

Sorting through Online Learning Options: A Guide for Parents



It is estimated that there are over one million K-12 enrollments in online courses across the country. The number of online courses and providers continues to grow at a steady rate each year (a staggering 30% annually), providing scores of options for today's students.

With all of the benefits that online learning provides to students and their families, many parents find themselves unsure of where to turn or even what questions to ask when sorting through the various online learning options.

In an effort to assist parents with finding the right online program for their student, below is a list of questions parents should use as a guide:

- 1.** Have you verified in advance that the school to which you wish to have the online grades/credit transferred will accept them?
- 2.** Is the program that interests you accredited by a recognized regional accrediting agency?
- 3.** What are the credentials of the teachers who teach the online courses?

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (*iNACOL*) is uniquely poised to assist students, parents and educators in navigating the myriad online learning choices. *iNACOL* is the only non-profit organization specifically focused on the advancement and quality implementation of K-12 online learning.

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4. How much interaction will the teachers have with students; is the program teacher-led or more computer-aided instruction?
5. What are the costs involved? Are there costs beyond the tuition such as materials fees?
6. Can your child accelerate through the course if he or she is capable? Can your child start the course at any point in the year?
7. How is assessment handled in the course? Is it all online? Will you be required to go to a physical facility to have your child participate in state assessments?
8. Does the provider require your child to be online at certain times of the week?
9. If you and/or your child do not like the course, can you drop the course without a grade penalty or payment penalty?
10. Upon completion, what will you receive to show that a grade was earned and will they also send a record to your child's school?
11. How long has the virtual school been operating and can they give you a list of the schools, districts, and/or states that use their program?



There are additional considerations that one may want to explore when selecting an online program. For more information regarding how *iNACOL* can help you, please contact Allison Powell, Vice President, at apowell@inacol.org.