

September 1, 2009

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN)

Senate Bill 1788, passed by the 80th Texas Legislature in 2007, established a state virtual network to provide supplemental, online courses for Texas students. Courses are provided by Texas school districts, open enrollment charter schools, Education Service Centers, and institutions of higher education. The Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) began offering courses for grades 9-12 in January 2009. All high school courses offered through the TxVSN are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as well as the iNACOL National Standards of Quality for Online Courses. All high school courses are led by an instructor that is Texas-certified in the course subject area and grade level and has completed professional development on effective online instruction.

During the 2008-2009 school year, districts paid for the online courses provided by TxVSN; however, as a part of House Bill (HB) 3646, the 81st Texas Legislature created an allotment to fund courses provided through the TxVSN. If a student successfully completes an online course provided through the TxVSN, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will provide a payment of \$400 per semester course to the district providing the course and \$80 to the district in which that student is enrolled. The online course must be part of the student's normal course load and meet one of the graduation requirements. In addition, a separate source of funds will supply the same funding for online courses provided above a student's normal course load. *Districts will be paid half of the \$400 for initial start up costs and the remainder after the TEA receives verification from Central Operations that the courses were successfully completed. Districts are not allowed to receive this dedicated funding to serve their own students. While some districts may have different schedules, the agency will be proposing a rule to define a normal course load as seven credits based on a seven period day.

There are course capacity limits with the TxVSN that will limit the number of courses available during the 2009 – 2010 school year. Students may take a maximum of two online courses per semester, and enrollment priorities have been established that enable the network to ensure equitable opportunities for district and open enrollment charter school students. The intent of HB 3646 is to expand a variety of course offerings and provide students with online learning opportunities that would not otherwise be provided at their local district. The TxVSN can assist districts with shortages in highly qualified teachers, credit recovery, providing college courses, and accelerated instruction. Priority will be given to students that need to take courses required for high school graduation.

After the completion of the TxVSN application process, districts and open enrollment charter schools may begin registering students for courses beginning September 8, 2009. Each district and open enrollment charter school superintendent or designee must complete an annual agreement and a needs assessment, activate participating campuses serving students in grade 9-12, and approve the registration of TxVSN site coordinators. In addition, the TxVSN is providing a tool for the pre-assessment of student readiness for online learning. It is strongly recommended that this tool be used to identify the level of support needed to ensure students successfully complete online courses. The Site Coordinator provides the academic approval for student enrollments and actually registers students for TxVSN courses. The Site Coordinator will have time to meet with each student to explain the course rigor, review course information and complete a student agreement. The TxVSN Course Catalog will continue to expand as additional provider courses are approved by TXVSN Course Review.

To assist with the planning for TxVSN online courses, contact Central Operations at 1-866-93TxVSN (1-866-938-9876) or TxVSNCentral@txvsn.org. To start the registration process, go to <http://www.txvsn.org/schoolDistricts/Registration.aspx>.

Sincerely,

Anita Givens
Associate Commissioner
Standards and Programs