Virtual Learning Policy Landscape

National Overview

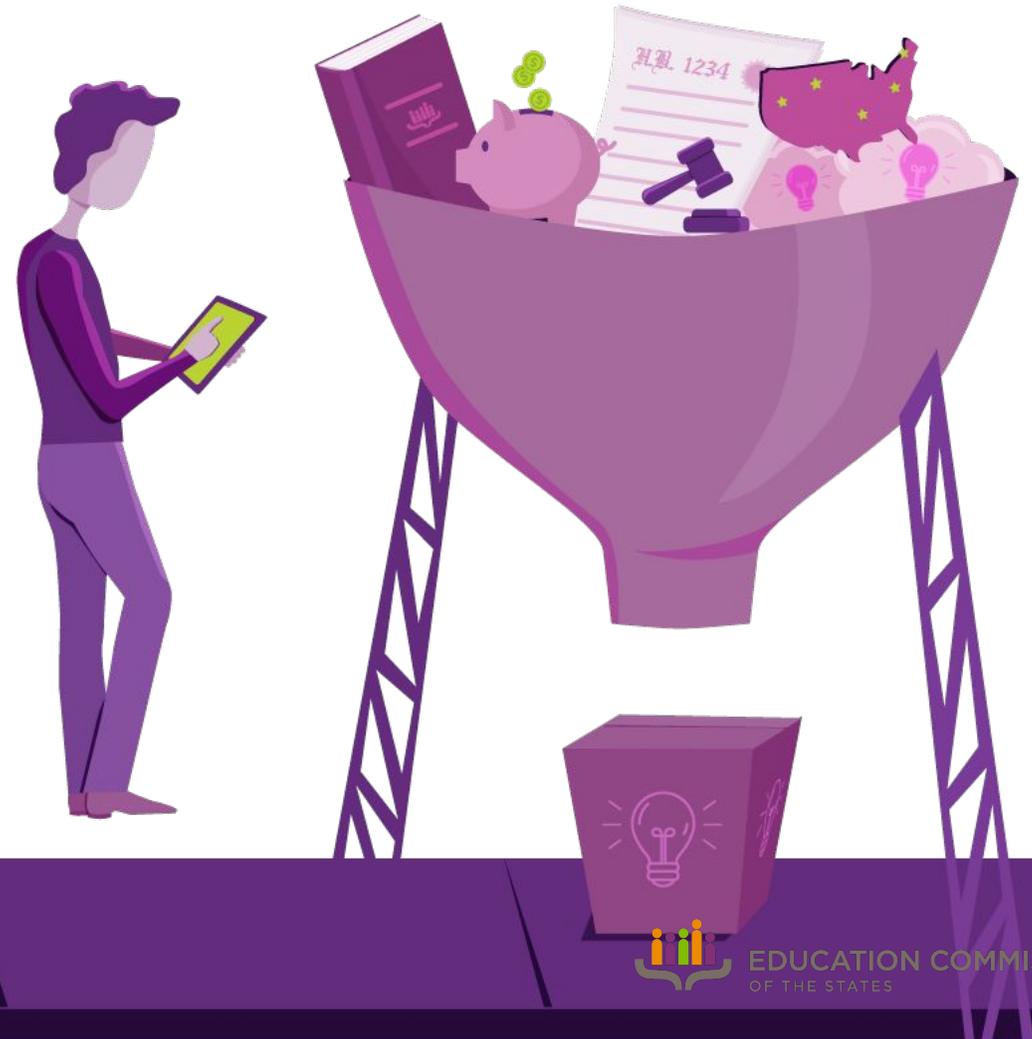EDUCATION COMMISSION
OF THE STATES

INTRODUCTION

Ben Erwin

POLICY ANALYST

Education Commission of the States

Who we are.

The essential, indispensable member of any team addressing education policy.

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What we do.

We believe in the power of learning from experience and we know informed policymakers create better education policy.

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How we do it.

We research, report, convene and counsel.

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Agenda

- Virtual Learning Governance

- Single-District Virtual Learning

- State Policy Options

- Q&A

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Governance
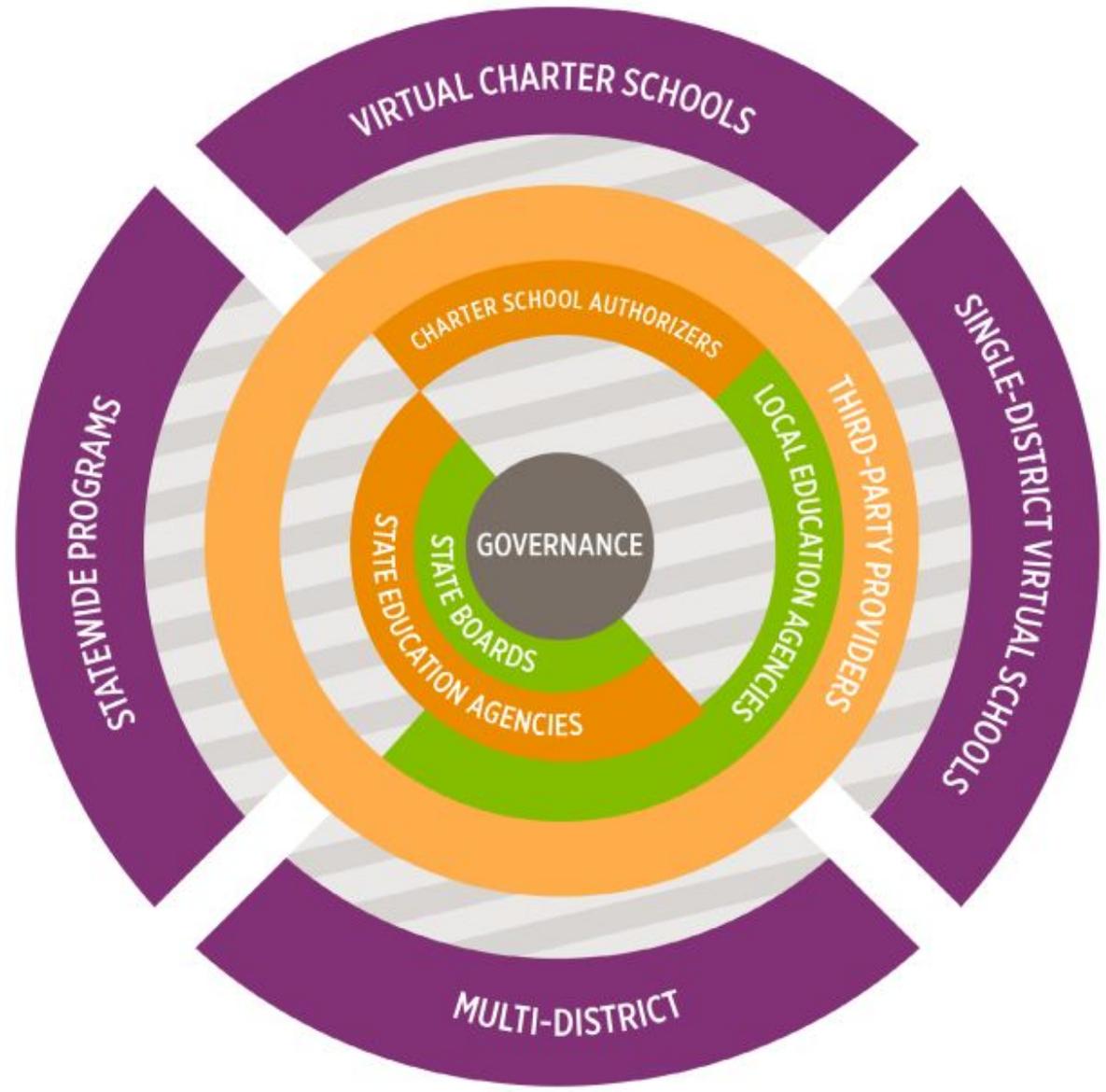
Single-District Virtual Learning

What does it look like?

- Full-time

- Part-time

- Credit Recovery

- Course Access

- Innovative Models

- Remote Learning Days

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Policy Levers

- Local Flexibility

- Student Attendance

- Personalization

Local Flexibility

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Arizona

Alternative Instructional Time Models

- Local board approval.

- <40% virtual instruction.

- Time over funded at 95%.

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Indiana

District Virtual Option

- Limits on virtual instruction.

- No more than 30% of students.

- No more than 50% of the time.

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Nevada

Distance Education Programs

- SEA approval required.

- Differentiated pacing.

- Credit for mastery.

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North Dakota

Learning Continuum

- K-12 competencies.

- Instructional time flexibility.

- Credit for mastery.

Texas

District Virtual Option

- "C" or better accountability rating.

- 10% of students.

- Student attendance and performance criteria.

Student Attendance

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Student Attendance

- **Michigan:** Seat-time Waivers

- **Nevada:** Virtual Attendance

- **Oklahoma:** Virtual Attendance

- **South Carolina:** Synchronous Instruction Requirements

- **Utah:** Learner Validated Enrollment

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Personalization

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Personalization

- **Missouri**: Individual Learning Plans and Progress Monitoring

- **Montana**: Proficiency-Based Progression

- **Ohio**: Credit Flexibility Policy

- **Rhode Island**: Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements

- **Vermont**: Flexible Pathways

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ECS Resources

A Policymaker's Guide to Virtual Schools

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POLICY GUIDE
NOV **2021**

A Policymaker's Guide to Virtual Schools

Ben Erwin

Virtual learning has grown significantly over roughly the last decade and, more recently, was thrust into the spotlight because of the shift to remote instruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2019-20 school year, full-time virtual schools enrolled more than 330,000 students, and statewide programs provided over 1 million courses, continuing a trend of year-to-year growth. During the 2020-21 pandemic year, full- and part-time virtual enrollment dramatically increased, accounting for nearly 40% of enrollment declines in traditional public schools.

Although pandemic enrollment levels are unlikely to be sustained with a return to in-person instruction, virtual schooling has emerged as a significant part of the public-school landscape. With the rapid expansion of virtual learning, state policymakers have sought to develop a virtual school policy framework to ensure that students accessing these options have a rigorous, high-quality educational experience. Advocates for virtual schools generally cite schedule flexibility, personalized learning and course access as major benefits of virtual learning options, but mixed research findings raise concerns about student engagement, academic outcomes, and school and resource management.

States are at various stages of virtual school policy development. While there has been a substantial amount of legislative action over the last five years, some virtual schools are still governed by policies developed for brick-and-mortar schools that are not necessarily conducive to meaningful oversight of a virtual school.

Virtual schools take various forms, including charter schools, single- and multi-district schools and statewide programs.

State policymakers have four key policy levers at their disposal to improve virtual school quality: authorization and school approval, student attendance and engagement, teachers and instruction, and funding.

Virtual school research highlights findings on virtual student outcomes, which emphasize the important role state policymakers have to play in creating a policy framework for quality virtual instruction.

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Policy Approaches to Competency-Based Education

RESOURCE TITLE:

Policy Approaches to Competency-Based Education

This Policy Outline defines competency-based education and its role in student-centered learning. It lists policy examples from eight states that grant the flexibility and autonomy needed to implement competency-based education. Those policy examples are: seat-time waivers, credit flexibility, pilot programs, innovation zones, proficiency-based diplomas, multiple graduation pathways, a state graduate profile, and statewide competencies.

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POLICY APPROACHES TO **Competency-Based Education**

FEB **2021**

KEY TERMS

Competency-based education refers to a systemic approach in which teaching and learning are designed to ensure students advance to the next level only after they demonstrate a mastery of standards. CBE requires schools to provide timely and differentiated support that addresses student needs determined by effective student assessment. "Proficiency-based," "mastery-based" and "performance-based" are used interchangeably with CBE.

Student-centered learning is a framework for education that is personalized, competency-based, student-driven and connected to real world experiences. Student-centered learning approaches can occur in various settings and are intended to meet students' diverse and distinct learning needs, interests and cultural backgrounds to support the development of the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary for success in college, career and civic life.

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

STUDENT AGENCY

REAL WORLD CONNECTIONS

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

STATE POLICY OPTIONS

State Education Policy Tracking

RESOURCE TITLE:

State Education Policy Tracking

Education Commission of the States tracks state education policy on a wide variety of education topics. There are three options available:

1. Scroll down to view *enacted and vetoed* bills on a wide variety of education topics for the 2019 – 2022 legislative sessions.
2. Click here to view our 2022 State Education Policy Watchlist, which includes pending legislation areas.
3. Click here to view an archive of state policy tracking for the 1996 through 2018 legislative sessions.

For more information about how to navigate this interactive map:

- **Click here for the PDF.**
- **Click here for the instructional video.**

Map | Bill Detail

Select a year from the drop-down to populate the views below

Year
(Multiple v... ▼) | Bill Title Keyword

Click states to filter by Legislature

Choose an issue area by clicking the

Accountability

State Information Request: State Profile of a Graduate

RESOURCE TITLE:

State Information Request: State Profile of a Graduate

State boards and state education departments in multiple states have asked for information on state profile-of-a-graduate policies and proficiency-based graduation requirements. Our response includes state policy examples of graduate profiles and proficiency-based graduation requirements. *To provide timely assistance to our constituents, State Information Requests are typically completed in 48 hours. They reflect an issue scan versus a comprehensive analysis.*

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Questions?

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berwin@ecs.org

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