

Policy #1- Shelby County Schools

Where I found the policy- Course Module readings

What I like about this policy-

- a) policy allows a gradual release of the program over the course of four years.
- b) eligibility requirements- specifically reading complex text at or above grade level, cumulative high school GPA of 3.0 or higher, no more than 5 unexcused absences during the previous school year, have access to adequate technology, and demonstrate school appropriate behavior
- c) outlined expectations while in the course- specifically communicate regularly with teachers, be aware of and meet deadlines, and login daily to work on assignments
- d) This statement- “Students who exhibit academic, behavioral, or attendance issues may be withdrawn from virtual courses and will be expected to complete those courses at their base school.” Students should not feel they are “off the hook” just because they take virtual classes.
- e) student and parent signature page outlining expectations while enrolled in the program- students sign knowing effective time management, communication, and a strong work ethic are crucial to the virtual school process. Parents sign to verify appropriate technology and transportation are available.

What I don't like about this policy-

- a) I do not understand why one of the eligibility requirements is that the student had to be enrolled in Shelby County Schools the year prior. I'm sure there is a reason for that but I feel some students may have to move school systems because of family jobs or other circumstances beyond their control and it doesn't seem like an equitable decision if they meet all other requirements.
- b) I like the statement about removal from the program but feel the process should have more of a measurable accountability instead of the broad word “issues”. I feel there should be some sort of write up process in place.

What questions I still have-

- a) Will teachers require students to come to school for all quizzes and tests since the Academic Integrity Statement indicates tests should be taken in a proctored environment? If so, is that truly a virtual school? If not, how will the school keep students from working together/looking up answers?
- b) Why should students need to provide reliable transportation if they are in a virtual school. If they cannot provide this, is the program equitable?

Did I feel like the district had best practice in mind when they developed their policy?

Yes, I do. Although the plan could be more thorough in some areas with measurable outcomes, I feel Shelby County Schools had best practice in mind with the various expectations and policies put in place for virtual schools.

Did they leave room for growth in the future with regard to virtual schooling?

Yes; the gradual release plan allowed for “full offerings available” at the end of Year 4. “Full offerings” is a broad statement, leaving room for growth.

Is the plan fully developed?

I feel the plan could be further developed with more specific language listed in regard to student removal of the program. I think the plan should be updated after the Year 4 rollout to include the new offerings.

Policy #2- Sylacauga City Schools

Where I found the policy- I found this policy on the Sylacauga City Schools Website under “Policy Manual”. I had to scan the Table of Contents to look for the Virtual School Policy.

What I like about this policy-

- a) The policy specifies that all courses will be accredited, based off ALCOS, and taught by teachers with appropriate certification.
- b) Gives eligibility requirements- specifically minimal GPA, access to Internet outside of school, and maintaining course progression.
- c) Statement about completing specified standardized and non-standardized testing at the school

What I don't like about this policy-

- a) I feel the policy could be more specific. Example: maintaining course progression, is this up to the facilitator?
- b) The attendance policy seems unclear to me. Students are exempt from rules that apply to traditional instruction, but in the testing requirements section they are required at the request of the instructor to come to the school for assessments.

- c) There is nothing that highlights constant communication as an expectation.

What questions I still have-

- a) If students are required to take assessments at school, will transportation be provided? If not, that should be specified in the policy as an expectation.
- b) What happens if students do not maintain course progression or their GPA drops?
- c) Is there anything for parents/students to sign to understand the policy before they take these classes?

Did I feel like the district had best practice in mind when they developed their policy?

Somewhat- I feel the language was vague in some places and some things were forgotten.

Did they leave room for growth in the future with regard to virtual schooling?

Yes. Since not much was specific, there is room for growth in regard to virtual schooling. The Scope and Delivery section of the policy leaves room for growth of the program.

Is the plan fully developed?

I do not feel the plan is fully developed.