2009 Survey of Virtual Learning in Indiana

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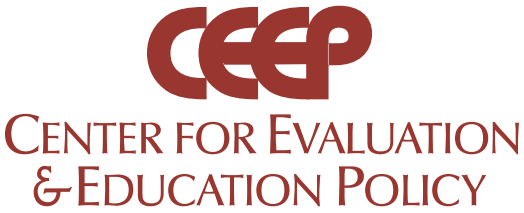

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Executive Summary

The Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University, in coordination with the Indiana Virtual Learning Consortium (IVLC) conducted a survey on virtual learning with the participation of school corporation superintendents, high school and junior high school principals and school counselors across the state of Indiana. The intent of the survey was twofold: guidance in providing efficient and effective virtual learning services, and assistance in making policy recommendations to the legislature in promoting such virtual learning across the state.

Key findings from the survey include:

- English/language arts and mathematics are the two areas of curriculum most frequently being served by online courses in Indiana today, used by over half of respondents. However, educators expressed a high level of interest in every curricular area for the potential growth in online usage. At least 40% of respondents indicated that they were currently using or have an interest in using online courses for every curricular area.

- Currently few academic challenges, except credit recovery, are being addressed through the use of virtual learning services in Indiana; however, respondents feel that there is a strong potential for virtual learning to address their unique needs. A total of 50-60% of respondents indicated that virtual learning could potentially address their needs in 10 key areas, including credit recovery, scheduling conflicts, at-risk students, homebound students, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, specific needs of small numbers of students, filling curriculum gaps, limited teacher availability, and AP courses.

- Although alternative education and the traditional in-school classroom are currently the most popular settings for offering online courses, respondents feel that there is potential for offering online courses in all academic settings. 60% of respondents indicated they are offering currently or may offer the future online courses in six different settings, including alternative education, the in-school classroom, out-of-school instruction, after school program, homebound instruction, and gifted and talented education.

- Funding is the greatest barrier to schools and corporations for offering courses in both online and traditional brick-and-mortar formats. Concerns over online course/program quality and concerns over academic integrity were also concerns for more than half of respondents.

- The data regarding financial responsibility for virtual learning indicate that the student and school generally pay for the virtual courses and programs in all settings except special education; virtual courses and programs for special education are paid for predominately by the school and state. Correspondingly, schools and corporations are generally hesitant about paying for virtual learning courses in all aspects of their curriculum. When asked if their schools would consider paying for online course in particular academic settings, no more than 50% of respondents indicated that their schools would pay in a given setting. For those that said they would, the majority (66%) indicated that the school or corporation would pay only $100 or less per student per credit.

- The majority (58%) of respondents oppose a requirement that all high-school students complete at least one course online.

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I. Introduction

Virtual learning, by most accounts, has become a viable mechanism to deliver student instruction and meet student learning needs in complement to the classroom instruction found in public schools today. 44 states, including Indiana, have some form of virtual learning in place, and approximately 57% of public secondary schools in the U.S. provide access to students for online learning.[1] The number of K-12 students engaged in online courses nationwide in 2007-2008 is estimated at 1,030,000, a 47% increase since 2005-2006.[2] The Indiana Virtual Learning Consortium (IVLC), in coordination with the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University, determined a survey of the view on virtual education held by education administrators in Indiana was necessary and timely. This survey, administered online from Monday, April 13 through Friday, May 8, 2009, was targeted at high school and junior high school principals, school counselors, and school corporation superintendents. The data gathered from this survey will serve as guidance to provide more efficient and effective virtual learning services to students. Furthermore, the data will be used to make policy recommendations to the legislature for advancing the effective use of virtual learning across the state.

The Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (CEEP) was asked by the IVLC to organize and conduct the survey due to the Center's experience and expertise in non-partisan policy research and its interest in virtual education in Indiana. CEEP, associated with the Indiana University School of Education, is Indiana's leading non-partisan program evaluation and education policy research center. The Center takes a dynamic approach to evaluation and education policy research, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including experimental designs. CEEP utilized its extensive survey research experience and descriptive statistics in producing this report.

The Indiana Virtual Learning Consortium (IVLC) was formed in December 2007 as a collaborative venture of the five Indiana-based providers of virtual learning "to promote the growth of high-quality virtual educational opportunities for Indiana students and schools." The members are: the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities; the Indiana Online Academy; Indiana University High School; the Indiana Virtual Academy; and, Ivy Tech Community College.

It is the stated position of IVLC that the courses offered through virtual education providers in the state of Indiana should follow rigorous standards and the teachers should be well qualified to teach their subjects. IVLC members are committed to working collaboratively with each other, with the various educational constituencies around the state, the Department of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide high quality virtual learning experiences for the students and schools of Indiana.

[1] Wells, J. & Lewis, L. (2006). *Internet Access in U.S. Public Schools and Classrooms: 1994–2005*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

[2] Picciano, A. & Seaman, J. (2009) *K–12 Online Learning: A 2008 Follow-up of the Survey of U.S. School District Administrators.* The Sloan Consortium.

Virtual education will play an important part in the future of Indiana education in the 21st century. The authors of a recent book on educational change predict that by 2020 "online courses will account for half of high school enrollments."[3] The next few years will be critical as Indiana tackles the emerging issues of standards, accreditation, access, and funding for virtual education. How the state addresses these issues will go a long way in determining the future of education in Indiana in general, and virtual education in particular.

[3]Christensen, C., Johnson, C., & Horn, M. (2008). *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*. McGraw-Hill.

II. Findings

Response Rates

The following data were compiled using the survey responses sent out online to all school corporation superintendents, high school and junior high school principals, and school counselors in Indiana. The surveys were sent out via the groups' online list-serves and were made available to approximately 292 superintendents, 1,255 principals, and 2,582 school counselors. Individuals were under no obligation to complete the survey. A total of 194 individuals responded to the survey, 84 were superintendents, 40 were principals, and 70 were counselors. Table 1 presents an overview of the number and percentage of response rates per each group.

Table 1. Response Rates

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total
Actual Participants	84	40	70	194
Possible Participants	292	1,255	2,582	4129
Response Rate (%)	29%	3%	3%	5%

Demographic Information

Questions 1.1-1.3 asked demographic information regarding course enrollments. In question 1.1, superintendents were asked to indicate which grade levels were currently being served by virtual learning courses at their school corporations. The majority of the superintendents, 80%, indicated that virtual learning courses were provided at the high school level (Grades 9-12); whereas only 13% of superintendents indicated that virtual learning courses were offered at the middle school level (Grades 6-8). The level least served by virtual learning courses was elementary, which was reported as being served by only 7% of superintendents.

All three groups of superintendents, principals, and counselors were asked in question 1.2 if there were any high school courses (not necessarily via virtual education) which were currently offered to middle school students. Although the majority of principals (83%) and counselors (91%) indicated that high school courses were currently offered to middle school students, nearly two-thirds of superintendents responded negatively.

Respondents were asked in question 1.3 to approximate the percentage of their students currently enrolled in virtual learning courses. 95% of all respondents indicated that less than 25% of students are enrolled in virtual learning course. Only three percent of respondents indicated that 25%-50% of students are enrolled in virtual education course. Only one principal reported a virtual course enrollment percentage of 50%-75%, and one respondent from each of the three groups indicated a greater than 75% virtual course enrollment rate.

Table 1.1. Which grade levels at your corporation are currently being served by virtual learning courses? Please check all that apply.

	N*	%
Elementary: K-5	6	7%
Middle grades: 6-8	11	13%
High School: 9-12	67	80%

*Superintendent responses only

Table 1.2. Are there any high school courses which are currently offered to middle school students?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Yes	25	33	64	122	65%
No	50	5	6	61	32%
DK/NA	4	2	0	6	3%

Table 1.3. Approximately what percentage of your corporation's/ school's students is currently enrolled in virtual learning courses?

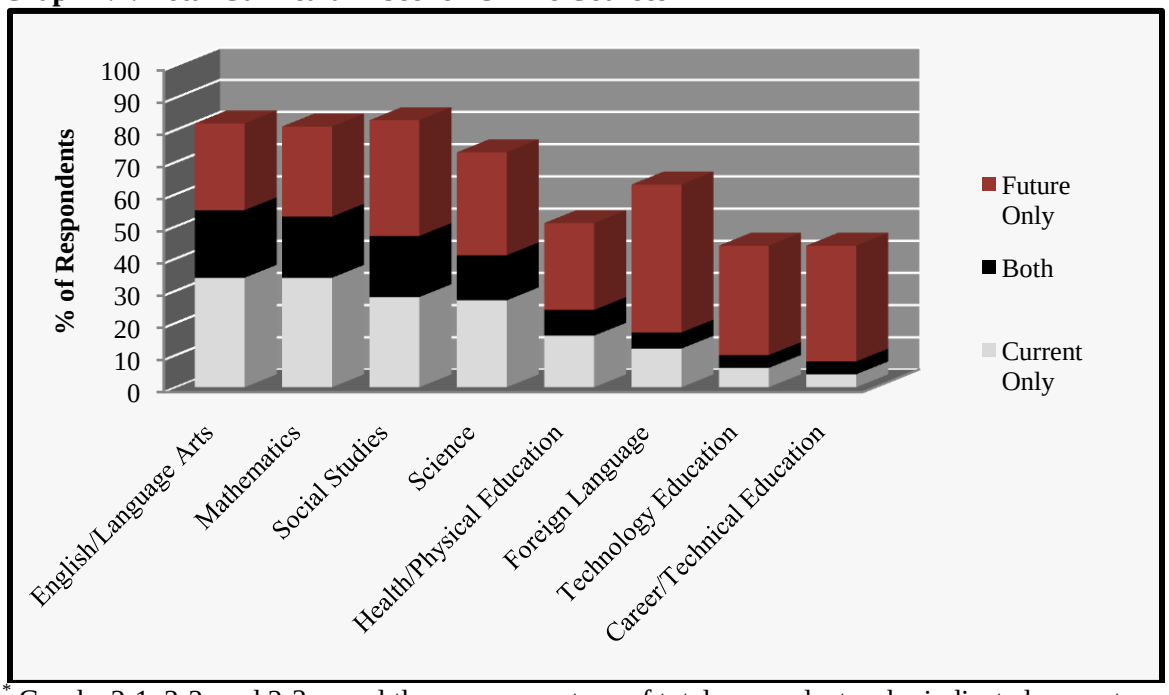
	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%*
Less than 25%	79	36	67	182	95%
25%-50%	1	2	2	5	3%
50%-75%	0	1	0	1	1%
More than 75%	1	1	1	3	2%

*Percents in all graphs may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Curriculum

Questions 2.1-2.7 asked for data regarding curriculum information for both online and traditional brick-and-mortar courses. In question 2.1, respondents were asked to indicate for which areas of curriculum they currently use or would consider using online courses for their schools. English/language arts courses were most frequently reported as being currently served by online courses, followed closely by mathematics courses; both curriculum areas were specified by over 50% of respondents as currently being served by online courses. The least currently served curriculum areas are technology education and career/technical education, indicated by less than 10% of respondents each. Social studies and foreign languages were the two highest reported curriculum areas for consideration for future use in an online format, each indicated by more than 50% of respondents. From the data gathered through this question, it appears that the demand for traditional core areas will remain high and increase further, but the demand for foreign language, technology, technical and career courses will increase dramatically over current use, as can be seen in graph 2.1. Every curricular area shows strong potential for growth in online usage, with at least 40% of respondents, and as many as 80% of respondents, indicating either current usage or future interest in online courses for each curricular area. Significantly, only 6% and 7% of respondents indicated that their schools do not use online courses currently or would not use them in the future, respectively.

Graph 2.1: Total Curriculum Use for Online Courses*



* Graphs 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3 reveal the sum percentage of total respondents who indicated current use/needs only, the percentage of total respondents who indicated future use/needs only, and the percentage of total respondents who indicated both current and future use/needs.

Table 2.1. For which of the following curriculum areas do you currently use or would you consider in the future using online courses? Please check all that apply.

CURRENT	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
English/Language Arts	44	23	38	105	54%
Mathematics	43	23	37	103	53%
Social Studies	31	21	38	90	46%
Science	34	20	26	80	41%
Health/Physical Education	13	13	20	46	24%
Foreign Language	18	6	10	34	18%
Technology Education	5	7	6	18	9%
Career/Technical Education	7	5	4	16	8%
None	2	2	7	11	6%

FUTURE	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Social Studies	49	17	39	105	54%
Foreign Language	55	23	21	99	51%
English/Language Arts	40	16	37	93	48%
Mathematics	44	14	33	91	47%
Science	46	15	30	91	47%
Career/Technical Education	37	18	22	77	40%
Technology Education	32	17	23	72	37%
Health/Physical Education	29	14	25	68	35%
None	5	2	7	14	7%

Respondents were asked in question 2.2 to indicate which areas of student need are currently being addressed by virtual learning or which they feel could be addressed in the future in this way. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that credit recovery is a need currently being addressed by virtual learning, and one-half of respondents indicated they felt virtual learning could address this need in the future. In fact, only 17 total respondents, less than 10%, did not indicate either current or future in regards to virtual learning addressing credit recovery needs. Although all other categories of need are currently being served by virtual learning only half as much as credit recovery, it is significant that there is a growth in the potential use of virtual learning for needs other than credit recovery. Every category of need in addition to credit recovery shows a dramatic increase in their potential for virtual learning solutions. Ten of the 13 total categories generated an approximately 50% or greater response rate for future management through virtual learning, and, in general, the data indicate a strong potential for virtual learning to be utilized for all areas of need, as can be seen in graph 2.2.

Graph 2.2: Needs addressed through virtual education

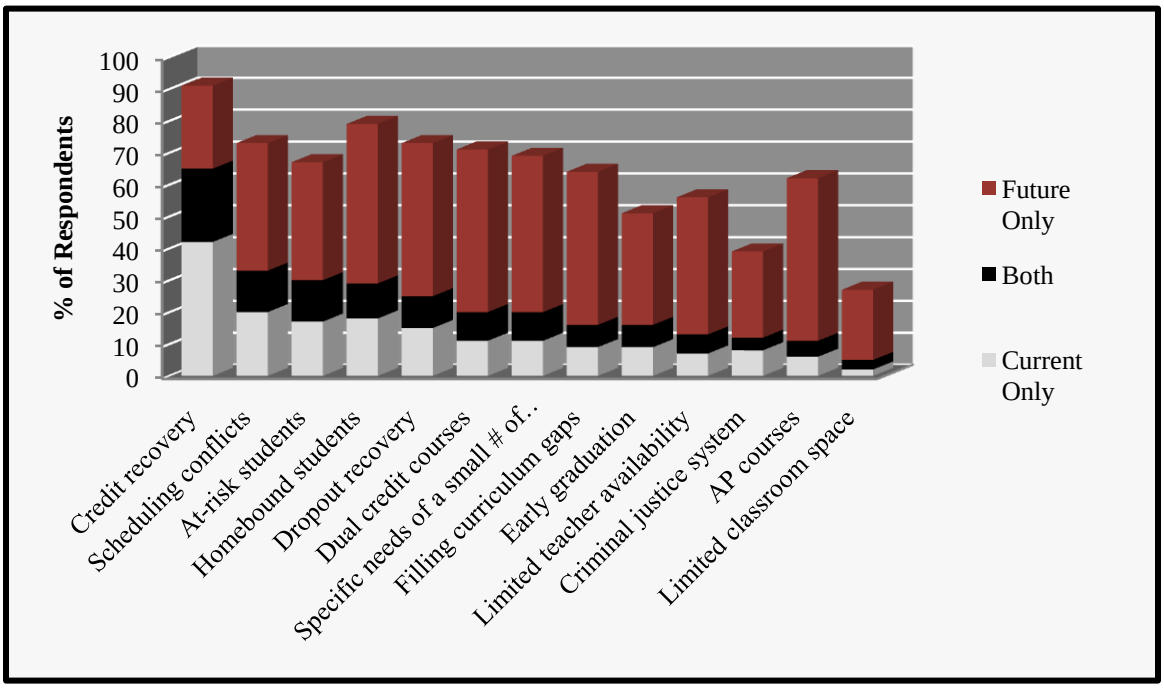


Table 2.2. Which of the following needs of your corporation/school are currently being addressed or do you feel could be addressed in the future through the use of virtual learning? Please check all that apply.

CURRENT	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Credit recovery	54	29	43	126	65%
Scheduling conflicts	29	12	22	63	32%
At-risk students	22	16	20	58	30%
Homebound students	23	18	15	56	29%
Dropout recovery	16	14	16	49	25%
Dual credit courses	18	7	13	38	20%
Specific needs of a small # of students	13	9	16	38	20%
Filling curriculum gaps	15	6	10	31	16%
Early graduation	5	9	16	30	15%
Limited teacher availability	11	6	9	26	13%
Criminal justice system	9	8	5	22	11%
Advanced placement courses	12	4	5	21	11%
Limited classroom space	2	3	3	8	4%
None	1	0	5	6	3%

Table 2.2. cont'd.

FUTURE	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Homebound students	55	22	42	119	61%
Dual credit courses	57	23	35	115	59%
Specific needs of a small # of students	48	23	41	112	58%
Dropout recovery	50	22	40	112	58%
Advanced placement courses	61	21	27	109	56%
Filling curriculum gaps	51	23	33	107	55%
Scheduling conflicts	42	21	39	102	53%
At-risk students	43	21	33	97	50%
Credit recovery	41	18	37	96	49%
Limited teacher availability	51	20	24	95	49%
Early graduation	38	18	25	81	42%
Criminal justice system	32	12	15	59	30%
Limited classroom space	19	14	15	48	25%
None	3	1	1	5	3%

On a similar note, respondents were asked in question 2.3 to indicate the various settings which they are currently offering or would consider in the future offering online courses. Currently alternative education and the traditional in-school classroom are the two most frequently used settings for online courses, as indicated by 35% of all respondents. Settings for special education and gifted and talented education are currently the least served by online courses, reported by only 13% and 10% of respondents, respectively. Each of the remaining three categories was indicated as being served by online courses by approximately one-quarter of respondents. The data suggest that a dramatic growth in online course offerings for all categories, especially homebound, special needs, gifted and talented, after school and out of school instruction, is anticipated and/or desired by respondents, as can be seen in graph 2.3. As seen in the graph, respondents indicated at a rate of over 60% for offering currently or in the future online courses in all settings, except special education. A comparison of the data from questions 2.1-2.3 reveals that respondents see potential across the board for online courses to be offered in all of the various academic settings to suit a variety of needs.

Graph 2.3: Online Course Settings

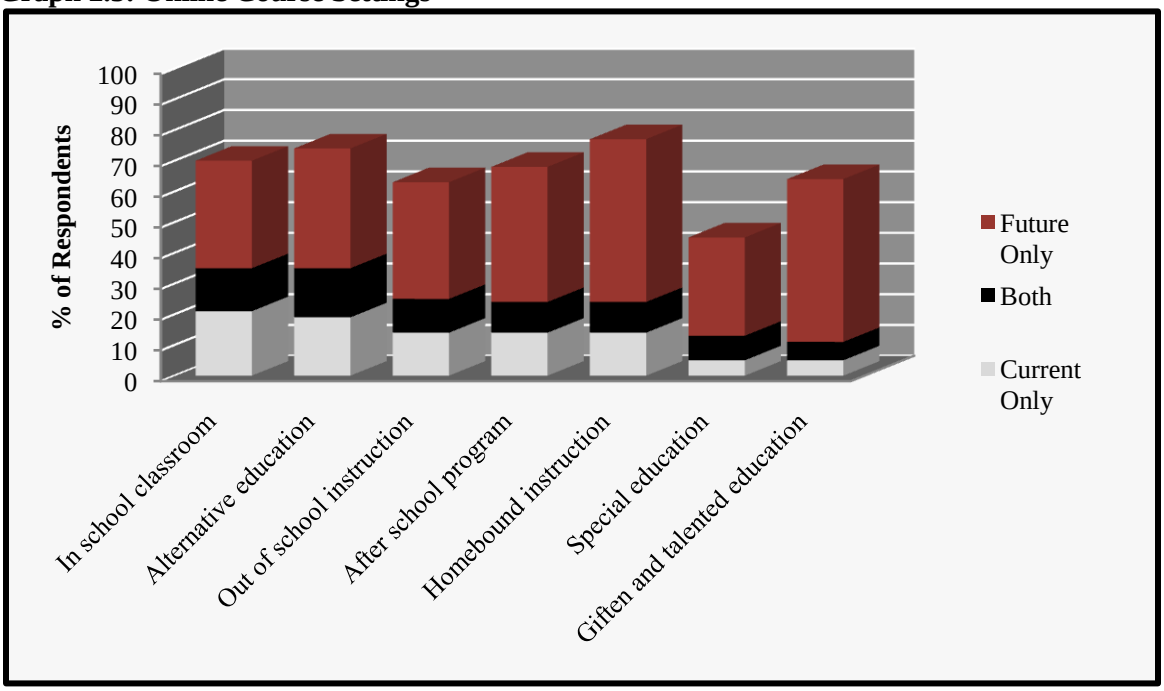


Table 2.3. In which of the following settings are you currently offering or would you consider in the future offering online courses? Please check all that apply.

CURRENT	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
In-school classroom	35	14	19	68	35%
Alternative education	30	16	22	68	35%
Out of school instruction	20	8	22	50	26%
After school program	16	16	15	47	24%
Homebound instruction	21	13	13	47	24%
Special education	9	9	7	25	13%
Gifted and talented education	10	4	6	20	10%
None	1	1	7	9	5%

FUTURE	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Homebound instruction	56	27	39	122	63%
Gifted and talented education	54	24	36	114	59%
Alternative education	52	20	34	106	55%
After school program	54	19	32	105	54%
Out of school instruction	40	23	33	96	49%
In-school classroom	50	19	26	95	49%
Special education	40	20	18	78	40%
None	4	1	3	8	4%

In questions 2.4 and 2.5, respondents were asked to indicate the barriers which prevent their schools and corporations from offering courses in both an online format and in traditional brick-and-mortar settings. In both formats, a lack of funding proved the greatest barrier, as indicated by 66% for online courses and 55% for traditional classroom courses. Concerns over both course/program quality and academic integrity were indicated by over 50% of respondents as barriers to offering virtual learning. Lack of teacher training or expertise and limited access to technology round out the top five barriers for offering virtual learning courses. Although funding issues are clearly an important matter for all education entities, the three barriers of course/program quality, academic integrity, and teacher experience/training are areas which virtual learning providers can and should be most concerned about addressing through their services.

Table 2.4. From the list below, please check the greatest barrier(s) to your corporation/school offering virtual learning. Please check all that apply.

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Lack of funding	49	27	53	129	66%
Concerns over course/program quality	48	18	37	103	53%
Concerns over academic integrity	45	19	38	102	53%
Lack of teacher training/expertise	37	19	17	73	38%
Limited access to technology	19	10	27	56	29%
Lack of state guidance/direction	29	8	15	52	27%
Lack of bandwidth or network issues	22	7	13	42	22%
Lack of administrative expertise/leadership	20	4	10	34	18%
Lack of student interest	10	4	11	25	13%
Restrictive state policies, laws, or guidelines	7	2	4	13	7%
Do not see a need to offer online education	6	1	3	10	5%
No barriers	3	3	4	10	5%
Restrictive local policies, laws, or guidelines	1	2	6	9	5%

In regards to traditional brick-and-mortar, a lack of funding (indicated by 55% of respondents) was the greatest barrier to offering courses in the traditional setting, followed closely by scheduling difficulties (49%). Respondents also indicated that a lack of teacher expertise (36%), lack of student interest (26%), a lack of physical space (24%) were barriers to offering courses in the traditional classroom setting. Virtual education might be a resource to help resolve several of these barriers encountered by corporations and schools, especially scheduling difficulties, a lack of teacher capacity and expertise, and a lack of classroom space.

Table 2.5. From the list below, please check the greatest barrier(s) to your corporation/school offering courses in traditional brick-and-mortar settings. Please check all that apply.

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Lack of funding	45	23	38	106	55%
Scheduling difficulties	46	18	31	95	49%
Lack of teacher capacity/expertise	32	18	19	69	36%
Lack of student interest	20	8	22	50	26%
Lack of classroom space	12	13	22	47	24%
Lack of technology	17	4	16	37	19%
Concerns over course quality	11	2	7	20	10%
None	9	3	7	19	10%
Restrictive state/local policies, laws, or guidelines	5	4	7	16	8%
Lack of administrative expertise/leadership	5	2	3	10	5%

Question 2.6 asked respondents to indicate the qualities which they consider most important in choosing a virtual learning provider for their schools and corporations. The primary factor indicated by all three categories of respondents was courses based on Indiana Academic Standards, selected by 85% of all respondents. A similar percentage of respondents, 79%, indicated that course costs were also an important factor in choosing a virtual learning provider. Respondents also indicated that academic rigor equivalent to traditional courses, flexibility in delivery mode, and Indiana certified teachers, are all important factors in choosing a virtual learning provider. The results from the data of question 2.6 correspond closely to the results from the data of questions 2.4 and 2.5; thus, it is not surprising that the qualities listed as most important, courses aligned with Indiana standards, course costs, academic rigor, flexible delivery mode, and Indiana certified teachers, are also barriers that need to be overcome for schools to offer online courses as part of their curriculum. Furthermore, two curricular areas were identified as important factors by more than 40% of respondents—Advanced Placement/dual credit courses offerings and courses for at-risk students or dropouts. This likely reflects concern on how to meet the new academic honors requirements and how to reduce the dropout rate in the state. The only factor which proved to be relatively unimportant was a program-based in Indiana, selected by only 16% of respondents as an important factor; thus, location of a virtual learning provider matters little, as long as the options and standards are present.

Table 2.6. From the list below, please check the qualities which you consider the most important for your corporation/school in choosing a virtual learning provider. Please check all that apply.

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Courses based on Indiana Academic Standards	73	29	62	164	85%
Course costs	65	29	59	153	79%
Academic rigor equivalent to traditional courses	54	26	47	127	65%
Flexibility in delivery mode	50	19	34	103	53%
Indiana certified teachers	38	14	35	87	45%
Advanced placement/dual credit course offerings	48	15	18	81	42%
Diploma option for at-risk students or dropouts	35	14	31	80	41%
Proctored exams	28	11	30	69	36%
Indiana-based program	13	7	12	32	16%
Choosing virtual learning provider not important	2	0	1	3	2%

Survey participants were then asked in question 2.7 which virtual learning format is preferred—synchronous courses in which participants are communicating and learning in simultaneous or "real time;" asynchronous courses in which learning is flexible and not simultaneous; a combination of both; or no preference. Only 21% of respondents had a preference of one format over the other, with asynchronous courses being slightly preferred. 43% preferred a combination of both formats, and 36% had no preference either way. The data here support the desire for flexibility as noted by more than 50% of respondents in question 2.6.

Table 2.7. Which method of virtual learning would you prefer?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Synchronous courses	9	2	5	16	8%
Asynchronous courses	8	7	9	24	13%
Either/no preference	29	12	28	69	36%
Combination of both	36	18	28	82	43%

Graduation and Dropout

Questions 3.1-3.4 asked respondents' opinions on graduation requirements and dropout prevention options. Survey participants were asked in question 3.1 to what extent they agree or disagree that virtual learning courses can help their schools and corporations meet the state requirement to offer two dual credit and two Advanced Placement courses. The majority of respondents, two-thirds, agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with more agreeing than strongly agreeing. Less than 30% of respondents disagreed with this statement to some extent, while 5% had no opinion.

Results were similar when respondents were asked in question 3.2 whether they agree or disagree that virtual learning could aid students in early graduation. Three-quarters of respondents agreed with this statement to some extent, more of whom agreed than strongly agreed; whereas less than one-fifth of respondents disagreed to some extent.

Respondents expressed agreement at an even greater rate when asked in question 3.3 about their opinion on whether virtual learning is a reasonable option to help students at risk of dropping out. 79% of respondents were in agreement, whereas only 16% were in disagreement. It should be noted additionally that nearly 50% of all respondents indicated strong agreement with this statement.

When asked in question 3.4 whether their school or corporation would utilize virtual learning to help dropout students complete their diploma, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they would, with 90% answering yes and 10% answering no. When the data are broken down by participant group, school counselors were slightly more hesitant than superintendents and principals; only 86% said they would. Principals, on the other hand, were the most eager; as 95% said they would utilize virtual learning to help dropout students complete a diploma.

As can be discerned from the data of questions 3.1-3.4, there exists a general consensus between respondents that virtual learning can be beneficial toward graduation and dropout prevention needs. This is especially true for at-risk and dropout students, for the benefit of whom there is strong favor toward the use of virtual learning options.

Table 3.1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that virtual learning courses can help your corporation/school meet the state requirement to offer two dual credit and two Advanced Placement courses?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Strongly Disagree	15	4	11	30	16%
Disagree	11	5	9	25	13%
Agree	26	17	29	72	37%
Strongly Agree	28	13	15	56	29%
DK/NA	4	1	5	10	5%

Table 3.2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that virtual learning could aid students in early graduation?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Strongly Disagree	14	4	6	24	12%
Disagree	4	3	5	12	6%
Agree	39	19	32	90	47%
Strongly Agree	23	13	19	55	28%
DK/NA	4	1	7	12	6%

Table 3.3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that virtual learning is a reasonable option to help students at risk for dropping out?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Strongly Disagree	12	3	5	20	11%
Disagree	5	4	2	11	6%
Agree	30	11	21	62	33%
Strongly Agree	32	19	36	87	46%
DK/NA	4	2	4	10	5%

Table 3.4. Would your corporation/school utilize virtual learning to help dropouts complete their diploma?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Yes	74	35	57	166	90%
No	7	2	9	18	10%

Financial

Questions 4.1-4.4 asked survey participants their opinions on various financial aspects of virtual learning. Question 4.1 provided a list of curricular areas and asked respondents to indicate who currently pays for virtual learning courses for the given settings: the student, school, state, or grant/external funding. The settings included AP courses, dual credit courses, remediation recovery, education courses which school offers in a traditional setting, education courses which school does not offer in a traditional setting, special education, alternative education, after-school instruction, homebound instruction, and out-of-school instruction. The data for virtual learning in all categories, except special education, indicate that the student and schools generally pay for the virtual courses and programs in a given curricular area; virtual courses and programs for special education are paid for predominately by the school and state. This would seem to indicate that students and schools in wealthier locales have greater access to virtual education than students and schools in poorer locales. Grants and external sources of funding are responsible for only a small portion of the bill in regards to paying for virtual learning. No more than 5% of respondents in a given category indicated that grants or external funding pays for virtual learning at their schools and corporations. Another noteworthy trend is the significant number of respondents who indicated "not applicable" for each of the categories. No less than 20% and as much as 44% of respondents for a given category indicated "not applicable," reflecting that these courses and programs are not presently offered online.

Table 4.1. Who currently pays for virtual learning courses in the following categories, if applicable? Please check all that apply.

AP Courses	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
N/A	31	20	33	84	43%
Student	15	9	21	45	23%
School	26	6	8	40	21%
State	3	5	6	14	7%
Grant/external funding	6	1	1	8	4%

Dual Credit Courses	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
N/A	31	20	21	72	37%
Student	19	14	37	70	36%
School	22	3	3	28	14%
Grant/external funding	5	0	3	8	4%
State	3	1	1	5	3%

Table 4.1. cont'd.

Remediation/Credit Recovery	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
School	49	19	21	89	46%
Student	13	9	28	50	26%
N/A	16	10	14	40	21%
State	9	0	2	11	6%
Grant/external funding	1	0	2	3	2%

Traditional education courses which school offers	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
School	34	14	21	69	36%
N/A	25	13	17	55	28%
Student	12	4	25	41	21%
State	9	4	4	17	9%
Grant/external funding	3	1	2	6	3%

Traditional education courses which school does not offer	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
N/A	37	23	25	85	44%
Student	18	7	29	54	28%
School	14	5	4	23	12%
State	2	1	0	3	2%
Grant/external funding	1	0	1	2	1%

Special Education	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
N/A	35	13	28	76	39%
School	30	19	18	67	35%
State	8	6	4	18	9%
Student	0	1	7	8	4%
Grant/external funding	2	1	1	4	2%

Alternative Education	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
School	37	20	23	80	41%
N/A	27	14	24	65	34%
Student	7	2	12	21	11%
Grant/external funding	3	3	3	9	5%
State	4	1	3	8	4%

Table 4.1. cont'd.

After School Instruction	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
N/A	35	14	32	81	42%
School	23	14	11	48	25%
Student	10	3	17	30	15%
Grant/external funding	3	2	3	8	4%
State	2	1	1	4	2%

Homebound Instruction	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
School	37	21	23	81	42%
N/A	27	11	23	61	31%
Student	2	2	10	14	7%
State	5	1	3	9	5%
Grant/external funding	2	2	1	5	3%

Out-of-school Instruction	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
N/A	37	22	27	86	44%
Student	15	7	27	49	25%
School	17	6	6	29	15%
State	3	0	2	5	3%
Grant/external funding	1	0	0	1	1%

Relating with the previous question, respondents were then asked in question 4.2 for which of these categories would their schools or corporations consider paying in the future. No single category received more than 50% of positive responses, indicating that schools and corporations are generally hesitant about paying for virtual learning courses in all aspects of their curriculum. Remediation/credit recovery, alternative education, and homebound instruction were the three most frequently selected categories that schools would pay for; each area generated 39% of positive responses. The next wave of curriculum areas, indicated by approximately 30% of respondents, was composed of AP courses, dual credit courses, and education courses which schools does not offer in traditional setting. After school instruction, special education, education courses which schools do offer in traditional setting, and out-of-school instruction composed the final wave of categories for which schools and corporations were least likely to pay for virtual learning. It is significant that nearly one-quarter of all respondents indicated that their schools or corporations would consider paying for none of the given curricular categories. This corresponds with the data found earlier in the survey that funding and financial matters are the most serious concern and barrier for schools and corporations.

Table 4.2. Which of the following categories would your school consider paying in the future? Please check all that apply.

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Remediation/credit recovery	44	12	20	76	39%
Alternative education	41	15	19	75	39%
Homebound instruction	43	17	15	75	39%
AP courses	40	11	10	61	31%
Dual credit courses	40	11	10	61	31%
Traditional education courses which does not offer	30	11	14	55	28%
None	9	14	23	46	24%
After school instruction	29	8	8	45	23%
Special education	26	11	8	45	23%
Traditional education courses which school offers	25	12	6	43	22%
Out of school instruction	17	7	5	29	15%

When asked in question 4.3 how much their school or corporation currently pays or would be willing to pay for virtual learning courses, only 158 survey participants responded. Out of these respondents, the significant majority, nearly two-thirds, indicated that they currently pay or would be willing to pay $100 or less per student per course. One-fourth of respondents indicated a maximum dollar amount of $200 per student per course, and only 7% indicated a maximum dollar amount of $300. Whereas only one principal indicated a maximum dollar amount of $400, a total of five participants reported their school would be willing to pay more than $400 dollars per student per virtual learning course. As the data reveals, generally schools would be willing to pay for virtual learning in the future but they want it to cost $100 or less per student per course. However, this is too low for most virtual learning providers to survive and sustain themselves in the current educational and economic market. Since the data indicate that the demand for virtual education is high, but the willingness to pay is low, this may be an indication that the state needs to step in with some kind of funding mechanism in order for virtual learning to succeed in the state.

Table 4.3. If the corporation/school pays or would be willing to pay for virtual learning courses, what is the maximum dollar amount per student per course? Please check one.

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
$0-$100	39	25	38	102	65%
$100-$200	28	6	5	39	25%
$200-$300	7	2	2	11	7%
$300-$400	0	1	0	1	1%
More than $400	3	1	1	5	3%

When asked in question 4.4 if they agree or disagree that virtual learning would help cut down on education costs, twice as many respondents were in agreement than disagreement. 44% of respondents reported that they believe virtual learning would help cut down education costs, whereas only 20% did not believe this to be true. 36% of respondents were unsure of the effects of virtual learning on education costs, a significant portion of which were school counselors, who as a whole were much more undecided than their superintendent and principal counterparts.

Table 4.4. Do you agree or disagree that virtual learning would help cut down on education costs?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Disagree	21	9	8	38	20%
Agree	42	18	24	84	44%
No opinion	20	13	37	70	36%

Legislative

The final question on the survey asked participants how strongly they would support or oppose a requirement that all high school students complete at least one course online. Such a requirement has been recommended by CEEP and has been considered by state legislators. The data reveal considerable opposition to the idea of requiring students to take a virtual course as part of their high school program. Over 58% of all respondents oppose the requirement to some extent, whereas only 27% support it to some extent. School counselors, who deal with the individual requirements of students on a daily basis, are especially opposed to the requirement; 70% of school counselors either oppose or strongly oppose the requirement that all high school students complete at least one course online. Only two school counselors indicated that they strongly support such an idea.

Graph 5-1: Online Course Requirement

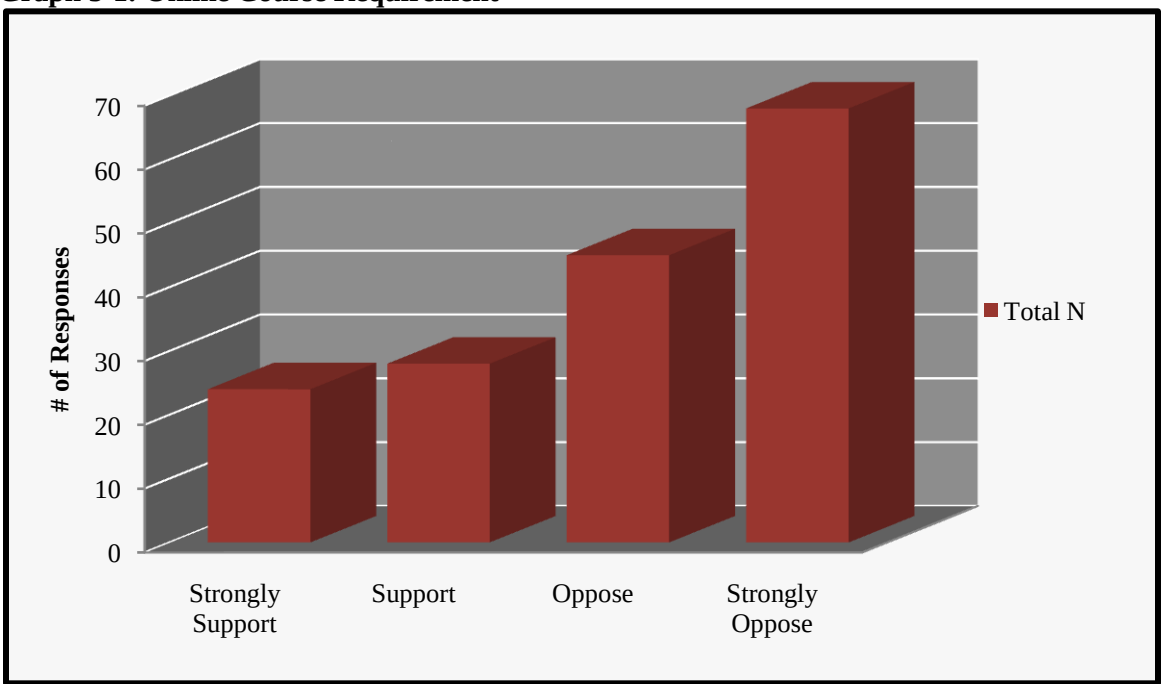


Table 5.1. To what extent do you support or oppose a requirement that all high school students complete at least one course online?

	Superintendents	Principals	Counselors	Total	
	N	N	N	N	%
Strongly support	15	7	2	24	12%
Support	12	9	7	28	15%
Oppose	17	7	21	45	23%
Strongly Oppose	28	12	28	68	35%
DK/NA	11	5	12	28	15%

III. Conclusion

Results from the findings of the 2009 Survey of Virtual Learning in Indiana indicate that there is great potential for the use and success of virtual learning in Indiana. Caution must be taken when considering the results due to the small sample size of the survey. The possibility may exist for a selection-based bias in the results, if, for example, only those more favorable to virtual learning chose to fill out the survey. Although virtual learning is not being used with great frequency at present, the majority of the 194 superintendents, principals, and school counselors across Indiana who responded to the survey indicated that they recognized virtual learning's potential and would like to see it used at their schools and corporations in the future. Currently, the majority of online courses are offered to high school students; however, virtual learning providers should not just focus their services on this level. A not insignificant number of school corporations are offering online courses to their elementary and middle school students, and most schools allow their middle school students to take high school courses.

The survey data indicate that there are a variety of applications in which virtual learning is being utilized; however, the frequency of utilization is low. The core curriculum areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies are frequently being served by online courses in Indiana today; however, the data for all other curricular areas reveals little online course usage. Nevertheless, every curricular area shows strong potential for growth in online usage, as at least 40% of respondents indicated that they were currently using or have an interest in using online courses for every curricular area. Beyond credit recovery, few academic needs are being addressed through the use of virtual learning services in Indiana; however, as with curricular areas, respondents feel that there is a strong potential for virtual learning to address the needs of their schools and corporations. There was an approximately 50% or greater response rate for the use of virtual learning to potentially address needs in 10 key areas, including credit recovery, scheduling conflicts, at-risk students, homebound students, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, specific needs of small numbers of students, filling curriculum gaps, limited teacher availability, and AP courses. Likewise, respondents feel that there is potential for offering online courses in all academic settings. 60% of respondents indicated offering currently or considering offering online courses in six different settings, including alternative education, the in-school classroom, out-of-school instruction, after school program, homebound instruction, and gifted and talented education.

The survey data reveal a strong connection between the factors that respondents found important in choosing a virtual learning provider and the barriers and challenges that their schools and corporations face in offering virtual learning. The greatest barriers in offering online courses were concerns over funding, course/program quality, academic integrity, and teacher training and expertise. These same four barriers were also four of the top five important factors for schools and corporations in choosing a virtual learning provider. The other important factor was flexibility in delivery mode. A follow-up question on this factor revealed that nearly two-thirds of respondents had a preference for the method of online course delivery used at their schools, the majority of whom preferred a combination of both synchronous and asynchronous courses.

The data regarding financial responsibility for virtual learning indicate that the student and school generally pay for the virtual courses and programs in all curricular areas except special education; virtual courses and programs for special education (if offered) are paid for predominately by the school and state. Correspondingly, schools and corporations are generally hesitant about paying for virtual learning courses in all aspects of their curriculum. When asked if their schools would consider paying for online course in particular academic settings, no more than 50% of respondents indicated that their schools and corporations would pay in a given setting. For those that said they would, the majority indicated that the school or corporation would pay only $100 or less per student per course. Since the demand for virtual education is high, but the willingness to pay is low, this may be an indication for the state to step in with some kind of funding mechanism in order for virtual learning to succeed Indiana.

For more information about virtual learning
see the June 2008 Education Policy Brief,
"Promises and Pitfalls of Virtual Education in the United States and Indiana"
available at:
http://www.ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/PB_V6N6_Spring_2008_EPB.pdf