



## **MSC ONLINE LEARNING PROJECT**

A consortium of the Northeast Service Cooperative, its member districts, along with the Lakes Country Service Cooperative, and Resource Training and Solutions

### **REGIONAL POLICY GUIDELINES**

Revised July 1, 2010

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the MSC Online Learning Project is to provide expanded educational opportunities for all learners, prepare students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, promote the availability of online coursework among consortium members, improve the effectiveness of online learning and assure a quality learning environment for students and teachers. The MSC Online Learning Project will:

- Support standards-aligned, fully-online courses and blended learning for Minnesota students;
- Provide professional development and collaboration tools for online educators;
- Integrate, support and improve the development of K-12 work processes that employ virtual support tools.

The purpose of these guidelines is to articulate the basic policies for this consortium of school districts as they provide online learning options for students. Compliance with these guidelines, and any policies or procedures adopted pursuant to these guidelines, is required in order for districts and their students to access the regional resources of the MSC Online Learning Project.

The MSC Online Learning Project consortium includes school districts that are members of the following Minnesota Service Cooperatives:

- Lakes Country Service Cooperative / LCSC Online Learning Project
- Northeast Service Cooperative / NE Online Learning Project
- Resource Training and Solutions / Resource Student Online Learning

#### **DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions will be used throughout these policies:

1. Online learning is an interactive course or program that delivers instruction to a student by computer and the Internet. For students in K-12 courses, online learning must meet or exceed State of Minnesota academic standards and may be combined with other traditional delivery methods that include frequent student assessment and actual teacher contact time.

2. Online Learning Provider / Providing district is a school district or an organization of two or more school districts operating under a joint powers agreement, located in Minnesota, which provides learning to students.
3. Student is a Minnesota resident enrolled in a school as defined in the compulsory instruction law in any grades Kindergarten through grade 12.
4. Online Learning Student refers to a student enrolled in an online learning course or program delivered by an on-line learning provider.
5. Enrolling District refers to a school district or charter school in which a student is enrolled for purposes of compulsory instruction.
6. Participating District refers to the school district members of this consortium. These districts have the full rights and responsibilities available through the MSC Online Learning Project.
7. Supplemental Online Learning Program is an online program that offers courses taken in place of a course period during the regular school day at a local district school. MSC Online is a Supplemental Online Learning Program.
8. Course Management System (CMS) refers to the hardware and software that constitute the online resources installed and maintained by the MSC Online Learning Project. These resources may include commercially-prepared online courses, consortium-developed courses and other resources for the use of consortium members.
9. Student Enrollment refers to the enrollment in a fully-online course where more than 50% of the teaching and learning occurs online, using the MSC Online course management system (CMS) or other electronic tools.
10. Blended, Hybrid or Web-Enhanced Student Enrollment refers to the enrollment in a classroom-based course where less than 50% of the teaching and learning occurs online, using the MSC Online course management system (CMS) or other electronic tools.

## **GENERAL PROJECT GUIDELINES**

The MSC Online Learning Project will maintain a regional CMS, including approved online courses, and will maintain procedures for secure access to the CMS resources.

### Instructor Rights and Responsibilities

Online instructors:

1. Must successfully complete a course in the facilitation of online learning or its equivalent before beginning online instruction;

2. Must hold a valid Minnesota teaching license, or equivalent authorization, in the discipline area they are teaching;
3. Must have a signed Intellectual Property Agreement form [Addendum A] on file with the MSC Online Learning Project prior to instruction;
4. Must have a signed Instructor Requirements and Responsibilities [Addendum B] form on file with the MSC Online Learning Project prior to instruction;
5. Will be required to provide student and curriculum data as requested by the Project, the enrolling district and State; and
6. Will be required to participate in periodic evaluation of Project activities.

### Student Rights and Responsibilities

Online students (and parent/guardian, if appropriate):

1. Must complete and submit a MSC Online Enrollment Form [Addendum C] including a statement indicating the reason for enrolling in online learning.
2. Must notify the MSC Online Learning Project of intent to enroll within 10 days of acceptance into the online course(s) and must sign a statement of assurance [Addendum D] indicating the course and online learning expectations have been reviewed and understood.
3. Must receive academic credit for completing the requirements of an approved online course or program and secondary credit must count towards graduation and credit requirements of the enrolling district;
4. May enroll in supplemental online learning courses during a single school year to a maximum of 50 percent of the student's full schedule of courses per term. A student may exceed this limit if the enrolling district grants permission, or if an agreement is made between the enrolling district and an online learning provider for instructional services, or by applying for enrollment to an approved full-time, comprehensive online provider.
5. May enroll in supplemental online learning courses up to the midpoint of the enrolling district's term. The enrolling district may waive this requirement for special circumstances.
6. May enroll in additional courses under a separate agreement that includes terms for paying tuition or course fees;
7. May complete course work at a different grade level than the student's current grade level;
8. Must have written consent of a parent/guardian to apply for or enroll in online learning, if the student is age 17 or younger;
9. Must receive pre-approval from the enrolling district before credit is granted, if the online learning course is delivered by an institution that has not been pre-approved by MDE; and

10. Must comply with all the policies and procedures of the MSC Online Learning Project and their enrolling districts.

## **ENROLLMENT**

The following enrollment guidelines will apply for enrollment in the MSC Online Learning Project:

1. The enrolling district shall not prohibit an enrolled student from applying to enroll in online learning.
2. The enrolling district shall permit a student to enroll in supplemental online learning courses during a single year to a maximum of 50 percent of the student's full schedule of courses per term and up to the mid point of the district's term. To exceed these limits, students will be required to apply for enrollment in an approved full-time online learning provider, unless the district waives the requirement(s) or another agreement is in place.
3. The enrolling district shall permit an online learning student to complete coursework at a grade level that is different from the student's current grade level.
4. The enrolling district shall permit a student to enroll in, and shall grant credit for, courses beyond the maximum, full-time enrollment under a separate agreement that includes terms for payment of any tuition and fees.
5. The enrolling district may reduce an online learning student's regular classroom instructional membership in proportion to the student's membership in online learning courses.
6. In order to assure a quality academic experience, the MSC Online Learning Project will set a maximum of twenty (20) students for online classes offered through the Project.
7. Within 10 days of a student's application for enrollment into an online course or program, the MSC Online Learning Project will notify the student of acceptance. This acceptance will include a request that parent and student sign a statement of assurance [Addendum D] that they have reviewed the online learning course(s) and understand the expectations of online learning.
8. Within 10 days of a student's acceptance into an online learning course, the MSC Online Learning Project will notify the enrolling district of the student's acceptance in writing. This notification will include the courses to be taken, credits to be awarded, start date of the enrollment and a confirmation, based on communication with the enrolling district, that the courses will meet the student's graduation plan.
9. All courses offered through the MSC Online Learning Project will have a 14-day drop period. During the first 14 calendar days of enrollment, students may drop courses without a grade penalty. Each student's date of enrollment and the last day to drop a

course will be included in the notification of enrollment sent to students and their enrolling districts. Students may withdraw from a course after the 14-day drop period, however, all appropriate fees and tuition, as stated in this policy, the MSC Online Participation Agreement and provided through the Minnesota OLL Options Act, will apply.

Students who withdraw from a course within 14 calendar days of enrollment do not count as a “student enrollment” for the course, and the school district will be assessed a \$100.00 drop fee per student per course drop. Students who complete a course or withdraw after 14 calendar days do count as a “student enrollment” for the course, and the school district will be assessed the full fee per student per course. Students who receive a grade of “F” in a course are considered to have completed the course.

**NOTE:** There will be a \$25.00 registration fee charged for any student enrollment received which is withdrawn before the course notification email is sent. This is NOT the same as the drop fee charge within 14 days of enrollment.

By accepting enrollment in a MSC Online course, the student agrees to the following:

I acknowledge that during the first 14 days of being enrolled into my MSC Online course, I may drop the course without grade penalty. If I withdraw from a course after the first 14 days, a grade of F will be issued. I understand for each online course there are a minimum number of assignments that must be completed each week. Failure to submit the minimum number of assignments on a weekly basis may result in my removal from the course and may result in a failing grade. If I withdraw from the course after completing 50% or more of the class requirements and fail to take the final exam or complete the final project, MSC Online will issue a grade of F for my final grade.

10. MSC Online will provide a grade report to the student and to the enrolling district within 5 days of receiving notification from the instructor that the student has completed the course requirements and upon the return of the any course materials to the MSC Online Learning Project. The student, parent or school will have 15 days to check and verify the accuracy of the grade report. After 15 days the grade issued will be final.

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND COURSE COMPLETION**

The MSC Online Learning Project shall ensure that all online courses and programs provided as part of the regional resource are rigorous, aligned with state academic standards and contribute to grade progression in a single subject.

The Project will maintain records that allow the online learning program to defend the validity of its courses to enrolling school districts and to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

The Project shall demonstrate to the MDE Commissioner that online learning courses have equivalent standards of instruction, curriculum and assessment requirements as other courses

offered to enrolled students. This information will be available to students, parents, enrolling districts and the MDE, upon request.

In addition:

1. The enrolling district shall award appropriate academic credit and GPA points to students who have completed requirements of a MDE approved online learning course or program. Secondary credits granted to an online learning student shall be counted toward the graduation and credit requirements of the school district.
2. The enrolling district shall award credit for a graduation standard or grade progression requirement to any student who completes an online learning course or program that meets or exceeds such a requirement.
3. The enrolling district shall apply the same graduation requirements to all students, including online learning students.
4. The enrolling district shall not award credit for the online learning course or program if the student does not successfully complete the course or program.
5. When a student completes an online learning course delivered by an institution that has not been pre-approved by MDE, course credit may be transferred. The enrolling district shall use the same criteria for accepting these online credits or courses as it does for accepting other courses or credits from transfer students.
6. The MSC Online Learning Project shall demonstrate expectations for actual teacher contact time or other student-to-teacher communication [Addendum B].
7. The MSC Online Learning Project shall provide a teacher with a Minnesota license in the appropriate grade level and subject area to assemble and deliver instruction to students in the online program.
8. To support student academic achievement and effective communication in the online courses offered, the MSC Online Learning Project will monitor student attendance through a variety of methods and will be able to provide attendance information to parents, enrolling districts and the MDE, as needed. In each course, instructors will outline weekly minimum work and participation requirements for students. If a student is not meeting these expectations for a course, the following process will be followed:

STEP 1: If the student does not submit the expected number of assignment(s) within a period of seven (7) consecutive days, the student and parent(s) will receive a phone call from the instructor. During the call, the students, parents, and teacher will work to resolve any educational or technological issues that prevent the student from submitting an acceptable number of assignments each week. The instructor and student will develop a schedule for completion of the course that both can agree upon.

STEP 2: If the student does not respond to the phone call by submitting assignments within the next seven (7) days or does not continue to submit an acceptable number of assignments each week, the instructor will send an email to the student/parent(s) to remind them of the importance of submitting work and describing the withdrawal process. Counseling and administrative staff at the enrolling district and/or the MSC Online Administrator will also be notified and involved, as appropriate, to determine whether the student can be successful in the course and what specific steps are required for successful continuation in the course.

STEP 3: The instructor, district staff and the MSC Online Administrator will continue to monitor the student's progress and communicate with parents about the student's progress. If the student does not respond by submitting assignments within fourteen (14) days of the initial phone call, MSC Online will assume that the student does not intend to remain in the course, and the student will be administratively dropped from the course. If this occurs after the 14-day drop period, all appropriate fees and tuition will apply. Exceptions to this policy will be made with the consent of the enrolling district.

STEP 4: An official final grade report will be sent to the student and the enrolling district upon completion of the course and the return of the any course materials to the MSC Online Learning Project.

## **STUDENT RECORDS AND PRIVACY PROTECTION**

The MSC Online Learning Project is committed to the secure and appropriate handling of personal information. The Project will employ physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard the security and integrity of personal information collected by the Project.

In addition:

1. Participating districts will comply with all provisions of all Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, and will not collect any private student data without the consent of the student's parent or guardian.
2. The MSC Online Learning Project will collect the written parental consent for their online students who are age 17 or younger on the Enrollment Form [Addendum C] and will verify this consent with the enrolling district, as necessary.

## **EQUITABLE ACCESS**

The MSC Online Learning Project is committed to providing equitable and safe access to the Internet-based resources provided by the Project.

In addition:

1. The enrolling district shall allow an online learning student to have the same access to the computer hardware and education software available in the school district as for all other students in the school district.
2. The enrolling district will insure that all computers supplied by the enrolling district for online learning will have appropriate active Internet filtering and blocking technology. The enrolling district will periodically check all computers to insure that this filtering and blocking software is active.
3. The enrolling district shall assist an online learning student whose family qualifies for the education tax credit to acquire computer hardware and educational software for online learning purposes.
4. The enrolling district shall provide non-academic services to online learning students on the same basis as other enrolled students, including the participation in extracurricular activities.

#### **MSC ONLINE ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY**

By accepting a user account on the MSC Online Learning Project site, a user is acknowledging that she or he has read and agrees to comply with the terms of this policy.

The MSC Online Learning Project is responsible for securing its learning management system and online resources in a reasonable and economically feasible manner against unauthorized access and/or abuse, while making them accessible for authorized and legitimate users. Any attempt to violate the provisions of this policy will result in disciplinary action in the form of temporary or permanent revocation of user accounts and may include referral to law enforcement or civil liability, regardless of the success or failure of the attempt.

The users of the MSC Online Learning Project are responsible for respecting and adhering to local, state, federal and international laws. Any attempt to break those laws through the use of these resources may result in litigation against the offender by the proper authorities. If such an event should occur, this organization will fully comply with the authorities to provide any information necessary for the litigation process.

#### **GENERAL USE POLICY**

Once a person receives a user account for the purpose of accessing the MSC Online Learning Project resources, that person is a solely responsible for all actions taken while using that user account. Therefore:

1. Requesting a user account under false pretenses is a punishable disciplinary offense.

2. Sharing your user account with any other person is prohibited. If you do share your user account with another person, you will be solely responsible for the actions of that other person while he or she is using the account.
3. Deletion, examination, copying, or modification of files and/or data belonging to other users without their prior consent is prohibited.
4. Attempts to evade or change resource quotas are prohibited.
5. Use of MSC Online resources for commercial, political or other non-educational purposes is prohibited.
6. Any unauthorized, deliberate action that damages or disrupts these resources, alters the normal performance, or causes malfunctions is a violation regardless of system location or time duration.

### ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Users are responsible for all electronic communications originating from their user accounts. This includes email, messaging, discussion postings, chat discussions and other electronic communication within the MSC Online resources. Therefore:

1. Forgery or attempted forgery of electronic messages is prohibited.
2. Attempts to read, delete, copy, or modify the electronic messages of other users are prohibited, unless these actions are part of a specific course assignment.
3. Attempts to send harassing, obscene and/or other threatening electronic communications to another user are prohibited.
4. Attempts to send unsolicited junk mail, "for-profit" messages or chain letters are prohibited.
5. In addition, all users will be expected to abide by accepted guidelines of Internet etiquette (Netiquette) in all electronic communications.

### NETWORK AND SYSTEM SECURITY

In the normal use of MSC Online Learning Project resources, users may be allowed to access other networks and/or the computer systems attached to those networks. Therefore:

1. Use of systems and/or networks in attempts to gain unauthorized access to remote systems is prohibited.
2. Use of systems and/or networks to connect to other systems, in evasion of the physical limitations of the remote system/local, is prohibited.
3. Decryption of system or user passwords is prohibited.
4. The copying of system files is prohibited.
5. The copying, downloading or unauthorized use of copyrighted materials, such as third-party software or course content, without the express written permission of the owner or the proper

license, is prohibited. This provision also applies to the use of pirated software, which is prohibited.

6. Intentional attempts to "crash" Network systems or programs are punishable disciplinary offenses.
7. Any attempts to secure a higher level of privilege on Network systems are punishable disciplinary offenses.
8. The willful introduction of computer "viruses" or other disruptive/destructive programs into the organization network or into external networks is prohibited.

## **DISTRICT USE OF MSC ONLINE COURSEWARE**

Each year NESC, in consultation with the MSC Online Advisory Council, establishes the annual pricing schedule for the year. This schedule includes the cost for district participation in the project and also the fees for individual student enrollments in online courses. The policy statements below further define how MSC Online member districts may use MSC Online courseware and online curriculum.

1. MSC Online courseware and curriculum may be used by member districts without additional enrollment fees as long as the curriculum is used in a blended, hybrid or web-enhanced format. This format is defined as a classroom-based course where less than 50% of teaching and learning occurs online, using the MSC Online course management system (CMS) or other electronic tools.

The exception to this policy is any courseware for which MSC Online must pay a per-student enrollment fee to a courseware vendor. Courses that carry a per-student vendor fee cannot be used in a blended, hybrid or web-enhanced format without districts incurring appropriate course enrollment fees.

If the use of MSC Online courseware or curriculum by a district in a blended, hybrid or web-enhanced format develops to include more than 50% of teaching and learning occurring online, then the appropriate course enrollment fees will apply.

2. All MSC Online student enrollments that are not blended, hybrid or web-enhanced enrollments, will be considered full semester (.5 credit), fully-online courses. The full course fee, established annually by the Project, will be charged and the full teacher fee will be paid, if applicable, for any student enrollment in the course. This is the case, even when the student completes and the enrolling district accepts a quarter (.25) credit of work in the online course.