

Remote Learning Advisory Committee Summary

Overview, Outcomes, and Future
Actions

May 1, 2023



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Acknowledgements

The Oregon Department of Education wishes to acknowledge the time and commitment of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee members during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school year. These members volunteered their time to support the work of the committee and were integral in the development of the Online and Remote Learning Guidance and the work associated with attendance policy concepts and supporting online and remote schools in moving from compliance to providing high-quality learning opportunities for all students. Members listed below are inclusive of the year(s) served.

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Background

Remote learning programs have expanded across Oregon for well over a decade in the form of specialized courses available to students in rural communities, hybrid and virtual options for local schools, virtual public charter schools, and home-based options. Most recently, remote learning has become a familiar part of many students' education through the COVID-19 pandemic response. Even with a return to in-person learning for the significant majority of public schools, remote learning will continue to play a role in K-12 public education. Due to increase in remote and online learning schools and programs, during fall 2021, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) formed a cross-office team to focus on developing a better understanding of the landscape of online and remote learning in Oregon as well as addressing the findings and recommendations brought forth in the [2017 Secretary of State Audit of online and alternative education](#), the [K-12 Education Systemic Risk Report released in Spring 2022](#).

This included:

1. Developing a data snapshot that provides an overview of the landscape of online and remote schools currently operating in Oregon. An initial [Data Snapshot](#) was published winter 2022 on ODE's remote learning website with the goal to produce additional data snapshots as well as provide updates to the current snapshot as data becomes available.
2. Facilitating engagement sessions with educators and families to learn about their experiences and perspectives of online and remote learning in Oregon in order to

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develop Online Learning Standards¹. Engagement sessions took place during the fall and winter of 2021-22. A summary of engagement findings can be found in the [Fall and Winter 2021-22: Remote Learning Engagement Summary](#).

3. Establishing a Remote Learning Advisory Committee to support ongoing work related to online and remote schools and programs across Oregon. The Remote Learning Advisory Committee was established in November of 2021. Additional information about the committee can be found on [ODE's Remote Learning Advisory Committee website](#).

This particular summary will focus on the work of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee as this group of educators and parents have been integral to the work of addressing the findings and recommendations noted in the [2017 Secretary of State Audit of online and alternative education](#), the [K-12 Education Systemic Risk Report released in Spring 2022](#). Additional information regarding the online and remote learning work can be accessed in the [Remote Learning in Oregon Background document](#).

Purpose and Structure of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee

The Remote Learning Advisory Committee was established in November 2021 to support ongoing work related to online and remote schools and programs across Oregon. The work of the committee included reviewing research around online and remote learning, reviewing and refining and providing feedback on current policy and related guidance, and discussing effective practices.

Given that online and remote learning has expanded across Oregon for well over a decade in the form of specialized courses available to students in rural communities, hybrid options for local schools, virtual public charter schools, and most recently, district operated online schools to meet the needs of students and families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, convening this committee was both necessary and timely. The committee was structured to last for 18-24 months with ODE making the decision to sustain the committee through the end of the 2022-2023 school year given the continued work in this space and the commitment and passion of the committee members.

¹ Findings from engagement sessions as well as feedback from the Remote Learning Advisory Committee led to a shift away from Online Learning Standards and toward Online and Remote Learning Guidance as there was a concern that Online Learning Standards would duplicate other standards already in place.

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Opportunities to apply were sent out through existing ODE listservs including school and district administrators and communicated during engagement sessions. All members of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee went through an application process which included questions about the individual's role, experience, and priorities regarding online and remote learning in addition to demographic questions. The demographic questions were included in the application in an effort to create a committee made up of Oregonians who reflect the diversity of the public K-12 student population. During the 2021-22 school year, there were a total of 29 members and during the 2022-23 there were a total of 31 members with some members continuing from the previous year in addition to new members. During both school years, the committee was composed of individuals with a variety of roles, backgrounds, and experiences.

Outcomes of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee

2021-22 School Year

During the 2021-22 school year, the committee spent time on a variety of activities including reviewing data related to online and remote learning in Oregon, discussing engagement findings gathered by ODE during fall and winter 2021-22, and supporting the development of the Online and Remote Learning Guidance. The work of the guidance originally began as online and remote learning standards with the goal of developing a set of standards for online and remote schools. After continuous refinement of the standards and feedback from the committee, ODE shifted away from standards and toward guidance as to not duplicate standards and requirements for schools and districts that already exist. Once this shift was made, the committee provided continuous feedback on the guidance including: 1) how to shift the standards into larger themes - what eventually became pillars, 2) what indicators should be nested within each pillar aligned with high-quality student learning experiences, and 3) discussing potential artifacts to support implementation. As a result of the ideas and feedback from the Committee, ODE published the [Online and Remote Learning Guidance](#) in August 2022. This was the first non-emergency guidance published by ODE that directly addressed online and remote learning.

2022-23 School Year

During the 2022-23 school year, ODE initiated two subcommittees as a way to provide members an opportunity to spend more time discussing their areas of interest and expertise. The Online and Remote Learning Guidance Subcommittee and the Attendance Policy Concept Subcommittee.

Subcommittee	Tasks
Online and Remote Learning Guidance Subcommittee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review and refine the guidance ● Identify and share effective practices in order to support the development of rubrics and tools associated with the guidance.
Attendance Policy Concept Subcommittee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review and provide feedback on attendance policy concepts in connection with research and data both locally and nationally. ● Develop draft attendance policy concepts for review by ODE.

While the focus of the committee’s work was in these two areas, additional discussion and feedback to the Department included a wide range of topics and issues including funding, support for high-quality instructional materials, normalizing remote and online learning, and other topics that reinforced the themes that arose from the [engagement sessions](#) named above.

Online and Remote Learning Guidance Subcommittee

Purpose of Subcommittee

With the release of the Online and Remote Learning Guidance in August 2023, it was important to ODE to get feedback from Advisory Committee members on the guidance as well as work with members to collectively develop companion documents that could move the guidance from compliance with current policy toward ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all students attending online and remote schools and programs. This committee was tasked with 1) reviewing and refining the guidance, 2) identifying and sharing effective practices, and 3) supporting in the development of additional rubrics and tools associated with the guidance that uplift the unique nature of online and remote schools while envisioning what rigorous and compassionate online learning can and should look like for Oregon students moving forward.

Task #1: Review and Refine the Online and Remote Learning Guidance

While members of the subcommittee shared that the checklists embedded within the guidance are helpful for districts and schools to determine whether or not they are in compliance with current policy, they also shared the importance of having rubrics and other support documents that provide a ceiling rather than a floor.

Additionally, members of the committee shared that while they agree philosophically with much of what is in the guidance, there are certain challenges with implementation. One area of challenge is around instructional materials. Members of the subcommittee shared a desire for ODE to produce an approved instructional materials list that meets the guidance requirements regarding culturally and linguistically responsive digital instructional materials.

Finally, members of the committee brought up concerns with the current policies that are included in the guidance. They noted that while the guidance does not introduce new policy, as many of the current policies were designed for brick and mortar settings, for the guidance to be effective, the associated policies would need to be updated. This includes attendance, instructional time, and instructional materials policies.

Task #2: Support the development of additional rubrics and tools associated with the guidance.

The subcommittee spent the majority of time within their small group discussions reviewing examples of other rubrics (e.g. [High School Success Eligibility Requirement Rubric](#), [3-Point Rubric for iNACOL's National Standards for Quality Courses](#), [Instructional Strategies for Virtual Learning: A Companion Tool to the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric](#), [NSU Tech Rubric Based on ISTE Standards](#), and [Cognia Performance Standards K-12 and Postsecondary Institutions](#)) in order to identify structure and content that would be appropriate and meaningful for the companion rubrics. Several attributes were identified as being important to include within the development of the Online and Remote Learning Rubrics including the following:

- It is important to frame the rubrics as a progress in order to value both process and progress.
- Including definitions throughout the rubric is essential for ensuring there is a shared understanding of terms.
- Rather than only including descriptions of each level, it is important to also include strategies to create support for schools and districts.

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- It is important that the rubrics are supportive of a variety of instructional models (e.g. synchronous, bichronous, and asynchronous), as well as applicable to district schools, charter schools, and alternative schools.
- It is vital that the rubrics and associated tools are connected with other requirements for example, accreditation and Aligning for Student Success.

Given the importance of ensuring that the rubrics and associated tools created were meaningful for schools, the committee spent extensive time ideating over what should be included, particular descriptors for each indicator, and examples of associated practices. The rubrics are still in draft form, as developing strong and equitable rubrics is a time-consuming and delicate task, but the goal will be to continue work on the rubrics throughout the spring and summer of 2023 in order to release an early version in August 2023.

Questions for Further Consideration from Subcommittee Members

- How will ODE support professional development associated with the guidance to ensure that school leaders and operators and district personnel know how to use the guidance effectively?
- How or when will the ODE systems align to this guidance for online schools for example Division 22?
- How can the guidance be connected to other work that online and remote schools are already required to complete to ensure that the process is meaningfully moving toward continuous improvement e.g. Aligning for Student Success and accreditation?
- Will there be any additional accountability to ensure school and district fidelity of the implementation of the Online and Remote Learning Guidance? If there are accountability measures, will ODE also offer a commensurate increase in support and guidance for online and remote learning programs?
- How will the guidance change as statutory changes occur over time? Will it be timely responsive to such law revisions?

Attendance Policy Subcommittee

Purpose of Subcommittee

Attendance has been a top concern and priority for the members of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee and many other educators and families connected with online and remote learning. This subcommittee was formed to review existing policies, engage in research around

other state's policies, and continue discussion and ideation of attendance policy concepts for future consideration.

Task #1: Identify Priorities and Challenges with Current Policy

The subcommittee engaged in various discussions of current policy, practice, and explored other state policies for remote and online attendance.

Subcommittee Priorities

- Attendance policy should support flexibility in program design from school to school and between grade levels.
- Attendance policy should support flexibility for students to support all levels of student independence.
- Attendance policy should be shifted from presence to engagement.
- Attendance policy should support meaningful, rather than forced interactions with teachers.

Challenges with Current Policies

- Each online and remote school in Oregon is unique and uses different systems and mechanisms to account for attendance. Some schools record attendance in live lessons, others have teachers or staff record contact with students, and other schools use Google forms to gather responses to daily attendance quizzes or questions. A number of online schools utilize asynchronous learning modules where students do not have regular interaction with live teachers. The current policies only allow attendance to count when the student has interaction with the teacher.
- Many students and families who choose an online or remote school do not think daily attendance is meaningful or helpful. They are often selecting an online or remote school because of the flexibility and autonomy offered by the educational program
- Many online and remote school leaders think tracking student engagement with the course, progress in the course, or course completion is a better measure of a student's attendance. They also report that it is very difficult and time-intensive to ensure reciprocal student-teacher communication for attendance on a daily basis.

Task #2: Develop draft attendance policy concepts for review by ODE

The subcommittee also set forth to develop policy concepts to inform future decision making and consideration. Below are three attendance policy concepts developed by members of the Attendance Policy Concept Subcommittee.

Attendance Criteria Options (“Menu”)

Each online and remote school could develop an attendance policy including a minimal set of criteria from a menu of options. The policies would be approved by the local school board for district authorized school and district-sponsored charter schools and by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Each policy would include measures of accountability to ensure transparency, efficient reporting, and effectively integrated with ODE’s attendance accounting codes. Policies would be approved on a multi-year cycle with requirements to evaluate effectiveness.

Options to consider for this concept include:

- *Academic progress or completion of work*
- *Time engaging with the LMS*
- *Credits earned*
- *Weekly tracking vs daily*
- *Track students separately when completing work but not checking-in*
- *Student-specific schedule of meetings with teachers*

Each option would need to be very clearly defined by the school. ODE may need some parameters on what can be counted.

Daily Engagement

Add student engagement with the LMS or learning modules or progress in a course to the current policy.

Clarify Current Policy

Expand or clarify definitions throughout and provide further guidance on how schools can design and implement programs that comply with the current policy.

Possible Areas for Clarification:

- *“Meaningful”*
- *“Two-Way”*
- *Examples of student-teacher communication*
- *Guidance narrative about instructional time vs. attendance in terms of students who need more or less time*
- *Guidance and examples of teacher feedback on student work*

Additionally, the subcommittee discussed the link between attendance policies and funding which creates complexity if changes to the system are proposed and elevates the importance of accuracy at the school level.

Questions for Further Consideration from Subcommittee Members

1. Is attendance an indicator of success for online schools?

2. Should there be requirements for online schools to ensure type or amount of student-teacher engagement?
3. Can we compile examples of how schools code, collect, and process attendance data to provide as examples for other schools?
4. Should any attendance flexibility be extended to alternative schools and programs as well?

Future Actions

The last two years have been a time of expansive growth for online and remote learning and a powerful learning experience for online and remote school leaders and educators – as it has been for the cross-office team at ODE leading this work. Over the next 12-18 months, the Department’s work includes a continued focus on data analysis to inform policy and understanding of online and remote schools in Oregon, continued iteration and communication of the Online and Remote Learning Guidance, and additional discussion of attendance policy.

Data Analysis & Communication

Over the course of the 2023-24 school year, ODE will shift focus to collecting and analyzing data related to online and remote learning in order to get a more clear picture of the landscape across the state and inform future action. This will include both qualitative and quantitative data through utilizing established data collection processes as well as engaging in voluntary school visits and facilitating focus groups with educators, students, and families. One recommendation from the committee is to better distinguish in data reporting online *schools* and *programs* as well as how remote, non-virtual schools are reflected in reporting.

Suggested Actions:

- ODE to provide clear instructions to all schools on how to update their virtual status.
- ODE to provide technical assistance to schools interested in updating their virtual status.
- ODE to update Data Snapshot with 2022-23 school year and additional schools once virtual status has been updated.

Online and Remote Learning Guidance

ODE will update the Online and Remote Learning Guidance in summer of 2023 given the feedback provided by the Remote Learning Advisory Committee.

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Additionally, as the rubrics that were being developed by the Online and Remote Learning Guidance subcommittee are not yet complete, ODE offered the opportunity for current Remote Learning Advisory Committee members to serve on a workgroup to continue supporting the department in the development and refining of the rubrics with the goal of releasing by Spring 2024.

Suggested Actions:

- ODE to update the Online and Remote Learning Guidance on the basis of feedback
- ODE to convene a work group composed of current members of the Remote Learning Advisory Committee interested in continuing work on the rubrics.
- ODE to publish rubrics associated with the Online and Remote Learning Guidance and provide professional development and training to school and district leaders and interested educators.

Attendance

As attendance continues to be a point of interest for educators and families connected with online and remote learning, the cross-office team leading this work at ODE will share the attendance policy concepts with others at the agency in order to refine and develop action steps. Depending on the outcome of internal conversations, ODE will facilitate engagement opportunities with educators, students, families, and community members regarding the attendance policy concepts in order to ensure that there is broad and deep feedback from partners across the state.

Suggested Actions:

- ODE to share the attendance policy concepts with others in the agency, including executive leadership, to get feedback.
- ODE to develop an engagement plan to get feedback from the community on current attendance policy and attendance policy concepts.