

GENERAL GUIDANCE: STATEWIDE CATALOG ELECTRONIC COURSES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Texas Education Code (TEC), §30A.007(b), Local Policy on Electronic Courses, assigns a student's admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee the responsibility of determining whether or not an electronic (online) course provided through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) will meet the academic needs of a student with a disability.

TEC, §30A.007(b):

“For purposes of a policy adopted under Subsection (a), the determination of whether or not an electronic course will meet the needs of a student with a disability shall be made by the student's admission, review, and dismissal committee in a manner consistent with state and federal law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Section 1400 et seq.) and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Section 794).”

An informed decision about online learning

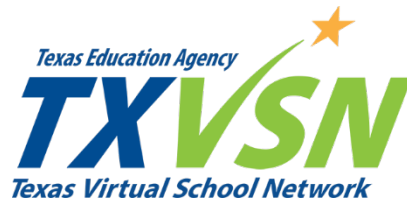
With this in mind, students, parents, and other ARD committee members will need to thoroughly research the available TXVSN catalog courses prior to a student's ARD meeting. This research will allow the ARD committee to make an informed decision about an online course and the educational appropriateness of this academic setting for a particular student and his or her particular academic needs.

When should the course identification process take place?

Identification of a potential online catalog course for use by a student with a disability might occur during transition planning for the student's transition into high school as a way to satisfy a graduation requirement or meet an appropriate graduation endorsement. Other times when online courses might typically be identified for use by a student with a disability include the semester before or the weeks just prior to the student's enrollment in the online course.

What are the next steps?

For purposes of example, let's assume a student with special needs wants to take a Health course through the TXVSN course catalog. As soon as the online course is identified, and prior to the ARD meeting, the TXVSN site coordinator should refer to the TXVSN statewide course catalog and review all available Health courses in the appropriate upcoming academic semester. A complete review of each available Health course includes printing out and reading all information provided under 'Course Details' for each individual Health course available in the appropriate upcoming academic semester. Additionally, any other available documents listed by the TXVSN course provider should also be printed, i.e., course syllabus, pacing chart, welcome letter, introductory information, etc. It may also be helpful to view and print out the student and parent survey results published on the TXVSN website. The site coordinator needs to be prepared to share this information with the ARD committee by having additional copies of these documents to share with all ARD committee members.



Contacting the TXVSN catalog course provider

The site coordinator may need to call the TXVSN catalog course provider contact after reviewing the student's current Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the course objectives and assignments. A contact person for each TXVSN course provider is listed on the 'Course Details' page for each course, including phone number and email address. This phone call will provide an opportunity for the site coordinator to ask the TXVSN course provider about the methods that might be utilized to meet the requirements of the student's current IEP. Notes should be taken during the conversation to document examples of modifications and accommodations that can be accomplished and are currently available in a specific TXVSN course. Noted examples of modifications and accommodations that are and are not currently available in a specific TXVSN course should be provided to the ARD committee during the ARD meeting. Any other items deemed worthy of note by the site coordinator during the phone call should be documented and shared with the ARD committee.

Orientation to online learning

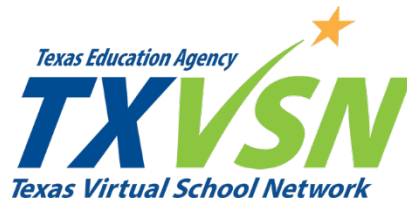
All students are highly encouraged to take some form of a pre-assessment for online learning readiness prior to taking an online course. A pre-assessment can provide additional information to the ARD committee about the student's knowledge, aptitude, and skills in the world of online learning. A free student orientation to online learning entitled 'Clue In' is currently available through the TXVSN at <http://cluein.txvsn.org>.

The ARD meeting

At the ARD meeting, an important person to consider inviting is the technology coordinator or campus technology liaison. By participating in the ARD, a member of the technology department can become aware of any additional technology or support needed from their department. Additionally, with this highlighted focus on technology, the student and parent can gain an awareness of the level of technology required should the student plan to work on this course from home. For example, does this TXVSN course require a high speed internet connection to view videos or other course components, etc. as opposed to a dial up connection? Any technology upgrades on the home computer would be the responsibility of the parents unless the ARD committee has determined the student will access the course at home, as necessary for a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Post ARD meeting school responsibilities

If the student and the ARD committee decide that taking an online course is an appropriate educational setting for the student, the school of enrollment will still maintain the responsibility for making sure the student's new IEP is implemented. The student's district or open-enrollment charter school is responsible for ensuring that: 1) prompt notification of necessary modifications/accommodations is provided to the TXVSN online teacher; 2) modifications/ accommodations identified in the IEP happen as required; 3) any necessary assistive technology is provided, and, 4) the student's IEP is properly implemented. It is also important to note that some TXVSN course modifications may not be technically possible.



Special provisions may need to be made so that the online teacher has their own signed copy of the IEP which includes the sections pertaining to the online course in which the instructor is teaching the student. As with any face-to-face teacher the student might have, the online teacher needs to receive and sign a copy of the sections of the student's IEP that pertain to the TXVSN course.

Just as with any course in which the student might become unsuccessful, the ARD committee should meet to determine if the IEP goals/objectives and services are sufficient to support this student in this type of academic setting, and then discuss what other supports, if any, need to be added for the successful completion of the TXVSN course.

Dual credit courses

If the course identified is a dual credit course, the site coordinator needs to gather all of the same information for the ARD committee as previously described for a high school course. Additionally, college application information and entrance requirements for the institution of higher education that is offering the course through the TXVSN should also be provided to the ARD committee. If the student meets the college admission requirements and the ARD committee decides that a dual credit course is an appropriate educational setting for the student, the student needs to work closely with his or her high school counselor and register with the college or university that is offering the desired TXVSN course. Students with special needs should also register with the person on the college or university campus who coordinates compliance with Section 504 and Title II or both laws (usually called the Section 504 coordinator, ADA coordinator, or disability services coordinator).

Postsecondary school responsibilities are very different from public high school or open-enrollment charter school responsibilities, even though they all have to follow Section 504 and Title II laws. Additionally, as the student matures academically, academic responsibilities become more the student's responsibility. For additional information on the transition from high school to college or university for students requiring special services, please view the article, [Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities](#).