

South Dakota Virtual School FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the South Dakota Virtual School?

The South Dakota Virtual 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 School is to provide choice, flexibility, quality and equity for students across the state. It is located at www.sdvs.k12.sd.us.

Who can use it?

Any middle or high school student enrolled in a South Dakota school can take courses via SDVS. This includes students at public, private and tribal and BIE schools. Interested students must work with their school's designated distance education 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 register through their resident public school district.

How does registration work?

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

Each South Dakota middle and high school that wishes to participate in SDVS will be issued a unique log-in and password from the Department of Education. From the SDVS 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 SDVS?

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?

The cost of courses available via SDVS depends on the provider, the length of the courses, and sometimes by the number of students enrolled in a particular course.



Most of the current MS/HS course offerings fall into a range between \$250 and \$325 per ½ credit course. More detailed information is provided on each course description page.

Who pays?

In general, payment to providers is made from the resident school district. However, a district can establish policy stating students must pay all or part of course cost before approving a request. Schools may use their state aid to pay for virtual courses the same way they use it for students taking traditional courses.

Does a school have to grant every request?

No. 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 SDVS?

Yes, students receive credit for courses taken via SDVS. The course provider issues the number grade for the course to the school. It is then the school's responsibility to issue the letter grade and any credit associated with the course. The SDVS does not grant credit or diplomas.

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

Before registering any student for a SDVS 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 SDVS courses, and how are they approved?

SDVS currently has several approved providers (see provider page on SDVS). The department evaluates providers 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 the SDVS courses approved?

In addition to approving providers, the SD Department of Education pre-approves each course offered via the SDVS. 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 SDVS?

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.

For more information:

For more information about the South Dakota Virtual School, contact the South Dakota Department of Education at (605)773-3423 or email DOESDVirtualSchool@state.sd.us.