

DATE:	October 21, 2021
SUBJECT:	New Virtual Hybrid Program Application & Supports
CATEGORY:	System Support and Innovation
NEXT STEPS:	Application Due <i>November 12, 2021</i>

Virtual & Hybrid Program Accelerator Overview

In the wake of COVID-19, local educational agencies (LEAs) across Texas have reimagined schools, upending traditional thinking about how schools “should” operate. For the overwhelming majority of students, the best place to learn is in the classroom, and we encourage school systems to support as many families returning to learning in the classroom as possible.

That being said, when designed effectively, virtual or hybrid learning can be transformative for certain students and educators, opening new opportunities for personalization, data-driven instruction, and “anytime, anywhere” learning. Further, with the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 15 on September 9, 2021, LEAs now have the opportunity to receive remote ADA for instruction meeting requirements outlined in SB 15.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is offering resources to support virtual instruction, including the Virtual and Hybrid Program Accelerator (VHPA). For LEAs interested in partnering with a technical assistance provider and learning alongside other LEAs launching virtual or hybrid programs in school year 2022-2023, we invite you to join the VHPA.

Participating LEAs will receive customized technical assistance to design, implement, and continuously improve their virtual or hybrid program. These supports include, but are not limited to, model design, strategic staffing, academic strategy, family engagement, supporting diverse learners, developing teachers, and other topics related to virtual and hybrid school programs.

All Texas LEAs that commit to creating a new virtual or hybrid program set to launch in school year 2022-2023 are eligible to apply.

Please note: The TEA previously released a TAA for the Virtual Hybrid School Accelerator Program on March 25, 2021. This is the most recent iteration of that previously planned support program, the Virtual Hybrid School Accelerator.

Eligible Applicants

All Texas LEAs that commit to run a virtual or hybrid program through school year 2022-2023 and meet the eligibility criteria requirements outlined in Senate Bill (SB) 15 may apply to join the VHPA. Please review the [SB 15 TAA](#) and [SB 15 FAQ](#) for more information.

[LEA requirements per SB 15](#)

To be eligible for funding for local remote learning, LEAs must:

- Have an overall district-wide performance rating of C or higher in school year 2018-19, or the year the latest performance rating was given.
- LEAs that do not have a prior performance rating, for example, LEAs established in school years 2019-20 or 2020-21, are eligible to launch local remote learning under SB 15 but will be subject to the performance rating constraint once a rating is assigned in a future school year.
- Include at least one STAAR-assessed grade level among the grade levels for which local remote learning is offered or include a complete high school program, including each course for which an end-of-course assessment is required to be administered.
- Provide families an on-campus option. Local remote learning may not be the sole option offered to families, in general or for any given day that remote instruction is offered.
- Administer assessments to students enrolled in local remote learning in the same manner as students learning on campus. LEAs must also periodically assess students in the remote learning program to assess progress.
- Provide students enrolled in remote learning the ability to participate in any extracurricular activity sponsored or sanctioned by the LEA or by the University Interscholastic League in the same manner as other students.
- Meet the needs of and comply with all relevant federal and state law and policy with respect to students with disabilities and English learners who are enrolled in a remote program.

With respect to teachers delivering instruction, LEAs must:

- Provide professional development on virtual instruction to all teachers delivering instruction in a local remote learning program.
- Ensure that teachers delivering instruction in a full-time remote program have not been coerced in any way to take their full-time remote learning instruction position.
- Ensure teachers are not delivering instruction concurrently; concurrent instruction is instruction delivered to both on-campus and remote learners during the same class period, at the same time.

LEAs may only enroll up to 10% of their total LEA-wide enrollment in a local remote learning program. Any students enrolled for at least a portion of the year in local remote instruction count toward this cap. Additionally, any student that receives remote instruction under an alternative to local remote instruction for a majority of their instructional time during the year would count toward this cap, which could include students who are:

- Medically fragile;
- Placed in a remote learning setting by an admission, review, and dismissal committee;
- Receiving accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- Served via remote conferencing.

VHPA Program Options

- Eligible applicants could consider a virtual or hybrid program, as defined below:
 - **Virtual Program** – one virtual program set up to support all remote learners in the LEA; other students attend school on campus
 - **Hybrid Program** – hybrid grade(s) with learners who are on-campus part of the day or week and remote for the rest of the day or week
- LEAs may apply under either of the following two options:

- Individual LEAs establishing a virtual or hybrid program
- "Consortiums" of multiple LEAs that are committed to standing up a single virtual program to serve their collective student populations. (A consortium of multiple LEAs should apply to this program as a single applicant with a single application.)
 - The consortium option may especially be a fit for smaller LEAs looking to pool resources into a common virtual program and/or LEAs with a small number of expected remote learners in the coming school year and beyond.
 - A consortium could also function such that one or more LEAs is/are contracting with and sending their remote learners to a virtual program operated by a different LEA.

What Districts Participating in VHPA Will Receive Benefits

The VHPA will select up to 24 applicants (a single consortium of multiple LEAs will count as a single applicant) to support from December 2021 through fall 2023. Selected LEAs will receive support from a technical assistance provider with expertise in virtual school models and innovation. A technical assistance vendor, in partnership with TEA, will support LEAs reimagine their virtual and hybrid program delivery in alignment with the Effective Schools Framework in the following ways:

Accelerated program model design support for a high quality virtual or hybrid program, including, but not limited to:

- Designing a dynamic and highly effective student learning experience
- Building aligned staffing models
- Crafting a strong school culture and family engagement strategy
- Enabling strong decision-making on technology and operations systems (e.g., learning management system, attendance, etc.)

Virtual or hybrid program launch and continuous improvement support, including but not limited to:

- Ongoing training and development of teachers and leaders
- Implementing proactive and responsive student support services
- Analyzing data to ensure that all students can access high-quality, grade-level instruction
- Understanding of emerging best practices and providing opportunities to directly network and learn from other LEAs doing similar virtual or hybrid programs
- Providing a direct line to TEA support and resources

If of interest to the LEA – Support developing a strong plan for the TEA new County District Campus Number (CDCN) approval process for eligible hybrid or virtual schools

Through this program, TEA will support LEAs in continuously improving their virtual and hybrid programs through school year 2022-2023. Due to the highly fluid nature of the school year, TEA reserves the right to modify the program or supports.

Selected LEAs must commit to making the VHPA a cabinet-level priority. A cabinet member must make this a yearlong priority and be willing to make significant improvements throughout the year.

Selection Process

TEA will select LEAs based upon the strength of their application and interview, objective measures of need, and evidence of willingness of the LEAs to implement significant improvements during the school year.

Virtual and Hybrid Program Accelerator Application Process and Timeline

TEA reserves the right to modify the following deadlines and information.

Date	Event
October 21, 2021	Applications Release: The application will be available on the Remote Learning webpage.
November 2, 2021	Information Webinar: Interested LEAs may learn more by registering for and attending a webinar.
November 12, 2021	Application Due: LEAs submit completed applications to VHPA@tea.texas.gov . These will be processed on a rolling basis until the application deadline.
November 8 – 19, 2021	Zoom Interviews: TEA staff will conduct zoom interviews with LEA program leaders to add context to the written application and make an acceptance decision. LEAs will receive an invite to interview upon submission of the application.
December 1, 2021	Acceptance: Accepted applicants will be invited to join the program.
December 3, 2021	Cohort Launch: All accepted LEAs will participate in a cohort launch webinar.

Virtual Hybrid Program Accelerator Upcoming Webinar

An informational webinar will be held to provide information regarding the components of the Virtual Hybrid Program Accelerator. You may register for the webinar by using the hyperlinked date below.

- November 2, [2021](#) New Virtual Hybrid Program Accelerator Application Overview and Rubric Process

Please submit all questions in writing to VHPA@tea.texas.gov. Please visit the [Remote Learning webpage](#) for more information.