

PARENT GUIDE

for

ONLINE LEARNING



K-8
District Shared Services
Full-Time Virtual Program

<https://www.lcec-sc.org>

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INTRODUCTION



Low Country Virtual is a collaborative effort of multiple school districts in South Carolina that have partnered to offer a high-quality, full-time, virtual program for students.

Low Country Virtual has utilized the National Standards for Quality (NSQ)- the gold standard for online courses, programs, and teaching in the design of its virtual program.

This guide has been prepared for parents, counselors, school staff, and others who are helping students decide whether online learning is a good option for them.

This document is organized to provide the following information:

- Online learning opportunities with Low Country Virtual,
- Characteristics of successful online learners,
- Preparation for Success,
- Request to Enroll Process, and
- Resources & Frequently Asked Questions.



WHY ONLINE LEARNING?

There are many reasons why students and their families choose online learning. The Foundation for Blended and Online Learning (2017) published a report on why students choose blended and online schools. Typically these reasons fall into three broad categories:


- Academics
- Health
- Flexibility in Schedule

Additionally, students report that online learning provides opportunities for personalization, flexibility in schedules, and teacher support. The following list from Michigan Virtual & Next Generation Learning Challenges identifies the reasons that more students than ever before are choosing online instruction.

- Personalized to my needs and learning goals. When students select their courses, they take greater ownership.
- Flexible so that I can try different ways to learn. Online learning allows scheduling to accommodate health, athletic, job, and family circumstances.
- Interactive and engaging to draw me in. Students meet people outside their community in a safe environment, and multimedia used in online learning provides different ways of learning.

Students do better when they can go at their own pace, on their own time, when they have some choice over their learning strategies, and when materials enable them to engage deeply and critically with course content.

Restarting and Reinventing School: In the Time of COVID and Beyond, Learning Policy Institute

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- Relevant to the life I'd like to lead. Students gain more experience using the 21st-century technology tools used in college and in the workplace.
 - Paced by my own progress measured against goals I understand. Students can move faster or slower through assignments and track their own progress toward their goals.
 - Constantly informed by different ways of demonstrating and measuring my progress. Educational technology can measure and share student progress quickly.
 - Collaborative with faculty, peers, and others, unlimited by proximity. Students can access learning materials and resources – including local, state, and national experts – using online communication tools.
 - Responsive and supportive when I need extra help. Communicating outside the typical school day is supported by the online learning culture. Many students – and teachers – report they spend more time interacting online than in the face-to-face classroom.
 - Challenging but achievable, with opportunities to become an expert in an area of interest. Online learning reinforces lifelong learning skills and promotes information literacy and communication skills as well as thinking and problem-solving skills.
 - Available to me as much as it is to every other student. Online learning can direct the talents of some of the most skilled educators to the most underserved populations. A zip code does not have to determine learning options anymore.

DEFINITIONS & TERMS



Virtual Learning -

Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the Internet. Virtual learning connects quality teachers to students in rigorous, interactive, and information-rich courses across grades K-12.

Asynchronous Instruction -

Asynchronous instruction is built around digital content, online discussions, and other tools and materials that students access at the time and pace that they choose.

Synchronous Instruction -

Online learning in which the participants interact at the same time. The instructor utilizes video platforms to deliver real-time instruction in the same space to connect with learners.

Teacher of Record -

This is the person who holds the appropriate teaching certification and is responsible for certifying the final grade for the course.

Learning Management System -

The technology platform through which students access online courses and resources. All classroom resources can be found here and students will submit online work in the LMS. The platform allows teachers to host various types of learning materials in one centralized location, helping them to streamline their workloads and better plan ahead future lessons.

School of Record-

The home school collects student information and awards credits for courses or programs that students have taken. The school of record will certify the final grades for all courses that students take.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

The focus of online learning is the demonstration of content mastery. In an online learning environment, students will be engaged in targeted, instructional support to achieve mastery of South Carolina standards. As such, the content will be based on grade-level and provided in a flexible and adaptive learning environment.

The following characteristic should be considered when placing students in an online course/program.

The student can read and write at grade level and effectively communicate through writing.

- Online courses are usually reading intensive. Students need to comprehend information from text and apply it to assignments.
- A significant amount of communication in an online classroom is written. It is critical that students have good reading skills and feel comfortable expressing themselves in writing.
- The student must comprehend grade-level content and be able to ask for help when needed.
- Students are able to ask for help as needed or have appropriate accommodations to support the student when help is needed.



CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

The student is motivated to learn.

- Self-motivation is critical. The student must be self-motivated and has demonstrated that he/she has a commitment to online learning.

The student understands the rigor and demands of online learning.

- Online courses offer the same content and rigor as courses in the face-to-face classroom. They are flexible and convenient, but not easier. The student should be a self-directed learner who does not require real-time feedback from an adult regarding basic directions and next steps in learning new material.

The student uses effective time management skills.

- To be successful, the student must have regularly scheduled time to study and the self-discipline and/or support needed to stick to this schedule. This often requires balancing competing priorities between online courses and outside activities

The student is organized.

- The student sets up a dedicated learning environment for attending classes and studying. Establishing a routine for classes and homework is an important step towards being successful.



CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

The student values and pursues success in their online classes.

- Successful online students demonstrate strong motivation and commitment. This requires that students be active participants in all course activities, including class discussions and other assignments.
- Successful online students are typically very determined students who like to set their own goals and challenge themselves to meet them.

The student has strong support at home.

- Students need strong and consistent support.
- Support from home will be very important as the student will need to balance competing priorities for time and will face frequent deadlines. Students are far more likely to succeed if they have encouragement from adults who support their efforts.
- Elementary students will need parents to be more hands-on and involved in guiding and assisting with projects and school work that may be completed both on and away from the computer. This onsite supervision is critical in the early years while students in older grades begin to work more independently.
- Students will need to be able to upload completed assignments in the virtual learning system, a working printer or device that can be used to scan/ take a photo and upload assignments is required.



CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

The student has access to appropriate technology and the internet.

- Online learning applications and programs should be readily available and understood. Students who are willing and able to learn new programs will have a higher likelihood of succeeding in their online courses.





MAKING THE DECISION

CONSIDERATIONS & SUPPORT

When considering an online learning environment for your child, there are some key factors that you will want to review.

- What are the characteristics of successful online students? Does my child possess these characteristics?
- Do the program's website and student handbook have information regarding student, parent, and school responsibilities and expectations?
- Does the virtual program utilize information to determine how prepared students are to learn online?
- What kinds of training and support are provided to parents/guardians?

- What kinds of training and support are provided to the staff so that they are equipped to support my child?
- If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, what is the level of support the child needs?
- Are the accommodations in my child's IEP or 504 plan required to be successful and access the core curriculum available in a virtual learning environment?

Low Country Virtual K-8 is a full-time virtual program that offers shared services across several districts. Low Country Virtual is governed and led by your child's school district. Enrolling in Low Country Virtual allows students to remain enrolled in his or her home school and school district allowing him or her to participate in extracurricular activities if qualified and he/ she chooses to do so.

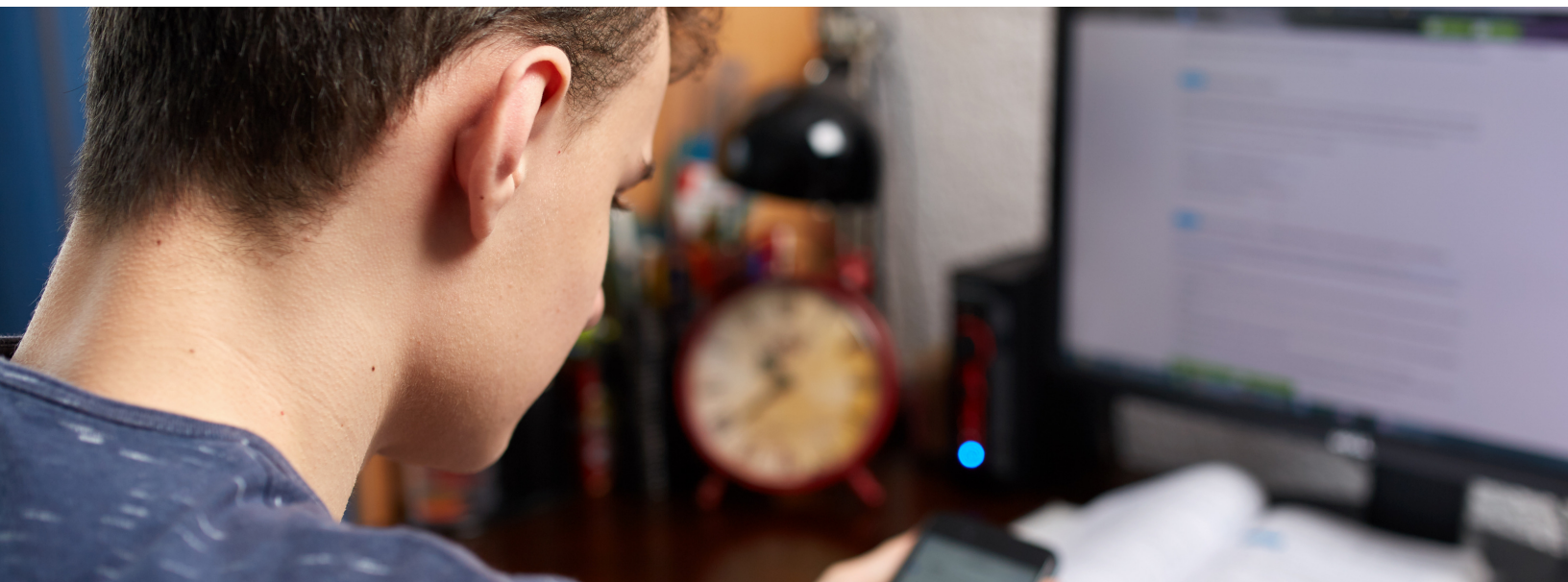
MAKING THE DECISION

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETES & NCAA ELIGIBILITY

Middle school athletes playing on high school sports teams must pay close attention when enrolling in both full-time virtual programs and supplemental courses when taking courses for high school credit. Students who may be planning on attending a Division I or Division II school after high school graduation need to make sure that the high-school credit-bearing courses in which they enroll meet the NCAA requirements. Work with your base-school guidance counselor and your high school athletic director.

BEFORE YOU MAKE THE FINAL DECISION

- Ask questions.
- Consider your student's readiness and potential for success in online learning.
- Consider the support your student may need.
- Participate in webinars or overviews offered by your child's district and Low Country Virtual.
- Allow the student to weigh in on the decision.



TECHNOLOGY & INTERNET

Low Country Virtual plans to utilize a robust learning management system (LMS) to organize student courses.

Participating districts believe that all students enrolling in Low Country Virtual should have equitable access to computers and internet connectivity. Students will have access to computers, and if needed internet hot spots, via their home school district and school. Once the LMS and course content is selected, specifications for devices will be shared among participant districts.

Internet tech support will be provided by the home district for each student enrolled in Low Country Virtual through their standard Help Desk procedures.



NEXT STEPS

MY CHILD IS A GREAT CANDIDATE - NOW WHAT

Request to Enroll Process

As a parent/guardian, your role in helping your student decide if online learning is the most effective way for him/her to learn is extremely important. Parents/guardians can expect to support their child in gaining the maximum benefit from his/her online learning experience and determine if a virtual path helps to meet the educational goals of the family and the student.

Parents/guardians of virtual learning students can expect to:

- Make arrangements for regular access to a connected device with stable internet,
- Provide a place for students to interact with their virtual coursework,
- Assist in maintaining an attendance and study schedule,
- Support the development of digital citizenship and technology fluency,
- Monitor the student progress, and
- Advocate for communication.
- Serve as the child's learning coach for elementary-age students.

In order to enroll in Low Country Virtual, your student must have approval from his/her designated school of attendance. If you are new to the area, you must enroll at your designated home school and receive approval from the school to attend this virtual program. The steps to request enrollment are outlined below.

STEPS TO REQUEST TO ENROLL

- Contact your child's school or visit your district's website for information on how to request enrollment.
- A representative from your child's home district may contact you to discuss your request,
- You (and your child if 13 or older) may be required to attend a meeting at your home school for further evaluation of enrollment eligibility criteria.
 - Low Country Virtual program enrollment for students who have an IEP or 504 will be reviewed by the home school's IEP or 504 team prior to students being enrolled in the Low Country Virtual program. The IEP or 504 team should discuss if FAPE can be provided in an online program then determine appropriate accommodations necessary for the student to be successful in the online program.
 - Once enrollment is approved by your home district your enrollment request will be sent to Low Country Virtual for processing.
- Upon enrollment, parents and students will be asked to sign a Low Country Virtual Parent/Student Agreement that will include an acceptable use agreement covering responsible use of devices and the internet.

RESOURCES

PARENT CHECKLIST FOR STUDENT SUCESS

A simple to use checklist to
determine if online learning is
right for your child

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Answers to the most frequently
asked questions

HELPING YOUR CHILD GET ORGANIZED

How you can support your
learner's organization and
preparation for the online
environment. - *Common Sense
Education*

SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Links for sample schedules for
primary, elementary, and middle
school students

PARENT SUPPORT CHECKLIST

A checklist to use to support your
learner at home when enrolled in
a virtual program

ACCEPTANCE GUIDELINES SCHOOL / COUNSELOR

A checklist for schools /
counselors to use when helping
families decide if online learning
is right for their student

PARENT RESOURCES

A list of resources to learn more
about virtual schools and
programs

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

Resources that focus on
supporting parents of students
who are enrolled in online
learning

LOW COUNTRY
Virtual 

COLLABORATING DISTRICTS



**Dorchester School
District Two**

Leading the Way
Every Student
Every Day

