

Interactive Videoconferencing: A Policy Issues Review

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Introduction

Policies are needed in many areas in order to address the variety of legal and other responsibilities borne by states, regions, districts, and schools when offering interactive videoconferencing opportunities to students and other educators. Policies and other statements of official and “unofficial” rules often determine the quality of use of the technology for involved teachers and students.

The Federal government, state governments, regional agencies, local school districts, and individual schools ALL have something to say about just how distance-delivered content is handled and by whom. The ultimate responsibility for the outcomes of learning in this way is the primary provider, usually the local school and district.

Some policies will be just that: well-defined law that specifies the allocation, use, and responsibility for money allocated for specific videoconferencing work in education. Other “policy” statements will be tacit agreements among and between users. Still others will be informal agreements among high school administrators, counselors, teachers, and students and their parents.

As a general rule, prior to writing and adopting any specific policy, it is a good idea to research existing policy to see if any are applicable to the proposed learning opportunities that employ interactive videoconferencing. It is also important to learn if there are any policies already in effect that will “define” what a district or school may do and/or restrict educational endeavors using interactive videoconferencing.

This document provides a starting place for discussion and investigation of policies related to the use of interactive videoconferencing in K-12 education. Examples of existing policies are provided, as well as some samples that illustrate what might be developed across a variety of possible categories.

Areas of Policy Need and Samples and Examples

Any way you look at it, formal or informal, attention must be paid to policies and rules. Below are categories of policy need that can be addressed. Included also are **Samples** (created policy) and **Examples** (actual policy with reference) statements that the practitioner can use as the basis for creating local policy to meet specific needs.

1. Technical Considerations

- a. Infrastructure
- b. Protocol
[**SAMPLE**: The broadband infrastructure provided by _____ (state, etc.) will be interactive videoconferencing delivered over an IP-based H.323 platform.]
- c. Line dedication
[**SAMPLE**: State Regulation – Each videoconferencing system installed at specific district and regional sites will have a dedicated line for the VC/audio transmission that is separate from district and regional data transmission.]
- d. Hardware and software
[**EXAMPLE**: Standard 5.2--The receiving LEA shall provide instructional and communication hardware which meets current industry standards;
Standard 5.3--The receiving LEA shall provide adequate funding for hardware maintenance. FROM: Louisiana State Standards for Distance Learning <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
- e. Tech Support
[**EXAMPLE**: Standard 4.8--The receiving LEA shall provide adequate and appropriate technical support to students and facilitator. FROM: Louisiana State Standards for Distance Learning <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
- f. Quality of Service (QOS)

1. Facilities and Budgetary Considerations

- a. Room dedication
- b. Use protocol
[**SAMPLE**: Local schools where videoconferencing units reside must develop policies outlining the protocol and priority for the use of the equipment when that equipment and room are made available to the greater community.]
- c. Local use fees
[**EXAMPLE**: Site fees may not be assessed for:
 - a. K-12 uses and users during the hours of 7:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday

- b. Use of the ICN for official business of the ITTC, the Education Telecommunications Councils, or the Regional Telecommunications Councils.

FROM: February 1995 Iowa Telecommunications and Technology Commission Memo --
http://www3.iptv.org/iowa_database/scheduling/ICNsiteUseFee.html]

- a. Scheduling and Schedule Hosting
- b. Financial support
 - (1) Legislative
 - (2) OTHER: State, regional, local

1. Learner/Student Considerations

- a. Technical support
- b. Qualifications for Enrollment
 [EXAMPLE: Only students who are regularly enrolled in the school district shall be allowed to enroll in alternative instructional delivery systems courses offered for credit through the local school district. FROM: Oklahoma State Code for “Alternative Instructional delivery Systems”]
- c. Supervision and remote site support
 [SAMPLE: For every class or session connecting two or more remote sites for a videoconferencing distance education experience, a minimum of one certificated/licensed staff person shall be present at each site. Receiving sites are responsible for the funding and support of that supervising staff person.]
- d. Enrolling Agency Responsibility
 [EXAMPLE: Contractual agreements shall be established between the school district and parent(s), or legal guardian, of students participating in alternative instructional delivery system courses prior to the beginning of instruction. These contracts may address such issues as grading criteria, time allotted for course completion, student attendance, and the responsibility for course costs and equipment. FROM: Oklahoma State Code for “Alternative Instructional delivery Systems”]
- e. Academic support
- f. Completion expectations
- g. Individual attention
 [Example: Standard 3.14--The providing LEA, school or agency shall ensure that instruction provides opportunities for student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction. FROM: Louisiana State Standards for Distance Learning
<http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]

1. Teacher/Curriculum Developer Considerations

- a. Technical Support

- [**SAMPLE**: Each teacher working at _____ school will be provided with a PC and a minimum of a 56K Internet connection at their home, as well as a desktop videoconferencing unit.]
- b. Contract Support
 - (1) Salary
 - (2) Benefits
 - (3) Preparation Time
 - c. Content Development Support
 - (1) Purchased Content
 - (a) Training time
 - (2) Home-grown Content Development
 - (a) Development time

[**EXAMPLE**: Standard 4.7--The providing LEA, school or agency shall provide training and/or support in designing course content to fit the delivery methods proposed for distance education courses. FROM: Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
 - (b) Videoconferencing training time
 - (2) Ongoing Professional Development

[**EXAMPLE**: Standard 4.12--The receiving LEA shall provide the facilitator ongoing staff development to support distance education courses technically and instructionally. FROM: Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
 - (3) Content Copyright requirements

[**EXAMPLE**: Standard 3.11--The providing LEA, school or agency shall ensure that all course content complies with copyright fair use laws and policies. FROM: Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
- a. Teacher & Other Staff Training, Professional Development, and Support
 - b. Pedagogy, Delivery, and Curricular Alignment
 - c. Personnel Qualifications

[**EXAMPLE**: When curriculum is provided by means of telecommunications, it shall be taught by an appropriately licensed teacher. The teacher shall either be present in the classroom, or be present at the location at which the curriculum delivered by means of telecommunications originates... {and} the curriculum received at a remote site shall be under the supervision of a licensed teacher. FROM: Code of Iowa – Chapter 256.7(7) (2001 Code Supplement.)]

1. Assessment and Evaluation Considerations

- a. Federal and State Assessment requirements

- [**EXAMPLE:** Students earning credit by means of Internet-based {and two-way interactive video} instruction shall participate in all assessments required by the Oklahoma School Testing Program. No student shall be allowed to participate in these assessments at a place other than the school site at which the student is enrolled. **FROM:** Oklahoma State Code for “Alternative Instructional delivery Systems”]
- b. Class, course, and school requirements for grading and credit
 [**EXAMPLE:** Granting Credits. Member schools are required to adopt written policies and implementation regulations for granting credits from non-accredited schools. Such a policy could be as simple as not accepting any credits from non-accredited schools. Schools and districts can certainly put limits of the number of credits, if any, that are allowed from a non-accredited school towards graduation or any recognition, such as valedictorian, salutatorian, honors, etc. Schools hold the ultimate decision when determining whether and how to grant credits. However, diminishing the value of the existing school program by simply accepting anything presented as credit hurts all accredited schools. The following may be items to consider when developing school policy: *Credit by Examination, Admission and Placement of Students by Examinations, Home Schools, Alternative Learning Experiences, Life Experience, Adult Education, Summer School Classes, Military Experience, and Tests of General Educational Development.* **FROM:** Policy 4.5.5.2, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges <http://www2.boisestate.edu/nasc/news.htm>]
- c. Curriculum standards requirements
 [**EXAMPLE:** Standard 1.2--Distance education courses shall incorporate the Foundation Skills of the State Content Standards (Communication, Problem Solving, Resource Access and Utilization, Linking and Generating Knowledge, and Citizenship. **FROM** Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
- d. Program evaluation needs
 [**EXAMPLE:** Standard 3.12--The LEA shall evaluate the effectiveness of each distance education course received in the district. **FROM** Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION <http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
- e. Accreditation requirements
 [**EXAMPLE:** 4.01--The Department of Education must approve all required courses originating from an offering institution located outside the State of Arkansas. The courses must be approved either individually or the Department may approve the institution to offer distance learning courses to public schools in Arkansas. **FROM:** Arkansas Department of Education Proposed Rules and Regulations governing distance learning http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/rr_distance_learning.pdf]
- a. Course and school “credibility” needs

[**EXAMPLE:** Standard 3.1--The LEA shall ensure that the content, instruction, and assessment of each distance education course are comparable in rigor and breadth to a traditionally delivered course.

FROM: Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

<http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]

1. Management and Administration Considerations

- a. Vision, goals, and objectives needs
[**EXAMPLE:** Web-based and two-way interactive video instruction shall be viewed as methods by which the public schools within the state can expand their course offerings and access to instructional resources. **FROM:** Oklahoma State Code for “Alternative Instructional delivery Systems”]
[**SAMPLE:** District Technology Plans shall include a component that addresses videoconferencing distance learning needs for students.]
- b. School Improvement Plan needs
- c. Americans with Disabilities Act requirements
[**EXAMPLE:** Standard 3.9--The providing LEA, school or agency shall provide courses which are designed to engage students in learning activities based on various learning styles and to accommodate individual differences, including student disabilities. **FROM:** Louisiana STATE STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION
<http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>]
- d. Contract and union requirements
[**EXAMPLE:** 7.03--Student interaction with the primary instructor or an appropriately licensed teacher(s) shall be available at a ratio of no more than 30 students per course and 150 students each day. **FROM:** Arkansas Department of Education Proposed Rules and Regulations governing distance learning
http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/rr_distance_learning.pdf]
- e. Parent/Community involvement requirements
- f. Student and Staff Privacy needs
[**EXAMPLE:** All federal and state statutes pertaining to student privacy, the posting of images on the World Wide Web, copyright of materials, Federal Communications Commission rules pertaining to the public broadcasting of audio and video, and other such issues shall be addressed by the local school board policy. **FROM:** Oklahoma State Code for “Alternative Instructional delivery Systems”]
- g. CIPA requirements

1. Marketing and Public Relations Considerations

- a. Class and program offering clearinghouse needs
- b. Local school contact plans (Counselors, etc.)

- c. Ongoing program improvement and development plans
- d. Outreach plans

Policy Resources

Below are some of the resources educators can go to for deeper information about policies and adoption rationale. Not all states are listed and this list should not be considered exhaustive in scope.

State Resources

Arkansas

http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/rr_distance_learning.pdf

Information for videoconferencing presenters is at

http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/presenters2_pack2001.pdf

and the videoconferencing checklist is at

http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/videoconference_planning%20checklist.pdf

Iowa

Iowa Telecommunications and Technology Commission Memo --

http://www3.iptv.org/iowa_database/scheduling/ICNsiteUseFee.html

Louisiana

<http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=LCET>

and then select the Technology Standards link. On that page there is a link to Distance Learning standards to download them.

Regional Policy Agencies

<http://www.remc11.k12.mi.us/dl/policies.htm>

Policies and procedures from the SouthwestNet (in Illinois) two-way interactive video system.

Accrediting Agencies

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

<http://www2.boisestate.edu/nasc/news.htm>