



**TN**

Department of  
**Education**

# Virtual School Monitoring Manual

Tennessee Department of Education | July 2023



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## Overview

This manual is designed to outline each component of the virtual school monitoring framework. It serves as an informational resource for LEAs that operate a public virtual school. To complete the monitoring cycle, LEAs will utilize both the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool and Virtual School Monitoring Report Template located in the LEA's ePlan document library. Additionally, LEAs may access both documents from the department's [virtual schools website](#).

Virtual schools provide flexible and unique learning opportunities for students across Tennessee. Statutes and rules that frame virtual schools in Tennessee<sup>1</sup> give LEAs the flexibility to create virtual learning environments that fit the needs of their students and families. Tennessee students deserve high-quality education, and it is incumbent upon virtual schools and LEAs that authorize virtual schools to ensure the best outcomes for all students.

The Tennessee Department of Education has created the virtual school monitoring framework to provide LEAs a structure by which to monitor their virtual school's efficacy, legal compliance, and operational practices. Monitoring conversations and feedback held throughout this process should serve as a catalyst for reflection and action to help virtual schools provide services that are best for all.

The Virtual School Monitoring Framework consists of three documents:

- **Virtual School Monitoring Manual** (*this document*) provides:
  - an overview of the monitoring process and components;
  - an [overview of monitoring requirements](#);
  - an overview of [how to rate indicators and assign designations](#); and
  - a [glossary of terms and acronyms for virtual school monitoring](#).
- **LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool** provides LEAs and virtual schools a template to:
  - organize monitoring findings;
  - identify a virtual school's strengths and areas for improvement; and
  - rate virtual school monitoring indicators and assign designation levels.
- **Virtual School Monitoring Report Template** is a template to provide stakeholders monitoring findings and information related to school operations, accountability scores, and academic models used within the virtual school.

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<sup>1</sup> [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-16-201](#); [SBE Rule 0520-01-03-.05\(1\)](#)

## **Statutes and Rules that Frame Virtual School Monitoring**

The following Tennessee statute and State Board of Education rule frame the requirements for virtual school monitoring:

### **Tenn. Code. Ann. § 49-16-213**

A virtual school shall be evaluated annually by its establisher based on the following criteria:

1. The extent to which the school demonstrates increases in student achievement according to the goals of its authorizing contract and state academic standards; and
2. The accountability and viability of the virtual school, as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal, and operational performance.

### **SBE Rule 0520-01-03-.05 (1)(b)(6)(i)**

The evaluation must assess the following utilizing a standardized template provided by the Department of Education:

1. Academic, fiscal, and operational performance; and
2. The extent to which the school demonstrates increases in student achievement.

The results of such evaluation shall be publicly reported through the following methods:

1. Posting of the results of the evaluation, utilizing a standardized template provided by the Department of Education on both the virtual school's and the LEA's website;
2. Direct distribution of the evaluation, utilizing a standardized template provided by the Department of Education, to all enrolled families. Such distribution may be accomplished via e-mail, U.S. mail, or other method determined by the LEA.

## Monitoring Requirements Overview

The list below outlines the actions that LEAs and virtual schools are required to complete during their annual virtual school monitoring process.

- LEAs must monitor their virtual schools annually, including virtual schools in which the instruction and/or operation is outsourced to another entity. The monitoring window opens on July 1<sup>st</sup> each year.
- LEAs must monitor their virtual schools using the Tennessee Department of Education's approved Virtual School Monitoring Framework as outlined within this manual. *(Areas within this manual that are expressly stated as "recommended" may be utilized at the LEA's discretion.)*
- LEAs must collaborate with their virtual schools to complete both the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool and the Virtual School Monitoring Report Template.
- LEAs must rate each monitoring indicator by utilizing the methods outlined within the [Indicator Rating Table found in appendix B](#) of this document.
- LEAs must designate each monitoring assurance as compliant or non-compliant by choosing yes or no within the assurances section of each monitoring domain.
- LEAs must complete all sections of the Virtual School Monitoring Report Template and the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool.
- LEAs must directly distribute the virtual school's monitoring results to all families enrolled within the virtual school using the department's approved Virtual School Monitoring Report Template. *(Distribution can be accomplished via e-mail, U.S. mail, or other method determined by the LEA.)*
- LEAs must post the virtual school's monitoring results to both the LEA's website and the virtual school's website using the TDOE approved Virtual School Monitoring Report Template located in ePlan.
- LEAs must submit both their completed Virtual School Monitoring Report Template and the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool to the department via ePlan by December 15<sup>th</sup>.

## Completing the Components of the Virtual School Monitoring Framework

LEAs have flexibility to determine the most appropriate methods and procedures to monitor their virtual schools; however, LEAs must utilize and complete both the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool and the Virtual School Monitoring Report Template to meet the requirements of the annual virtual school monitoring process. These documents are located within each LEA's ePlan document library. When completing the monitoring documents, LEAs should not make changes to the content, formatting, or the layout of the document other than minor changes needed for page breaks or formatting corrections. The tables below outline actions that LEAs and virtual schools must take to complete both the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool and Virtual School Monitoring Report Template.

Completing the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool	
Section of Monitoring Tool	Required LEA Action
<b>Cover page</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enter the school year in which the monitoring cycle was completed.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>School Name:</b> Insert the school's name as it appears in the state data systems (EIS, ePlan).</li> <li>- <b>Years in Operation:</b> Insert a whole number within this field. Do not include the current school year within the count. If it is the school's first year of operation, insert the words, "First Year of Operation".</li> <li>- <b>Total Current Enrollment:</b> Current count of students enrolled across all grades who hold a primary enrollment in the virtual school. Do not count students who are part-time or who have a service enrollment.</li> <li>- <b>Grades Served:</b> Insert the grades that the virtual school serves during the current school year. Format the entry as K-8, 9-12, etc.</li> <li>- <b>Enrollment Types Accepted:</b> Choose the enrollment type(s) that the school accepts within the current school year. Choose all that apply. See appendix A for definitions of terms.</li> <li>- <b>Primary Instructional Model by Grade:</b> Choose the instructional model that is utilized in a majority of classes for each grade. LEAs should ensure that they select the model that is primarily used. See appendix A for definitions of terms.</li> </ul>
<b>LEA's Overall Designation and Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select the overall designation for the virtual school based on monitoring findings. See the section <a href="#">Designation Calculation Process</a>.</li> <li>- Remove the prefilled text instructions within the form fields and insert a narrative summarizing each of the following sections: school's strengths, school's notable areas for improvement, and school's plan to address notable areas for improvement.</li> <li>- LEAs should include mention of specific virtual school monitoring indicators in which the virtual school shows strength and needed improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Specific Domain Designations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select an overall designation for each domain based on monitoring findings.</li> </ul>

## Completing the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool

Section of Monitoring Tool	Required LEA Action
<b>Monitoring Assurances and Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LEAs have discretion to require the virtual school to submit evidence or artifacts during the monitoring process. The department has provided examples of recommended evidence within the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool.</li> <li>- Collaborate with the virtual school to determine the answer for each assurance and rating for each applicable indicator.</li> <li>- Choose “yes” or “no” indicating compliance or non-compliance for each assurance.</li> <li>- Choose a rating for each applicable indicator based on knowledge of the virtual school and/or evidence gathered during the monitoring process.</li> <li>- LEAs are not required to enter a rationale for an indicator rating or list evidence provided by the virtual school.</li> <li>- LEAs must use the <a href="#">Assurance Rating Table</a> and <a href="#">Indicator Rating Table</a> to assign a numeric value for each assurance and each applicable indicator.</li> </ul>

## Completing the Virtual School Monitoring Report Template

Section of Report Template	Required LEA Action
<b>Cover page</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insert the school's name and the school district's name as they appear in the State Data systems (EIS, ePlan).</li> <li>- Enter the school year that the monitoring cycle was completed.</li> </ul>
<b>School District's Overall Designation and Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select the virtual school's overall designation based on the monitoring findings.</li> <li>- Remove the prefilled text instructions within the form fields and insert a narrative summarizing each of the following sections: school's strengths and school's notable areas for improvement.</li> <li>- LEAs should ensure that the narrative is written so that families, students, and external stakeholders can easily digest the information.</li> <li>- LEAs should avoid the use of educational jargon and/or acronyms that are not commonly known to families, students, and external stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>School's Tennessee State Report Card</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove the prefilled text and insert the URL to the school's TN state report card located here: <a href="https://tdepublicschools.ondemand.sas.com/">https://tdepublicschools.ondemand.sas.com/</a></li> </ul>
<b>School's Annual Improvement Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove the prefilled text and insert the URL to the school's improvement plan located here: <a href="https://edplan.tn.gov/public/plans/">https://edplan.tn.gov/public/plans/</a></li> </ul>

## Completing the Virtual School Monitoring Report Template

Section of Report Template	Required LEA Action
<b>Operational Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>School Name:</b> Insert the school's name as it appears in the state data systems (EIS, ePlan).</li> <li>- <b>Years in Operation:</b> Insert a whole number within this field. Do not include the current school year within the count. If it is the school's first year of operation, insert the words, "First Year of Operation".</li> <li>- <b>Total Current Enrollment:</b> Current count of students enrolled across all grades who hold a primary enrollment in the virtual school. Do not count students who are part-time or who have a service enrollment.</li> <li>- <b>Grades Served:</b> Insert the grades that the virtual school serves during the current school year. Format the entry as K-8, 9-12, etc.</li> <li>- <b>Date that the school begins accepting enrollment applications:</b> Insert the date or timeframe that the school begins taking applications for enrollment (<i>i.e., Beginning of April, 4/05, April of Each Year</i>).</li> <li>- <b>Date that the school stops accepting enrollment applications:</b> Insert the date or timeframe that the school stops taking applications for enrollment (<i>i.e., Beginning of October, 10/05, October of Each Year</i>).</li> <li>- <b>School's Website:</b> Remove the prefilled text and insert the URL to the school's website.</li> <li>- <b>Enrollment Types Accepted:</b> Choose the enrollment type(s) that the school accepts within the current school year. Choose all that apply. See appendix A for definitions of terms.</li> <li>- <b>Primary Instructional Model by Grade:</b> Choose the instructional model that is utilized in a majority of classes for each grade. LEAs should ensure that they select the model that is primarily used. See appendix A for definitions of terms.</li> </ul>

## Designation Calculation Process

The LEA will follow the steps below to determine the virtual school's overall designation using the percentage of indicators and assurances for which the virtual school aligns.

1. Use the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool to determine if the virtual school meets each assurance and mark each assurance yes or no based on monitoring findings. To complete this step, LEAs will use the [Assurance Rating Table located in appendix B](#).
2. Determine the numeric value of each assurance using the [Numeric Value of Assurance Ratings Table located in appendix B](#) and calculate the sum of the assurance ratings.
3. Use the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool to determine and mark the rating for each monitoring indicator based on the monitoring findings. To complete this step, LEAs will use the [Indicator Rating Table located in appendix B](#).
4. Determine the numeric value of each monitoring indicator using the [Numeric Values for Indicator Ratings Table located in appendix B](#) and calculate the sum of the indicator ratings.
5. Count the number of assurances within the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool.



6. Count the number of applicable indicators (indicators for which the LEA did not choose “Indicator Not Applicable”) within the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool.
7. Use the [Formula for Calculating School Designation Levels located in appendix B](#) to calculate the percentage of indicators and assurances for which the virtual school aligns. Use the Designation Levels located in appendix B to assign the school’s overall designation.
8. To complete the Specific Domain Designations section of the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool, apply the [Formula for Calculating School Designation Levels located in appendix B](#) using the same steps as above for each domain individually.

## **Finalization and Distribution of Virtual School Monitoring Documents**

Use the steps below to submit the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool and submit and distribute the Virtual School Monitoring Report.

### **LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool**

LEAs should follow these steps to submit the LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool to the department through ePlan.

- Ensure that all temporary notes and comments inserted by the LEA or virtual school during the monitoring process are removed from the finalized document.
- Ensure that all required fields are completed (see the [Completing the Components of the Virtual School Monitoring Framework](#) section).
- Save the finalized LEA Virtual School Monitoring Tool in either PDF or Microsoft Word format.
- Name the file as “<your virtual school’s name> Monitoring Tool <school year>” (e.g., ABC Virtual School Monitoring Tool SY23-24).
- Upload the completed Monitoring Tool into ePlan by December 15th.

### **Virtual School Monitoring Report**

LEAs should follow these steps to submit and distribute the Virtual School Monitoring Report.

- Ensure that all temporary notes and comments inserted by the LEA or virtual school during the monitoring process are removed from the finalized document.
- Ensure that all required fields are completed (see the [Completing the Components of the Virtual School Monitoring Framework](#) section).
- Save the finalized Virtual School Monitoring Report in either PDF or Microsoft Word format.
- Name the file as “<your virtual school’s name> Monitoring Report <school year>” (e.g., ABC Virtual School Monitoring Report SY23-24).

- Distribute the finalized PDF version of the report to families of enrolled students and post it on the LEA's and school's website by December 15th.
- Upload the completed Virtual School Monitoring Report into ePlan by December 15th.

## Appendix A - Glossary of Terms and Acronyms for Virtual School Monitoring

Terms	Short Term	Meaning
<b>Academic Achievement</b>		The percentage of students performing on grade level or above on state assessments as well as the improvement in this percentage from one year to the next.
<b>Advanced Placement</b>	<b>AP</b>	Early post-secondary courses offered that allow students to engage with highly rigorous course work.
<b>Annual Measurable Objective</b>	<b>AMO</b>	Yearly targets for improving performance based on prior year results.
<b>Assurances</b>		Statements aligned to Tennessee statutes, rules, and/or guidance that virtual schools and LEAs operating virtual schools must comply with.
<b>Asynchronous Virtual Instruction</b>		An instructional model that provides students access to on-demand instruction that is fully virtual/online. This model allows students to access instructional materials and progress at their own pace and does not require students to attend regularly scheduled (daily/every other day) virtual classes with a teacher.
<b>Bisynchronous Virtual Instruction</b>		An instructional model that utilizes both asynchronous and synchronous virtual instruction.
<b>Career &amp; Technical Education</b>	<b>CTE</b>	Career & Technical Education consists of nationally recognized career clusters with the goal of preparing students for success at the postsecondary level and in their chosen careers.
<b>Chronically Absent</b>		Tennessee public school students are considered chronically absent if they are absent for 10 percent or more instructional days for any reason, including excused absences and out-of-school suspensions.
<b>College and Career Readiness</b>		See Ready Graduate
<b>CTE Concentrator</b>		A student who concentrates in CTE by at least 2 sequenced courses in a single career and technical education program or program of study.
<b>Dual Credit</b>	<b>DC</b>	Statewide (SWDC) and Local Dual credit (LDC) courses are high school courses aligned to a postsecondary institution's course and exam. Students who pass the exam earn credits that are accepted and/or recognized by the postsecondary institution.
<b>Dual Enrollment</b>	<b>DE</b>	Postsecondary course taught either at the postsecondary institution or at the high school, by postsecondary faculty or credentialed adjunct faculty.
<b>Early Post-Secondary Opportunities</b>	<b>EPSO</b>	A course and/or exam that give students a chance to obtain postsecondary credit while still in high school.

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	<b>ED</b>	Students identified as participants in federal/state income/nutrition programs (e.g., TANF, SNAP), or students that meet categorical eligibility through their status as foster care, homeless, migrant, and/or runaway students.
<b>English Learner</b>	<b>EL</b>	Students identified by the LEA that have a native language other than English. EL student needs and placement can range across a spectrum of ESL/ELL services.
<b>Graduation Rate</b>		Measures the percentage of students that are graduating in four years and whether this percentage is increasing from one year to the next.
<b>Hybrid Virtual Instruction</b>		An instructional model that provides students access to virtual instruction and requires students to periodically attend class in-person within a brick-and-mortar location.
<b>Individual Learning Plans</b>	<b>ILP</b>	A document that describes an EL student's academic and language needs and goals.
<b>Individualized Education Plan</b>	<b>IEP</b>	A document that identifies a student's disability, outlines clear goals and objectives, and explains how the student will be supported.
<b>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</b>	<b>IDEA</b>	A federal law that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs.
<b>In-district Enrollment</b>		Enrollment option for students who reside within the zone of residency of the LEA establishing the virtual school.
<b>Inform TN</b>		A data and planning system that districts use to review accountability data and enter school/district plans.
<b>Local Education Agency</b>	<b>LEA</b>	The school district that oversees the virtual school.
<b>Monitoring Domain</b>	<b>Domain</b>	High-level topics that LEAs operating a virtual school are statutorily obligated to monitor on an annual basis. The domains are divided into monitoring strands.
<b>Monitoring Framework</b>		A series of documents that define and outline standardized monitoring practices for virtual schools and LEAs operating virtual schools.
<b>Monitoring Indicators</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	Items aligned with state statute, regulation, and/or TILS that LEAs will use to determine if the school is meeting the LEA's operational expectation.
<b>Monitoring Strand</b>	<b>Strand</b>	Topics that LEAs should focus on when monitoring their virtual schools. Strands are high-level topics that are divided into monitoring indicators.
<b>Out-of-district Enrollment</b>		Enrollment option for students who reside within a contiguous county, municipality, or city outside the zone of residency of the LEA establishing the virtual school.
<b>Ready Graduate</b>		Measures whether students are ready for college and careers after high school and whether the percentage of students who are ready is improving from one year to the next.

Terms	Short Term	Meaning
<b>State-wide Enrollment</b>		Enrollment option for students who reside outside the zone of residency of the LEA establishing the virtual school and do not reside in a contiguous county, municipality, or city.
<b>Students With Disabilities</b>	<b>SWD</b>	A student who has been identified to have a disability that affects their academic progress.
<b>Success Rate</b>		The one-year success rate represents the percentage of students that scored on track or mastered on annual state tests.
<b>Synchronous Virtual Instruction</b>		An instructional model that provides scheduled, teacher supervised instruction that is fully virtual/online. This model of instruction does require students to attend regularly scheduled (daily/every other day) virtual classes with a teacher.
<b>Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program</b>	<b>TCAP</b>	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program includes TNReady assessments in math, English language arts, social studies, and science, as well as alternative assessments, like MSAA and TCAP-Alt, for students with special needs.
<b>Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards</b>	<b>TILS</b>	Core performance indicators of ethical and effective instructional leaders.
<b>Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System</b>	<b>TVAAS</b>	Tennessee accountability component that measures student growth year over year.
<b>Virtual Instruction</b>		Instruction that is asynchronous, synchronous, or bisynchronous.

## Appendix B – Designation Methodology

LEAs will use the below methodology to assign the virtual school a designation level based on the LEA’s monitoring findings.

### Designation Levels

The LEA will assign the virtual school a designation level based on the percentages of applicable indicators and assurances as indicated in the table below. Use the [designation calculation process](#), tables, and formula below to calculate the school designation level.

Designation Levels		
<b>Meeting Expectations =</b> 80-100% of Indicators Met	<b>Approaching Expectations =</b> 60-79% of Indicators Met	<b>Below Expectations =</b> Below 60% of Indicators Met

### Formula for Calculating School Designation Levels:

$$\text{Designation Level} = \left( \frac{\text{Sum of Indicator Ratings} + \text{Sum of Assurance Ratings}}{\# \text{ of Applicable Indicators} + \# \text{ of Assurances}} \right) \times 100$$

### Assurance Rating Table

Each monitoring domain has associated assurances that are drawn from Tennessee statutes and Tennessee State Board of Education (SBE) rules. The included assurances are indicators of statutory and regulatory compliance and are not an exhaustive list of statutes, rules, or regulations that govern virtual schooling. For each assurance, the LEA’s director of schools or their designee will choose either yes or no signifying compliance or non-compliance. The LEA will assign a numeric value to each assurance based on the tables below.

<i>Compliant with Assurance</i>	<i>Non-compliant with Assurance</i>
– The LEA’s director of schools or their designee attests that the virtual school is fully compliant with the listed assurance.	– The LEA’s director of schools or their designee attests that the virtual school is not fully compliant with the listed assurance.

Numeric Value of Assurance Ratings	
<i>Compliant with assurance</i>	<i>Non-compliant with Assurance</i>
1	0

## Indicator Rating Table

LEAs will rate how the virtual school aligns to each applicable indicator within the monitoring strands. The LEA will assign a numeric value to each applicable indicator based on the tables below. Certain indicators may not be applicable to the virtual school; these indicators should not have a numeric value assigned and should be marked as “Indicator Not Applicable”.

<i>Fully Meets the Indicator</i>	<i>Partially Meets the Indicator</i>	<i>Does Not Meet the Indicator</i>	<i>Indicator Not Applicable</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– LEA determines that the preponderance of evidence provided by and/or related to the virtual school <b>fully</b> aligns with elements addressed in the indicator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– LEA determines that the preponderance of evidence provided by and/or related to the virtual school <b>partially</b> aligns with elements addressed in the indicator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– LEA determines that the preponderance of evidence provided by and/or related to the virtual school <b>does not meet</b> or align with elements addressed in the indicator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The indicator is not applicable due to grade-level configuration.</li> <li>– The indicator is not applicable due to absence of previous year accountability data.</li> <li>– The indicator is not applicable due to LEA policy.</li> </ul>

<b>Numeric Value of Indicator Ratings</b>			
<i>Fully Meets the Indicator</i>	<i>Partially Meets the Indicator</i>	<i>Does Not Meet the Indicator</i>	<i>Indicator is Not Applicable</i>
1	.5	0	<i>No numeric score assigned and not counted in totals</i>