



### Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a synopsis from an Illinois School Board Journal article to be published in the July/August edition.

#### *Explore the Potential for Online Learning*

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Today's students naturally incorporate technology into their daily lives, schools are finding innovative ways to blend technology with instruction through quality online learning opportunities.

**What about the quality of courses?** This question focuses on course rigor, examination integrity, and speed of the course. In developing or purchasing courses, it is essential that the course mirrors the traditional face-to-face (FTF) course's learning goals and is aligned to state learning standards.

**How are courses paced?** Some courses can be implemented that are totally self-paced. A second type of course is teacher-directed. In this mode, the teacher plans the course week-by-week, setting homework submission dates, virtual class meeting times, and online discussion deadlines. Within that framework, the student can set his or her own work paces, but the course is more-structured than an "open enrollment, open completion" course. In hybrid courses, students work in a FTF setting as well as online. The course may be split 50/50, with half the time in a traditional classroom and the balance in a computer laboratory setting with teacher supervision, or at home.

**Does online learning lead to reduction in teachers?** Many teachers who have taught online report that teaching electronically is more difficult than FTF. The models of schools that are emerging continue to have approximately the same teacher ratios or student-contact minutes as in a FTF setting.

**Who can be successful online?** According to the research about online learning in high schools, two factors are significant for a student: the student's success in FTF classes and whether the student has a computer with reliable Internet access at home. Framed by strong teacher support, the hybrid model may better suited for credit recovery or remedial classes.

**What about funding this initiative?** In August 2009, Illinois Governor Quinn signed into law Public Act 096-0684, Remote Educational Programs. While the law has several requirements, it will allow districts to count a student's participation in an online course for General State Aid.

### Trends in online Learning

- K-12
  - Michigan and Alabama require one online class for graduation.
  - 2009, 2 million (est.) on-line class enrollments in K-12.
  - Growing at 30% per year
- Higher Education:
  - In 2008, 4.6 million students enrolled on-line courses
    - A 17% increase over previous year, yet overall enrollment only increased by 1.2%
  - Over 25% of all students in higher education taking courses in fall 2008.