

Opening a New Public Virtual School

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can a school district open a virtual school?

To open a virtual school, a school district must complete and submit the Tennessee Department of Education's (department) Program and School Authorization Form (PSAF) and the School Directory Online Change Request Form found on the department's [School Directory website](#). Districts must submit all documentation requested in Addendum C with the completed PSAF. The school district's School Directory Contact or Director of Schools must submit all materials via the department's [School Directory Online Change Request Form](#). A school district wishing to open and operate a virtual school in partnership with another school district should contact the Tennessee Department of Education's Division of Choice via email at Virtual.Schools@tn.gov for more information.

2. What is the deadline for submitting a request to open a virtual school?

The deadline for submitting a Program and School Authorization Form (PSAF) to create a virtual school is June 1. Once the PSAF is approved by the department, a newly authorized virtual school will become active and may enroll students beginning July 1.

3. What is the department's process for reviewing a school district's request to open a virtual school?

Upon receipt of the Program and School Authorization Form, the Division of Choice will review the submission to:

- ensure that all required materials have been provided;
- ensure that the proposed virtual school complies with applicable law and regulation; and
- seek any necessary clarification and/or modification.

After satisfactory completion of these steps, the virtual school will be authorized, and the school directory team will assign a new school number to the virtual school.

4. What is the expected timeframe by which the department will issue authorization for a new virtual school once a school district has submitted a Program and School Authorization Form?

The Division of Choice will conduct an initial review within 15 calendar days of receiving all materials from a school district. Because this is a collaborative process, the final authorization date will depend upon timely receipt of requested feedback.

5. Are there any requirements regarding the location of our virtual school office?

A virtual school must maintain an administrative office within the State. That office will be considered its principal place of business. It is permissible to locate the virtual school office within a traditional school building.

6. Can districts partner to create a virtual school?

Yes. The districts should specify in an agreement how funding, accountability, staffing and other matters will be allocated between them. It is recommended that partnering districts contact their respective attorneys as well as the department for guidance.

7. Must a virtual school be overseen by a full-time principal?

T.C.A. §49-5-412 requires that each school having nine (9) or more teachers must have at least one (1) full-time supervising principal.

8. What options, other than a virtual school, do school districts have to offer students access to virtual education?

School districts may utilize a virtual education program to offer virtual learning to students. A virtual education program is offered within a public school and provides a pathway in which students may take a single virtual course or a series of virtual courses. Unlike a virtual school, it is not required that school districts receive authorization from the department to operate a virtual education program; however, districts must adhere to SBE rule 0520-01-03-.05(2) when operating a virtual education program.

TDOE Contact Information:

For more information, please contact Virtual.Schools@tn.gov.

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