



Texas Virtual School

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Policies and Procedures Manual

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<http://www.texasvirtualschool.org>

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Texas Virtual School

General Information

Texas Virtual School (TVS) classes operate according to a set calendar but will try to accommodate a school/district as much as possible. The start and ending dates are posted on the TVS website and in the TxVSN catalog next to each course listed. All courses come with a TEKS unit pacing chart and weekly checklists which can be adapted to meet a district's needs.

In order to protect the privacy of students, TVS works through schools and assigned liaisons. The TVS Administrator makes initial contact with the district, teacher, and liaison explaining how the communication processes work including these with parents.

Acceptable Use Policy

TVS is a means to offer students an opportunity to participate in online learning provided through a school/district's sponsorship. Because online learning represents a non-traditional learning experience there are certain expectations for students enrolling in these classes.

Students are expected to comply with the following standards:

1. Appropriate use of the Internet is outlined in the course materials and syllabus; inappropriate use of the Internet will not be tolerated and may result in the loss of a student's rights to participate in the class.
2. Appropriate language and message content is expected at all times (Teachers and TVS Administrator may retrieve and print student work, comments, and messages at anytime).
3. Students are expected to adhere to the following procedures:
 - a. Students must communicate with the teacher on a regular basis
 - b. Students must use course materials in an authorized and appropriate manner
 - c. Students are expected to follow other rules specified by the TVS teacher and their school's acceptable use policy

Students who fail to comply with the above conditions are subject to:

First Offense: The student is given a warning and the local school will be notified of the offense by the instructor and/or the TVS Administrator.

Second Offense: Removed from the course.

Severe Misconduct: The student will be removed from the course without regard to whether this is a first or second offense. (Severe misconduct as defined by the TVS administrator and the school/district's representative on a case by case basis.)

Active and Safe Environment

TVS does its best to ensure all students are enrolled in highly interactive and safe learning environments. To ensure this is the case, TVS:

- Require teachers to respond to students questions within 24 hours
- Require schools to provide a mentor/liaison for each student registered
- Conduct all courses within a password protected interface
- Ensure all interaction is only among students enrolled in that class
- Prohibit email exchange with anyone outside of the course
- Submission of grades is through a private secure location

Advanced Placement (AP)

AP Course Designation

All AP courses offered through TVS are audited by the College Board and are accredited as advanced placement courses. This means the syllabus the instructor is using meets the College Board Requirements for curriculum and resources.

AP Central

AP Central (www.apcentral.collegeboard.com) is the College Board's online home for AP programs. The site is free for all users. Districts should use this site to contact the College Board for any reason.

Designating an AP Coordinator

It is the responsibility of the school and/or district to appoint an AP Coordinator who is responsible for managing the ordering, receipt, distribution, administration, and return of AP Exam materials. The AP Coordinator should be a staff member other than the student's designated liaison.

Obtaining a School Code

Schools must have an active six-digit code to order and administer exams and receive student exam grades. **The school/district is responsible for obtaining its code.** All three (3) College Board programs-SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, and AP-share the same code. If the district is not sure it has a code, or if it is inactive, contact AP Services at 877-274-6474.

Registering with the College Board

During late September, a district should receive a Participation Form and a Participation Survey from the College Board. The school must complete the participation materials and submit these to the College Board no later than November 15. If a district does not receive these materials by late October, contact AP Services at 877-274-6474. These forms must be signed by the school principal and AP Coordinator. AP Coordinators will receive exam ordering information from the College Board via email following registration. Once required forms are submitted, the College Board will provide the AP Coordinator's Manual which includes its policies on administering AP Exams.

Copyright

Materials in all TVS courses are to be utilized for student personal educational needs only. These materials are not to be copied for distribution nor kept as digitized copies on a participant, district, and/or school computer. Failure to comply with these restrictions may hold the participant and/or school liable for copyright infringement.

Course Extension Policy

If TVS, the school and/or district, and the online teacher agree there is a need for an extension for course completion; the school will be charged an additional 50% of the initial registration fee to cover teacher time and effort.

Disaster Recovery Plan

An extensive plan is in place in case of emergency due to either a natural or man-made disaster.

Student Data: At the end of each semester, TVS instructors are required to submit formal grade sheets and entire semester grade reports for each student. This is housed in three (3) places: within a Bb submission area, within the online end-of-year folder, and in hardcopy form for each school. (All grades are kept in a secure location.) A pdf backup will be made at the end of each term and saved in a separate Region 4 online location.

Course Content and Data: After each semester has concluded, each course is archived and saved to a secure location.

Reporting Student Data: due to privacy issues, no student information is sent via public email (unless requested in writing by the enrolling district). All grades are submitted to each designated Liaison through the course itself. TxVSN receives required data through its private, password protected data submission area.

Types of Backups: Failover to new DR site will be effective 3Q2010. Currently, failover to new server using VM System is already hardware redundant via RAID and dual power supply and disparate power sources.

Frequency of Backups: Full backups are made on weekend and incremental during the week.

District Liaison

TVS requires each school/district enrolling a student to provide a liaison. Liaisons serve as the essential bridge between online students and teachers. They help resolve issues, respond to policy or procedural requirements, and arrange for testing security to ensure the integrity of the student's grade. TVS provides a comprehensive fee-based training program to prepare school liaisons for their responsibilities. For more information visit the TVS website at www.texasvirtualschool.org.

Drop Policy

Students are allowed to drop a TxVSN course anytime during the first two weeks of a course session, beginning on the designated start date in the TxVSN catalog, without penalty. After this point in time, students are assigned a

grade which will be sent to their school assigned liaison. TxVSN requires this grade is added to a student's transcript. Students who are registered into an online course directly through TVS will be allowed to drop on a case by case basis.

Inappropriate Language

When a student makes an unacceptable posting or sends an inappropriate message to another student, the school liaison will be contacted by the teacher. The posting will be made 'unavailable' to the class. Students using inappropriate language are subject to the terms of the TVS Acceptable Use Policy.

Grades and Progress Reports

TVS instructors will provide student progress reports and grades to schools/districts. The TVS teacher will coordinate with the liaison for each school/district on grade and progress report schedules. The teacher will send a Blackboard generated report that will include the following:

- Name of Student
- Name of Assignment, Assessment, and/or Activity
- Grade (percentage) of each assessment for that time period
- Total Grade for the grading period

It will be the districts responsibility to adapt this report to meet local formatting requirements.

Parent Contact

Because TVS teachers do not have the ability to determine the identity of a student's parent or legal guardian, the TVS instructor will work with the district's designated liaison with any initial communication with parents. It is up to the school/district to supply the appropriate contact information to the TVS teacher and indicate in writing that it gives formal approval for such communication to take place.

Because of student privacy and for safety reasons, TVS does not deal directly with parents concerning disciplinary or other matters involving local policy. The district should respond to a parent's request based on its (the districts) policies and procedures. The focus on any communication between TVS staff and parents will be the academic success of the student.

PEIMS Reporting

As long as a student is sitting in a classroom receiving face-to-face instruction for a total of four (4) hours (240 minutes) a day and is present for official attendance count the school will receive full ADA funding for that student. If a student takes an online class during any other time on the same day, this funding will NOT be affected. Location of student when taking these courses is not recorded as PEIMS data at this time. TVS courses are recorded by PEIMS as CODE 04 (Internet) on the 415 record as an indicator of course completion. Contact TEA PEIMS Customer Support further info.

PeimsCustomerSupport@tea.state.tx.us

Refund Policy

TVS will refund a school and/or district 60% of the registration fee if a student withdraws during the first 14 days of his/her course. After 14 days, no money will be refunded. Refund requests should be in writing.

TVS is not responsible for providing textbooks or supporting materials outside of the online class. TVS is not responsible for textbook returns or refunds.

Requests for Records and Grades

TVS will comply with record requests made in writing by the school and/or district administration. Due to the nature of online learning management systems (i. e. Blackboard), most information and data required is available at any time to the designated district staff. All grades will be submitted to the assigned district liaison by school/district on an official TVS grade sheet. This is not done on an individual student basis unless requested in advance. How the liaison submits grades to the district is based on district policy.

Students with Disabilities

TVS is committed to provide access to students with disabilities. TVS will comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements by providing information that is modified but is comparable to that which is provided to students without disabilities. School districts must provide TVS instructors information regarding students with modification needs within the first two (2) weeks of class.

Student Orientation

Taking a web-based course will be a necessity for many students. How can districts increase its students' chances of success? TVS offers a one-week orientation (Skills for Success in Online Learning) that can be completed before an academic class begins. This fee-based mini-course is designed to help students become comfortable in the web-based classroom before they begin their classes. Students who take this course will:

- Navigate Blackboard platform
- Post and respond to discussion board topics
- Deliver and retrieve documents electronically
- Effectively manage their time in a virtual environment
- Practice expected online behavior
- Take an online practice test
- Receive tips on how to be a successful online student

For more information, visit the TVS website: <http://www.texasvirtualschool.org>

Student Privacy

All TVS participant's information and data is subject to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and other legal provisions, Region 4 and TVS (student/liasion/teacher) have a duty to maintain privacy of all such participant information and records in conformity with the requirements of FERPA and other applicable law. TVS shall not release such records, information, and/or data to any third party.

Student Safety

Texas teachers, including TVS teachers, are bound by law to report suspicion of abuse, and other incidence of student endangerment. TVS teachers must report these instances to the appropriate state

authorities (Child Protection Services) and then notify the TVS Administrator through private communication (not via public email). The TVS Administrator will notify the appropriate school authority and maintain a record of the incident.

Student Success

TVS defines student success as a student who earns a score of 70% or above for a semester average based on class activities and assessments that reflect basic understanding of the course's learning objectives.

Technology Contingency Plan

TVS and Region 4 (administrating agent and server administrator) has a disaster contingency plan in place. However, in the case of potential disruption (i.e. hurricane), TVS will ask its teachers to do the following:

- Download their grade books
- Archive and save their courses to their computers
- Give students one week of seat time work
- Contact TVS Administrator or delegated alternate as soon as the event has past (if teacher is in the affected area)
- Contact the school liaison as soon as the event has past

It is also the school's responsibility to let TVS and/or the instructor know when there is an unexpected occurrence that will cause an interference in student connectivity to his/her online class. The teacher will make every effort to allow the student to make-up work missed.

Technology Requirements

Minimal Technology Hardware/Software includes:

- Platform: Mac OSX or Window 2000, NT, SP, or equivalent operating system
- Hardware: Pentium 4, Celeron and AMD processor running at 350+ MHz MB or RAM, 5 G of free disk space
- Microsoft Office 97 or higher
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Mozilla Flock or Apple Safari
- 56 bps modem
- Microphone and speakers (headphones with microphone preferred)
- Web Cam optional
- Printing capability

Textbooks and other Required Materials

In the event an online class requires a textbook and/or other related equipment to successfully complete the class, it will be the district's responsibility to provide these materials. It is the district's responsibility to provide computers and Internet access to its students. It will be the district's responsibility to make sure all

plug-in's and application programs necessary to complete course work is provided and to offer basic technology support to its online student. TVS will make every effort to help the district locate and solve connectivity issues. A listing of required textbooks and instructional materials is located on the TVS website. <http://www.texasvirtualschool.org>

University Interscholastic League (UIL) Student Eligibility

The UIL opinion stated that since an online course taken through TVS is done through a student's local high school; the No Pass No Play rules do apply (TEC 33.081). The online course should be included when considering a student's eligibility.

Information concerning online courses may be located in the TEA & UIL Side by Side (2009-2010) Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities (revised August 2009), or by following this link:

http://www.uil.utexas.edu/policy/pdf/09_10sidebyside.pdf (see page 7, number 16).