Understanding Distance Education Enrollment in Nevada

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) recognizes that families have different educational needs and priorities. Nevada offers families a variety of educational options, including homeschooling and public school distance education programs.

NDE has been working with school districts to ensure that enrollment and funding practices for distance education programs are consistent with existing state requirements. Recent questions have highlighted the need to clarify how these requirements work, particularly when a student seeks to enroll in a public school distance education program offered by a district other than the one where the student resides.

Homeschooling and public school distance education are different options:

Homeschooling: Nevada law protects families' right to direct their children's education through homeschooling. Beyond the requirement that families provide notice of their intent to homeschool to their local school district, NDE does not oversee homeschooling or provide funding for homeschooling. Parents are responsible for selecting and providing their children's educational instruction and resources.

Public school distance education: Students enrolled in public school distance education programs are public school students, even when they complete their coursework at home. These programs are supported by public tax dollars and must meet Nevada's requirements for enrollment, educational services, accountability, and oversight. The enrolling district is responsible for ensuring those requirements are met.

How does enrollment in another school district work?

Nevada students may enroll in public school distance education programs offered by districts other than the one where they reside, provided certain requirements are met. Under Nevada law (NRS 388.850), a full-time distance education program offered by another district must not be the same or substantially similar to a program available in the student's district of residence.

To support compliance with these requirements, districts seeking to enroll students who live outside their boundaries must establish interlocal agreements with the students' districts of residence. These agreements clarify each district's responsibilities for providing educational services, including special education, and how funding and associated costs will be handled.

Importantly, NDE cannot provide state public school funding for a student's cross-district distance education enrollment without the required agreement in place. This is an existing policy, not a new policy established by NDE.

The participating districts are also responsible for comparing their distance education programs to determine whether the applicable requirements are met. These agreements are developed and approved by the districts, not individual families.

What does this mean for families?

Families interested in exploring public school distance education are encouraged to contact their school district of residence to learn about available programs, enrollment eligibility, and educational supports.

Families interested in a program offered by another school district should also contact that district directly to learn about its offerings and enrollment requirements. When cross-district enrollment is requested, the participating districts are responsible for determining whether the applicable requirements can be met prior to the student's enrollment in the program.

Families who choose to homeschool may also enroll their children in a public school distance education program, at which point their children are considered public school students rather than homeschool students under NRS 388.850(2).

The Nevada Department of Education's (NDE) role:

NDE is responsible for administering Nevada's public school distance education requirements consistently across school districts. The Department does not negotiate interlocal agreements on behalf of individual families. These agreements are developed and approved by the participating school districts.

NDE does not regulate independent homeschooling programs or resources that families may choose to use outside of public school enrollment. However, when a student enrolls in a public school distance education program, that program must comply with applicable public education requirements, regardless of whether instruction is delivered by the district or through a partner organization.

NDE remains committed to supporting informed and connected families by providing clear information about educational options, helping families navigate the public education system, and ensuring that school districts implement Nevada's requirements consistently and transparently.