

294 Massachusetts Ave.
Rochester, Pa 15074
866.990.6637



LINCOLN
LEARNING

White Paper

Establishing a Successful K-12 Program

Implementing Virtual, Online, and Blended Solutions

Table of Contents

Introduction	01
Definitions Chart	02
Problem	03
Choosing Curriculum	
Hiring and Managing Teachers	04
Student Support Systems	
Selecting and Managing Technology	05
Assessing Program Success	06
Lincoln Learning Is the Solution	07
Success in Any Setting	08
Lincoln Learning Client Journey	09
Client Journey Details	10-12
Lincoln Learning's Solutions	13-14
Testimonials	15
Conclusion	16
References	17-18



Over the last decade, online K-12 education programs have exploded in popularity, particularly through the COVID-19 pandemic. Many schools have implemented various learning options to provide education and support to all students. These learning methods include in-person, hybrid learning, and fully online environments. Digital environments provide workable solutions to major education issues.

According to Gemin, Pape, Vashaw, and Watson (2013), all 50 states avail online options to students. Now—more than ever—schools are in need of flexible and efficient learning options.



Not only is online learning malleable, but it is also primed for personalization. With powerful learning management systems and tailored course options driving the top tier of K-12 curriculum organizations, “online teaching and learning is evolving as fast as the emerging technology that provides an engine for personalization” (Powell, et al., 2015).

The most common forms of online learning include virtual learning, hybrid or blended learning, and asynchronous learning. Virtual learning is typically done via live streaming. In the hybrid or blended model, students alternate or complete schoolwork in-person part-time and online part-time. In asynchronous learning, students access and complete work at their own pace, with no streaming or live instruction.

One alternative is not necessarily better than another. Each learning mode provides benefits that can be helpful for a large number of students. Typically, schools will adopt one method of online learning for their entire student population. However, it is not entirely uncommon for schools to offer several online learning options.

The following definitions provide insight and clarification to digital teaching and learning.

Term	Definition
virtual learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often consists of a teacher presenting face to face through streaming video in an online classroom environment • typically takes place on a Web-based platform through the Internet • can be completed independently or in real time
online learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refers to any form of education a student receives via the Internet
remote learning or distance learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a type of learning wherein students and teachers are not present in the same physical location, such as a classroom • can be implemented via synchronous, blended, or asynchronous environments
asynchronous environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn independently. • Curriculum and instruction is self-guided. • Students work at their own pace.
synchronous environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn in real time either virtually or in a classroom setting. • Courses often include a teacher.
blended environment or hybrid environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes a combination of synchronous, in-person instruction in a traditional classroom setting; synchronous, virtual instruction; and/or asynchronous, self-paced instruction • often implemented by allowing students to attend class several days each week and work online the remaining days
brick-and-mortar classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a traditional learning environment where students learn in a physical school setting
student information system (SIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • software, typically Web-based, wherein school administrators, educators, facilitators, and businesses can enter, update, store, and manage student data
learning management system (LMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • software, typically Web-based, that can manage a variety of tools, such as instruction, assessment, training, reporting, and tracking

The challenge of establishing a formidable online program can seem immense. Securing implementation funding for an innovative, non-traditional program and finding experienced online instructors are not least among these tasks (Hill, 2010).

Also, schools need to ensure the chosen program aligns to relevant standards, budget for the program, and implement it, in addition to supporting staff, students, and parents. Administrators must assess student needs, as well as parental support and technological availability in homes, particularly in diverse socioeconomic areas.

In “Management and Operations of Online Programs: Ensuring Quality and Accountability,” Watson and Gemin (2009) listed the five most taxing processes in establishing an online program. In 2022, these top five challenges remain the same.

Five Challenges in Establishing an Online Program

1. Create, buy, or lease a curriculum.
2. Hire and manage teachers.
3. Determine and build student support systems.
4. Select and manage technology.
5. Assess a program's success.

Source: Watson & Gemin, 2009

Choosing Curriculum

When the pandemic first began, schools were forced to rapidly implement an online option. However, in more typical times, the curriculum should be chosen deliberately and confidently.

Many schools nationwide have never implemented any type of digital learning. Administrators must decide if building a curriculum internally or outsourcing from a vendor will best fit their needs and budget.

According to the Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL) (2018), there are several benefits to purchasing third-party curriculum:

- The expertise of vendor development teams, including writers, instructional designers, multimedia developers, and technologists, often exceeds the expertise within the online program.
- A wide variety of curriculum and specialty courses is difficult to produce in-house.
- A program may lack staffing, funding, and/or expertise to develop and update high production-value content.
- Organizations that are focused on curriculum development often have the resources to incorporate more extensive user testing and feedback than individual schools. They also may be more equipped to provide regular updates, including maintenance of multimedia-based content over generations of versions and changing technology.

Hiring and Managing Teachers

Choosing an engaging, rigorous curriculum can be an arduous process; however, a funding-dependent task just as challenging is recruiting and training qualified faculty. Undeniably, the online teaching environment is a shift from the traditional classroom.

As the demand for online K-12 instructors continues to increase alongside the demand for digital offerings, teacher preparation is of utmost importance. Kennedy and Archambault (2012) suggest that field experiences are “a critical component to preparing preservice teachers who are well-qualified,” but researchers argue that teacher education programs are struggling to properly prepare professionals to teach in all contemporary learning environments.

Giffin (2020) believes that “more than ever, teachers need high-quality, job-embedded professional learning to develop teaching practices for virtual environments and strategies to support students with potential learning loss and social-emotional well-being.”







Student Support Systems

Along with the added pressures on faculty, families are also finding it difficult to adapt to their new, participatory roles in their children's educations. According to Mike English, author of "The 5 Biggest Challenges in Delivering K-12 eLearning" (2020), "Many households were not prepared to help their children optimally achieve in a 'learn at home' model."

Moreover, parents with more than one child have an even bigger challenge to either supply or acquire multiple devices and secure Internet bandwidth to access online content.

Online programs must also be accessible for all students, especially those with disabilities. Features such as text to speech and speech to text, font colors and sizes, alt text for images and documents, and closed captioning help with ensuring learning management systems are suitable for every student (National Forum on Education Statistics, 2021).

Overall, students need several support systems, including:

-  teachers and staff
-  parents and guardians
-  technological availability
-  program accessibility

Selecting and Managing Technology

For schools wanting to create a virtual program, selecting and constructing online education technologies create funding, implementation, and maintenance challenges. Various technology issues—not the least of which is determining and maintaining a learning management system that supports personalized, multimodal learning and instant data reporting—are among the most popular factors discouraging schools from establishing an online program (Powell et al., 2015).

Although online programs can empower schools and their students with a multitude of unique education options, the challenges inherent in establishing such a program from scratch can overwhelm and deter administrators.

“Technological constraints, including access, infrastructure, and hardware and software issues stifled early [online learning] initiatives. Finding quality content and software programs that integrate with a school’s Learning Management System is a major issue, combined with the lack of translatable, universal data reports able to flow into teacher dashboards coherently.”

- Powell et al. (2015)

Administrators must assess what students and staff have access to at home in terms of device and Internet capabilities and decide how to provide such options to families who do not have adequate technology.

The success in the implementation of an online program cannot be measured quickly. However, administrators and staff can meet to evaluate what is working, what is not, and how to overcome challenges. Importantly, teachers and administrators need to know if students are thriving or struggling.

Targeted surveys for teachers, parents, and students can give administrators a clear vision of things to continue, update, and change. By recognizing additional needs, schools can continue to improve and adjust their programs and guidelines.

Using a learning management system with built-in data reporting is especially helpful for teachers to see how much time students are spending in the platform and actively engaged with the content.

In a survey conducted by Ian Kingsbury (2021), "Virtual schools would be expected to outperform brick and mortar counterparts that were forced to adapt to virtual learning with limited warning."

With these expectations in mind, there is a significant amount of pressure for schools to find, fund, and implement a successful online program.



Alleviating the complications of establishing an online program, some education leadership organizations assist schools in making the transition to online learning (Hill, 2010). One such organization providing these services is Lincoln Learning Solutions.



In its web guide, “How to Start an Online Program: A Practical Guide to Key Issues and Policies,” the Aurora Institute (2018) elaborates upon the major steps to establishing a successful online program.

STEPS TO ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL ONLINE PROGRAM

1. Determine potential student population and stakeholders.
2. Analyze faculty and staff needs.
3. Establish funding.
4. Choose a curriculum.
5. Determine technology needs and arrange related services.
6. Recruit, hire, and train staff members.
7. Market program to students and families.
8. Train students and families.
9. Evaluate the program’s effectiveness and future success.

Lincoln Learning Solutions provides the Lincoln Empowered curriculum, a high-quality, customizable curriculum, suitable for any learning environment. Lincoln Learning strives to foster strong partnerships with its turnkey program to alleviate a significant workload for client schools. Lincoln Empowered is available for pre-kindergarten through grade 12.

Blended Learning Environment

In a blended learning environment, teachers can use Lincoln Empowered to enhance their current practices and make live and online classrooms more engaging. Content can be used a multitude of ways, but it is recommended for small and large group instruction via a smartboard or other device. In addition, teachers can set up station rotations for students to play games, watch videos, and practice skill sets.

In a flipped classroom, teachers can provide lessons to students to be done at home or on their own time. Then, students can come to class prepared for discussion and other applications. Content can also be assigned for homework.

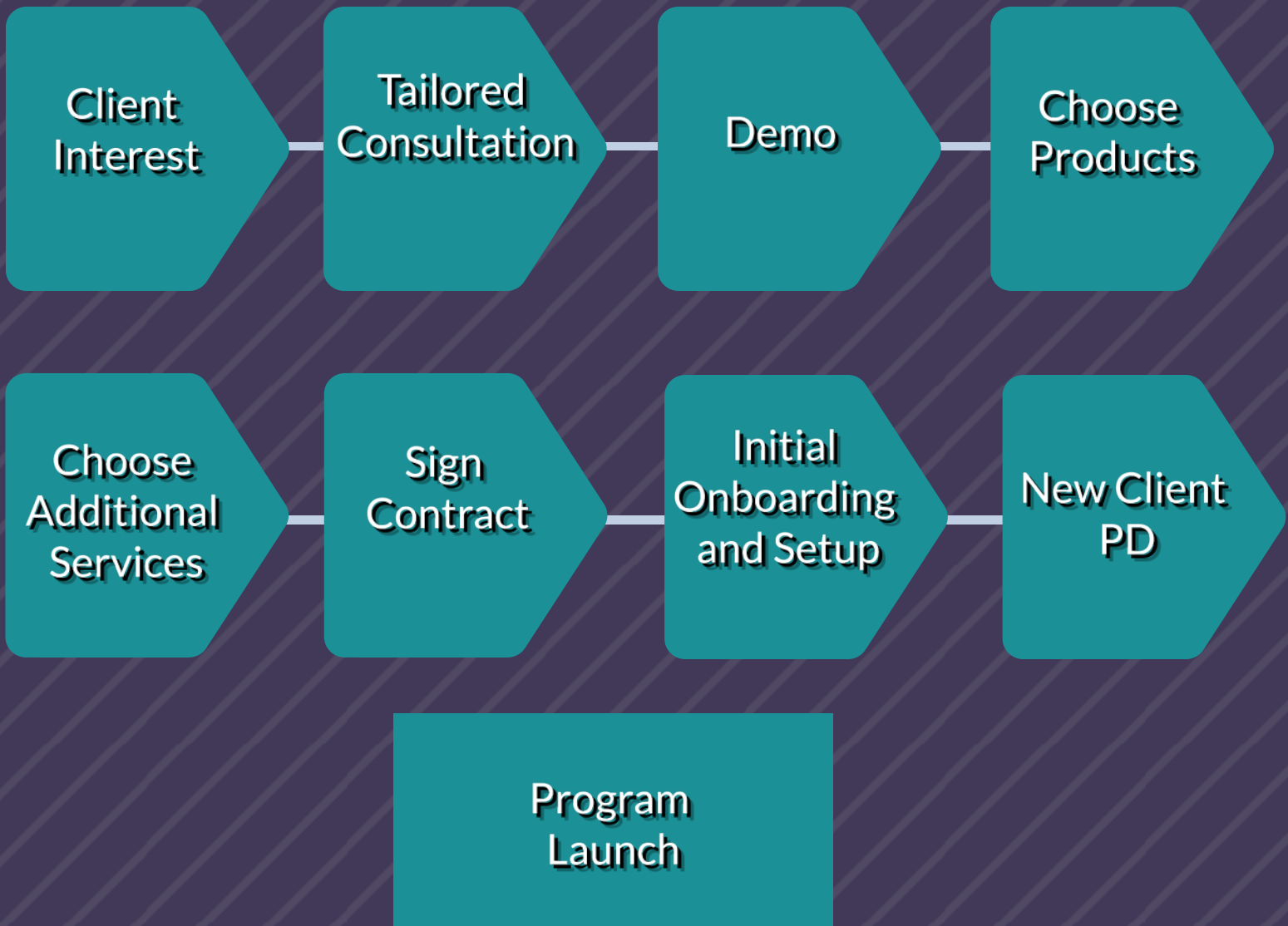
Importantly, teachers can utilize the Learning Object Repository to pull in content to personalize lessons and individualize instruction.

Fully Remote or Virtual Environment

In instances of virtual learning and fully remote environments, students are working entirely from home. Schools can set up their online classrooms through Lincoln Learning's LMS, Buzz. Teachers can then integrate their own live-stream video sessions if they choose. Lincoln Learning teachers do not stream live, but they do offer office hours and one-on-one student support. Lincoln Learning teachers work with school mentors to ensure students are on the path toward success.

The Lincoln Empowered curriculum is self-paced, enabling students to work at a rate that suits their needs. It includes progress monitoring and soft due dates to help students stay on track toward completing coursework within a set amount of time.

Keys to a Successful Lincoln Learning Program at a Glance



Choose Products

Program Evaluation Questions

- Would you like your students to participate in a curriculum that is housed entirely online?
- Do you need a stand alone curriculum or curriculum that is adaptable to meet the needs of your students or program?
- Are you seeking a project-based curriculum where students are creating then uploading authentic assessments?
- What are your student and program needs?
- Are you looking for supplemental curriculum from which you can create or enhance your own courses?

Empowered Traditional	Empowered Auto-graded	Credit Recovery	Learning Object Repository
<p>Authentic and project-based assessments</p> <p>Auto-graded assessments</p> <p>Teacher grading and support</p> <p>Time-based completion</p> <p>Client point person needed for student support and teacher of record</p>	<p>Auto-graded checkpoints every 5 lessons</p> <p>Auto-graded summative Mastery Assessments</p> <p>No teacher grading or support</p> <p>Action-based completion</p> <p>Client point person needed for student support and teacher of record</p>	<p>Non-graded auto-graded pre-tests for diagnostic learning pathways</p> <p>Graded auto-graded post-tests</p> <p>Teacher support</p> <p>Time-based completion</p> <p>Client point person needed for student support and teacher of record</p>	<p>A repository of more than 180,000 granular content and assessment items from more than 170 courses</p> <p>Supplemental content for all learning types and levels</p> <p>Cross-curricular opportunities</p> <p>Flexibility to differentiate instruction</p>

Choose
Additional
Services

Service Evaluation Questions

Materials

- ▶ How would you like to incorporate tangible learning materials and supplies?
- ▶ Who will be responsible for purchasing course materials?
- ▶ Do you want Lincoln Learning to supply materials, including printables and course kits?

Professional Development

- ▶ Are you in need of additional professional development sessions and training services?
- ▶ What kind of support do you need after the program has launched?

Course Facilitation

- ▶ Do you have teachers available for implementing Lincoln Learning courses and offering student support?
- ▶ Would you prefer course facilitation from Lincoln Learning teachers?

Initial Onboarding & Setup

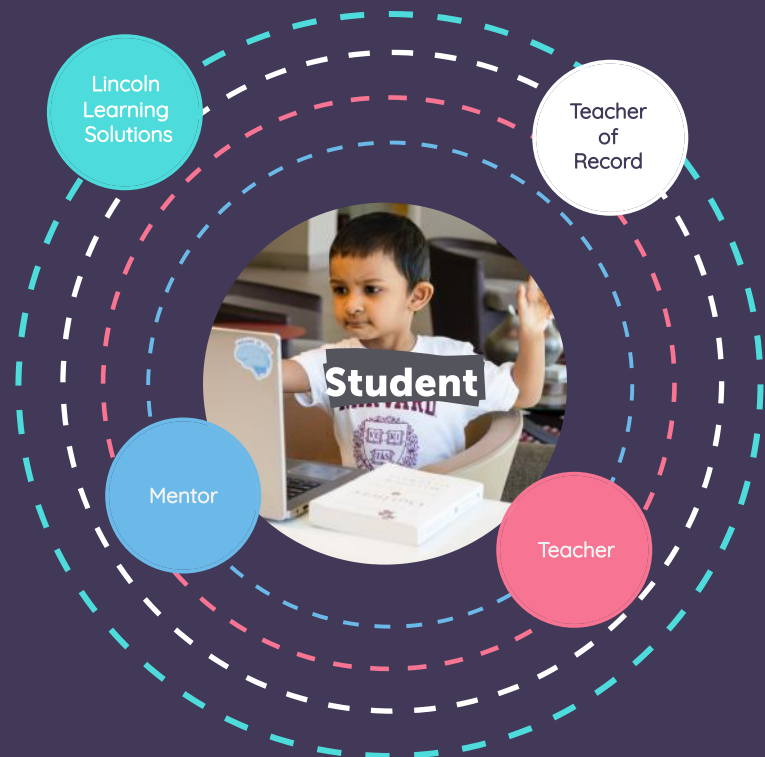
Onboarding & Setup Evaluation Questions

- Who will be the main point of contact?
- What is your timeline for setup and program launch?
- Who will be responsible for setting up student, parent, and staff accounts and enrollments?
- Where will your students be learning: in the classroom, remotely, or a combination of both?

Lincoln Learning Solutions focuses on assisting clients after the program launch and supporting students through their academic journeys.

Client-Centered Support

Student-Centered Support



Lincoln Learning Solutions includes specialized departments that collaborate, produce, and maintain curriculum and client needs. The following outline provides an overview of how teams serve clients.

Lincoln Empowered	
Curriculum	<p>Lincoln Empowered gives students the opportunity to exceed academic standards. Using a variety of media, students learn new and exciting grade-appropriate content. Students establish their own learning paths with Lincoln Empowered videos that inspire, motivate, and prepare students to learn. Online manipulatives, like simulations and games, gauge students' understanding. As part of the Lincoln Empowered curriculum development, each piece of content goes through an extensive process of planning, development, review, editing, and sign-off.</p>
Course Facilitation and Student Support	<p>Lincoln Learning Solutions hires highly qualified teachers to facilitate courses. These teachers are certified by content area in a state. State certifications will vary. Lincoln Learning teachers grade and provide content support for students within their classes. Expert teaching staff uses best practices, teacher tools, and individualized support to help students progress through their courses. As part of course facilitation, teachers adhere to Lincoln Learning internal guidelines and evidence-based practices.</p> <p>Virtual Liaisons are available for client schools who have students with accommodations from IEP/504 plans and are using Lincoln Learning Solution's instructional staff.</p> <p>For more information, review the following resources: Teacher Facilitation Overview Student Support Services Information Guide</p>
Solutions Specialists	<p>Solutions Specialists work with clients to determine the most appropriate products and services. Solutions Specialists meet with clients throughout the year to monitor program success and to introduce new products and services.</p>

Lincoln Empowered

Training & Teacher Preparation

The Professional Development team assists clients through customized implementation, training, and ongoing professional development. This team provides modules of support for individual teachers, trains the trainer teams, and leads groups through webinars, in-person sessions, and ongoing sessions—all of which are supported by precise resources available in our [Help Center](#). Client teachers are able to implement the curriculum within their own classrooms, with the support of our PD team.

Client Success

Following the thorough and structured professional development sessions, the implementation plan concludes with assigning clients a single point of contact: a Lincoln Learning Solutions Client Success Specialist. Success Specialists assist clients with enrollments and curriculum questions, and they work closely with other departments to answer questions clients may have beyond the curriculum. These accessible, friendly individuals serve as support systems for clients throughout the year and offer customer service in real time, responding to calls and emails within 24 hours during the business week.

Marketing

The marketing team, in part, supports clients and families by maintaining a user friendly website, including blogs, newsletters, and other time-released resources, promoting community engagement, and highlighting philanthropic endeavors.

Technical Support

Technical Support at Lincoln Learning Solutions provides a strong collaboration with service teams to help establish efficient workflows and solutions for clients. The IT team created and maintains the Lincoln Learning enrollment tool, Pulse.

Program Analytics

Lincoln Learning Solutions sends surveys to collect data in order to enhance curriculum and suggest how clients can improve their own programs. Reports can pull student and teacher data from the LMS and SIS to inform clients on curriculum analytics.

Gull Lake Community Schools

“Lincoln Learning has continued to be a positive educational partner for all of us at the Gull Lake Virtual Partnership. During the pandemic, our established partnership proved to be a powerhouse, which allowed us to creatively work together to meet our increased enrollment needs in a timely manner. Our stakeholders consistently report that Lincoln’s content is high quality, relevant, and rigorous. The customer service from Lincoln is outstanding, and they have demonstrated a growth mindset in meeting our unique needs. Gull Lake Virtual Partnership strives to provide meaningful, personalized learning pathways for all students. It is important to us that we choose vendors who share the same sentiment for student learning.”

Bobbie Jo Stoner

Principal of Early College and Innovative Programs

Pewamo-Westphalia Community Schools

“Lincoln Learning has been such a blessing in an already stressful season in education. As an elementary school principal I was looking for a vendor that would be a good fit for my students who were opting to learn remotely due to COVID-19. We found Lincoln Learning and discovered that you had Michigan certified teachers. What a perfect fit for us! Despite my lack of experience with an online vendor, I have been completely at ease throughout this process. Everyone at Lincoln Learning has been patient and gracious to me. Your initial start up training was informative and answered all of my questions. The training videos and support materials helped me work at my own pace and explained everything that I needed to know to begin the process. Pulse is user-friendly and the enrollment of my students was quick. I am really excited for my students who have chosen to learn remotely this year because of Lincoln Learning. I am confident that it will be seamless and they will learn a lot! Thank you for providing excellent training and support so far throughout this process.”

Julie Farmer

Elementary Principal/Special Education Supervisor

Across the nation, K-12 online education initiatives are thriving. As a result, districts are reaping the benefits of establishing online programs, including:

1. Opportunities for personalized learning options, including advanced placement and credit recovery
2. Freedom from limitations, including location and scheduling
3. Flexible schedules for students (Archambault et al., 2016)

Accompanying the establishment of online programs is a bevy of hurdles, however. Choosing curriculum, hiring and training staff, providing student support, managing technology, and assessing the program can discourage schools from pursuing expanded, online curriculum offerings.

With these challenges in mind, education leadership organizations such as Lincoln Learning Solutions now offer solutions to assist schools in creating their own online programs with minimal difficulty, which enables schools across the nation to more effectively and efficiently personalize learning for their students.



- Archambault, A., Kennedy, K., Shelton, C., Dalal, M., McAllister, L., & Huyett, S. (2016). Incremental progress: Re-examining field experiences in K-12 online learning contexts in the United States. *Journal of Online Research*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1148603.pdf>
- English, M. (2020, July 1). The 5 biggest challenges in delivering K-12 elearning. *Forecast 5 Analytics*. <https://www.forecast5analytics.com/blog/5-biggest-challenges-delivering-elearning>
- Forum guide to virtual education data: A resource for education agencies. (2021, June). *National Forum on Education Statistics*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED615403.pdf>
- Giffin, J. (2020). Teacher observation, feedback, and support in the time of COVID-19: Guidance for virtual learning. American Institute for Research. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED610628.pdf>
- Gemin, B., Pape, L., Vashaw, L., & Watson, J. (2015). Keeping pace with K-12 online & blended learning: An annual review of policy and practice. *Evergreen Education Group*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED570125.pdf>
- Hill, W. R. (2010, June). Barriers to implementing K12 virtual education: A statewide study of school district online technology coordinators. *Texas A&M University of Corpus Christi*. <https://1library.net/document/y91n3gjq-barriers-implementing-education-statewide-district-technology-coordinators-dissertation.html>
- How to start an online program: A practical guide to key issues and policies. (2018, January 25). *iNACOL*. <https://www.onlineprogramhowto.org/>
- Kennedy, K., & Archambault, L. (2012, February 24). Offering preservice teachers field experiences in K-12 online learning: A national survey of teacher education programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63(3), 185-200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487111433651>

- Kingsbury, I. Online learning: How do brick and mortar schools stack up to virtual schools?. *Educ Inf Technol* **26**, 6567–6588 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10450-1>
- Powell, A., Watson, J., Staley, P., Patrick, S., Horn, M., Fetzer, L., Hibbard, L., Oglesby, J., & Verma, S. (2015, July). Blended learning: The evolution of online and face-to-face education from 2008-2015. *iNACOL*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED560788.pdf>
- Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2009, April). Management and operations of online programs: Ensuring quality and accountability. *iNACOL*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509622.pdf>
- Watson, J., Murin, A., Vashaw, L., Gemin, B., & Rapp, C. (2013). Keeping ace with K-12 Online & Blended Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice. *iNACOL*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED566139.pdf>