Georgia Department of Education Report for Senate Bill 289

Introduction and Background:

This report has been created in accordance with a section of SB289 which requires the department of Education (DOE) to submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report identifies and explains the best methods and strategies for enabling the department to assist local boards of education in acquiring and delivering digital learning in a cost efficient manner for the purpose of increasing student access to digital learning

Georgia Department of Education developed this document as a practical resource to assist school board members, administrators, teachers, parents and others in acquiring and delivering online learning resources to meet student needs. To accomplish this, the document provides best practices and tools for the following areas:

 Acquiring digital and online resources

Determine standards for quality online courses

Evaluation of the quality of digital content

We have also included a description of the existing portfolio of state owned online learning resources that are currently available to Georgia's school districts, teachers, students and parents.

Section One: Best Practices to Acquire Digital and Online Resources

To acquire digital and online resources, the DOE is recommending districts use the best practices and tools developed by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), Achieve, and the Georgia Virtual School to accomplish the following:

- Obtain and deliver online learning (described in Section 2)
- Evaluate digital content (described in section 3)
- Access a portfolio of state-provided resources (described in section 4)

Section Two: Obtaining and delivering online learning using iNACOL Standards for Quality Digital Learning Courses

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) requires five key components for quality digital learning. As districts begin looking to provide quality courses with interactive digital content, it is critical to look to national standards and best practices to begin this process.

Content: The course provides online learners with multiple ways of engaging with learning experiences that promote their mastery of content and are aligned with state and/or national content standards. The content must focus on four additional areas that support the overall content of the course. These are listed below.

- Academic Content Standards and Assessments
- Course Overview and Introduction
- Legal and Acceptable Use Policies
- Instructor Resources

Instructional Design: The course uses learning activities that engage students in active learning; provides students with multiple learning paths to master; the content is based on student needs; and provides ample opportunities for interaction and communication—student to student, student to instructor and instructor to student. Instructional design also includes focus on the five areas listed below:

- Instructional and Audience Analysis
- Course, Unit and Lesson Design
- Instructional Strategies and Activities
- Communication and Interaction
- Resources and Materials

Student Assessment: The course uses multiple strategies and activities to assess student readiness for and progress in course content and provides students with feedback on their progress.

- Evaluation Strategies
- Feedback
- Assessment Resources and Materials

Technology: The course takes full advantage of a variety of technology tools, has a user-friendly interface and meets accessibility standards for interoperability and access for learners with special needs.

- Course Architecture
- User interface
- Technology Requirements and Interoperability
- Accessibility
- Data Security

Course Evaluation and Support: The course is evaluated regularly for effectiveness, using a variety of assessment strategies, and the findings are used as a basis for improvement. Course is kept up to date, both in content and application of new research on course design and technologies. Online instructors and their students are prepared to teach and learn in an online environment and are provides support during the course.

- Accessing Course Effectiveness
- Course Updates
- Teacher Certification
- Instructor and Student Support

The rubrics provided by iNACOL are used in all of the Georgia Virtual School course planning, development, and implementation. This rubric can be accessed at the following link:
http://www.inacol.org/research/nationalstandards/iNACOL_CourseStandards_2011.pdf

Section Three: Evaluating Digital Content Through the Achieve Open Educational Resources (OER) Rubrics

Achieve has identified eight key components when evaluating quality digital resources and their application when delivering instruction:

- Degree of Alignment to Standards
- Quality Explanation of the Subject Matter
- Utility of Materials Designed to Support Teaching
- Quality of Assessment
- Quality of Technological Interactivity
- Quality of Instructional and Practice Exercises
- Opportunities for Deeper Learning
- Assurance of Accessibility

The rubrics provided by Achieve are uses in conjunction with the iNACOL Course Standards to assist Georgia Virtual School in the selection of all digital resources used in the Georgia Virtual School courses. The rubrics can be accessed at the following link: http://www.achieve.org/files/AchieveOERRubrics.pdf

Section Four: Portfolio of State-Provided Online Resources

The DOE provides multiple options for students to maximize online learning opportunities throughout the state. Listed below are the key areas with descriptions:

Georgia Virtual School (GAVS) Content Resources are available free for teachers, students, and parents to access to support learning. Over 70 courses containing over 13000 individual digital resources aligned to state and national standards are available at www.gavirtuallearning.org/resources.aspx.

State Longitudinal Data System (LDS) has taken all of the GAVS digital resources listed above and added them to the states longitudinal data system (LDS) so that when teachers are utilizing LDS these GAVS online learning resources are automatically delivered to the teachers desktop already aligned to the course being taught. This requires no additional work by the district, school or teacher to access these resources. By utilizing LDS districts will have access to all of the advantages of online learning resources without the need to procure, install or maintain the resources themselves. Nor will they have to invest in learning management systems to deliver the online resources as a statewide learning management systems will also be available to teachers and students so they will have an environment available to utilize the online resources for individual customized student learning.

Georgia Virtual School is SACS CASI accredited and operates in partnership with schools and parents to offer over 120 middle school and high school level courses across the state. Georgia Virtual School provides a high quality, teacher led, virtual classroom environment using digital curriculum aligned to state and national standards. Georgia Virtual School also equips students with an online media center and guidance center to support students throughout their online course experience.

Georgia Credit Recovery is an opportunity for a student to retake a course in which he/she previously was not academically successful in earning credit towards graduation. Courses are designed to be on a flexible The GA DOE Credit Recovery Program is an opportunity for a student to retake a course in which he/she previously was not academically successful in earning credit towards graduation. Credit Recovery options allow students who have completed seat time and calendar requirements to earn credit based on competency of the content standards.

Georgia Open Online Teacher Training is an open, free course designed and scaled to prepare beginning teachers to advanced teachers to integrate digital content, teach online, and "blend" their classrooms.

Conclusions and Final Remarks:

Today's global economy requires new instructional and technology-enabled approaches in public education. To be competitive, students and teachers need to do more than just learn about technology, they need to use it to create powerful teaching and learning environments that are engaging, effective and relevant. The reach and impact of online learning in Georgia is growing at a rapid pace. Experts predict that 50 percent of all high school classes in the U.S. will be taught online before 2019.

All schools face planning challenges as they take steps to transform their delivery models to stimulate, extend and deepen student learning while integrating technology. This document is designed to begin facilitating a more deliberate online and blended learning planning process, with the goals of improving student outcomes and integrating technology in the most effective manner possible and to make everyone aware of the strategic plans of the DOE to assist districts in overcoming these challenges.