

281—15.8(256) Online learning provided by a school district or nonpublic school—courses.

15.8(1) *Course content and delivery.* A school district or nonpublic school may provide an online learning program to deliver online learning and online coursework to students attending the district or school. Such a program must meet the following content and delivery requirements:

- a. Courses are taught by teachers licensed under Iowa Code chapter 272.
- b. Courses are taught by teachers who have specialized training or experience in online learning including but not limited to an online-learning-for-Iowa-educators-professional-development project offered by area education agencies, a teacher preservice program, comparable coursework, or relevant experience.
- c. Courses provide access to rigorous, high-quality content and instructional materials aligned with Iowa core content standards and blended learning.
- d. Courses provide content and instructional practices aligned with the national standards of quality for online courses issued by an internationally recognized association for kindergarten through grade 12 online learning.
- e. Grades in online courses are based, at a minimum, on whether a student mastered the subject, demonstrated competency, and met the standards established by the school district. Grades may be conferred only by teachers licensed under Iowa Code chapter 272.

15.8(2) *Use to meet general accreditation standards.* Any course that is not part of the offer-and-teach requirements for grades 9 through 12 may be provided by an area education agency, by the school district or accredited nonpublic school, or through an online learning platform or online exchange offered by the department in collaboration with area education agencies, school districts, or nonpublic schools. Online courses may be used to meet offer-and-teach requirements for grades 9 through 12 under the following circumstances:

a. Iowa Code sections 256.11(5) “a” through “e” and 256.11(5) “g” through “j” do not apply for up to two specified subjects for any district or accredited nonpublic school if any of the following apply:

- (1) The school district or accredited nonpublic school makes every reasonable and good faith effort to employ a teacher licensed under Iowa Code chapter 272 for the specified subject and is unable to employ such a teacher.
- (2) Fewer than ten students typically register for instruction in the specified subject at the school district or accredited nonpublic school.

b. In addition, a school district or nonpublic school may exceed the two-subject limitation for the purpose of providing world language, personal finance literacy, and computer science coursework online if either subparagraph 15.8(2) “a”(1) or 15.8(2) “a”(2) applies.

c. In addition to paragraphs 15.8(2) “a” and “b,” a school district or nonpublic school may apply for an annual waiver of the requirements of Iowa Code section 256.11(5) for up to two specified subjects. The school district or nonpublic school must prove to the satisfaction of the department that the school district or accredited nonpublic school has made every reasonable effort, but is unable to meet requirements to offer and teach the courses for which a waiver is sought. A school district or accredited nonpublic school may apply for a waiver each year. Waiver applications are due no later than January 15 the year prior to the school year during which the waiver is requested.

15.8(3) *Delivery options for general accreditation standards.*

a. If a district or accredited nonpublic school uses any of the options under subrule 15.8(2), the courses may be delivered by the following methods: by an area education agency under Iowa Code section 273.16, or by the school district or accredited nonpublic school.

b. If offered by the school district or accredited nonpublic school, the specified subject or course shall be offered through any of the following means:

- (1) An online learning platform if the course is developed by the school district or accredited nonpublic school itself or is developed by a partnership or consortium of schools that have developed the course individually or cooperatively. A partnership or consortium of schools may include two or more school districts or accredited nonpublic schools, or any combination thereof.
- (2) A private provider approved under subrule 15.5(4).

(3) An online learning platform or online exchange offered, subject to the initial availability of federal funds, by the department in collaboration with one or more area education agencies or in partnership with school districts and accredited nonpublic schools.

15.8(4) *Competent private instruction.* The online learning platform described in subparagraph 15.8(3) “b”(3) may deliver distance education to students receiving competent private instruction under Iowa Code chapter 299A, provided such students register with the school district of residence and the coursework offered by the online learning platform is taught and supervised by a teacher licensed under Iowa Code chapter 272 who has online learning experience, and the course content meets the requirements established by rule pursuant to Iowa Code section 256.7(32) “c.”

15.8(5) *Coordination and costs.* The department and the area education agencies operating online learning programs pursuant to Iowa Code section 273.16 shall coordinate to ensure the most effective use of resources and delivery of services. Federal or other funds, if available, may be used to offset what would otherwise be costs to school districts for participation in the program.

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