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**Guidance on District Use of the**

**North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE)**

*Disclaimer: The language in this document is provided as guidance only. Districts may choose whether to use it and, if so, determine the most appropriate format—such as a board-adopted policy, district-wide procedure, or administrative regulation used in select schools—based on local context and policy governance. This document is not intended to suggest that the language must serve as board policy; that decision is local. If adopted, the language may need to be modified to fit the district’s context (e.g., changing "district" to "school") and should be reviewed alongside existing policies and with legal counsel, as this document does not constitute legal advice. Bracketed items may not apply to all districts and should be carefully reviewed for alignment with local policies and practices.*

**Scope of Policy**

The districtrecognizes the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE) as a state-approved provider of supplemental online courses. While NDCDE has established enrollment and academic policies, the district retains the authority to set additional parameters for student participation. Per law, the district is required to pay the cost of NDCDE courses for district-enrolled students.

**Student Enrollment and Eligibility**

Students may enroll in NDCDE courses under the following conditions:

1. **Enrollment Timing and Process**

**[Option 1: The district allows students to request NDCDE** **registration through their school at any time and will enroll them upon request.]**

**[Option 2: The district may restrict NDCDE registration requests to a designated window coinciding with in-district course registration periods with exceptions allowed for:**

* + 1. **Medical conditions or disability accommodations**
    2. **Disciplinary placements**
    3. **Transfer students**
    4. **District-identified virtual learning needs**
    5. **Necessary course placement changes due to academic, safety, or personal needs, subject to supporting documentation provided by the parent.**

**The district will record all NDCDE pre-registrations and work with NDCDE to enroll the students before the district’s intended course start date(s).]**

The district shall establish and notify parents of the process to enroll in NDCDE courses, with the notice including information on the full list of courses available and their availability at no cost to the family and information on parental responsibilities associated with virtual enrollment (e.g., proctoring and academic integrity safeguards).

1. **Course Eligibility**

* Students must meet all NDCDE course prerequisites to be eligible to enroll.
* **[Elementary] [middle] [and] [h]**igh school students **[and parents]** must meet with a school counselor prior to enrollment for consultation to ensure that the course aligns with their academic plan and is an appropriate choice
* In order to be considered in attendance for purposes of NDCC 15.1-06-04 (4):
  + **[Option 1 (For districts with virtual academies): Unless enrolled in the district’s virtual academy, the student must be physically present in the building for at least half of the regular school day during the {regular academic year} to be considered in attendance, district-enrolled, and eligible to take NDCDE courses at no cost to the family. {List separate criteria for summer, if applicable}]**
  + **[Option 2: (For districts without virtual academies): Students must be physically present in the building for at {list duration—must not create unreasonable barrier to virtual education access} school day during the {regular academic year} to be considered in attendance, district-enrolled, and eligible to take NDCDE courses at no cost to the family. {List separate criteria for summer, if applicable}]**
* If a district requires students to attend onsite summer education, it must inform parents and students about available virtual options. This includes any virtual summer programs offered through the district’s own virtual academy at no cost to families. If the district does not have its own virtual academy, it must inform families about the option to enroll in a virtual academy for online summer instruction through a tuition agreement paid by the district. The district must also explain how to request enrollment in one of these virtual options.
* Students must be active in their NDCDE courses within the first eight business days after enrollment; failure to do so may result in the district dropping the student unless the student has good cause for the delay, such as a medical emergency.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. **Course Location and Supervision**

The district retains discretion over where it will allow students to complete virtual coursework. Options may be determined by student schedules, **[student conduct history]**, and supervision requirements and include:

* **[Option 1: On campus during designated school hours; it will grant exceptions for students with full schedules who are also taking NDCDE courses.]**
* **[Option 2: Outside of school hours at a location of the student’s choosing]**
* **[Option 3: A combination of both on and off-campus, with each school identifying which courses must be completed on campus and which may be completed off campus]**

If the district requires coursework to be completed on campus, it will provide a designated Learning Coach to support students **[or pay for a virtual proctoring solution]**. If coursework is completed outside of school, the parent must identify a Learning Coach outside the immediate household to ensure academic integrity. The district may make limited exceptions for parents to serve as learning coaches in cases of student safety or remote living situations or may pay for a virtual proctoring solution if necessary to uphold academic integrity.

1. **Retaking NDCDE Courses**

When a student wants to retake an NDCDE course—whether to improve a grade or after failing—the school district must decide two things: whether to allow the retake and who will pay for it.

**Request Process:** Parents must submit a written explanation detailing why the retake is needed. This request must be submitted to the building principal.

**When a Retake Will Be Approved:**

* The NDCDE course isn’t available for retake at the student’s school.
* The NDCDE retake is necessary due to disability, health, or safety reasons.
* The retake is needed for the student to graduate on time.
* The student’s school cannot offer the course because of limited availability, scheduling constraints, or the need for specialized curriculum or instruction.
* Extended absences or health issues prevent attending in-person course(s).

**Paying for the Retake:** The district may assess the cost to the student’s family if there is clear evidence of a consistent pattern of insufficient effort in the original NDCDE course (e.g., repeatedly rushing work or ignoring instructor feedback). However, if the retake is required as documented disability accommodation, the district will cover the cost regardless of the student’s previous engagement.

1. **Holds and Extensions**

**[Each school] [The district]** shall establish a process for students to request holds and extensions in their NDCDE courses. **[Each building]** **[The district]** will decide whether to request a hold or extension from NDCDE on behalf of a student, using the same criteria established for similar requests for in-person courses.

1. **Registration and Payment Process**

* To facilitate accurate billing, the district must enroll students in NDCDE courses for which it pays. The district will not reimburse a parent for self-paying for an NDCDE course unless the district fails to notify the parent of the availability and process for enrolling in free NDCDE courses.
* Parents may also elect to self-pay for NDCDE courses if they do not wish to adhere to the enrollment, eligibility, retake, and scheduling restrictions outlined in this policy. However, district students enrolled through self-payment are still subject to all conduct expectations, NDHSAA eligibility requirements, and grading policies outlined herein.

1. **Educational Records, FERPA Compliance, Special Education, and 504 Accommodations**

The district shall share necessary student information with NDCDE for enrollment, academic progress, discipline, accommodations, and student support services. NDCDE is considered an educational provider under the district’s FERPA policy, meaning no additional parental consent is required to share this information.

The district shall designate a staff member to ensure that any student enrolling in an NDCDE course with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan has their accommodations provided to NDCDE in a timely manner, typically no later than one business day after enrollment to ensure appropriate accommodations are implemented.

1. **Academic and Conduct Expectations**

Students are subject to district conduct policies and disciplinary consequences while enrolled in NDCDE courses. This includes prohibitions on academic dishonesty, including cheating or plagiarism, which will result in disciplinary action in accordance with district policies.

Students found to have committed academic misconduct may be withdrawn from an NDCDE course at the district’s discretion. Repeated or serious violations of district conduct policies while enrolled in NDCDE courses may result in restrictions on future enrollment. The length of any enrollment prohibition will be determined through due process and may include conditions for re-enrollment, such as completing an academic integrity education program.

The district will honor and support NDCDE’s discipline policies, including its decisions to withdraw, suspend, or expel students from NDCDE courses.

1. **North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA) Eligibility Considerations**

Students participating in an NDHSAA-sanctioned activity and enrolled in NDCDE courses must meet NDHSAA eligibility requirements. Due to the self-paced nature of NDCDE courses, the district must evaluate a student's progress beyond the recorded grade to determine eligibility. Therefore, in addition to using NDCDE-reported grades, the district will evaluate and set rules concerning satisfactory activity in the following areas:

* Pacing and Course Progress: The degree to which the student is following the NDCDE pacing guide and whether they are behind schedule in coursework.
* Log-in Frequency: The student’s engagement in the NDCDE Learning Management System (LMS), including frequency of logins and time spent actively working on the course.
* Satisfactory Completion of Assignments: Whether the student is submitting coursework regularly, earning passing grades on submitted work, and making consistent academic progress.

1. **Collaboration with NDCDE on Student Concerns**

The district is encouraged to work directly with NDCDE’s dean of students and administration regarding any concerns about a student’s academic progress, behavior, accommodations, or other needs while the student is actively enrolled in an NDCDE course.

1. **Supplies and Equipment for NDCDE Courses**

**[Option 1: Student Responsibility for Course Materials: If the course requires materials that the district would typically require parents to purchase for an in-person class, the parent is also responsible for purchasing those materials for the online course.**

**District Responsibility for Equipment: If the course requires specialized equipment that the district typically provides for an in-person class (e.g., microscopes, lab kits), the district will make this equipment available for student use on campus. District-owned equipment cannot be checked out for home use unless this is a standard district practice for in-person classes.]**

**[Option 2: The district will provide the student with all equipment and supplies needed to take NDCDE courses as long as they are available within its current inventory, asking parents only to pay for nominal equipment and supplies not on hand. District-owned equipment cannot be checked out for home use unless this is a standard district practice for in-person classes.]**

Addressing Equipment Access Issues: If a student cannot access required equipment/supplies to take an NDCDE course, the district will:

* Assist the student in locating equipment available through an alternative source, such as a public library; and/or
* Notify NDCDE as soon as possible to explore course modifications or help the student find available equipment for use.

1. **Grading, Credit Transfer, [and Diploma Standards]**

The district must accept credit from NDCDE. NDCDE grades will be incorporated into district records as:

* **[Option 1: The percentage grade issued by NDCDE]**
* **[Option 2: A letter grade equivalent to the district’s grading scale]**
* **[A weighted composite grade, if applicable, when a student transitions from a district course to an NDCDE course within a term.]**
* Any policy enacted by the district concerning early graduation shall apply to students taking virtual courses.
* **[{#} of students’ credits must be district-issued for a student to be eligible for a district diploma {and a minimum of {#}% must be building-issued to qualify for a diploma from a specific district school}.][[2]](#footnote-2)**

**Implementation and Review**

The board will review this policy annually to ensure alignment with NDCDE policies and student needs. Building principals are authorized to establish age-appropriate regulations or procedures to implement this policy.

***End of Guidance***

1. Districts receive a full refund if dropping students from NDCDE courses within 24-hours and a refund less a processing fee for dropping students within 10 business days. Students who are dropped would then need to wait to take the course until the next registration window or could self-pay to take the course immediately. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If this section is included, please consult any applicable Cognia accreditation standards on this threshold. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)