Online Learning Annual Report
2013–14


Information Technology Services
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Executive Summary

Online learning plays an important role in the state’s education landscape. Both students and schools benefit from online courses by:

- Allowing students to enroll in courses that are otherwise not available at their school;
- Ensuring that students are able to earn credits needed for graduation;
- Providing schools with a wide array of educational options to meet student needs;
- Providing students with an important alternative to traditional classrooms, assisting students who seek remediation or acceleration in their learning;
- Meeting the needs of students with different learning styles.

In school year 2013–14, over 23,000 Washington students enrolled in nearly 73,000 K-12 online courses. Both the number of students and the number of enrollments were essentially unchanged from the previous year. The number of districts reporting online enrollments increased, while the number of schools fell slightly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012–13</th>
<th>2013–14</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School districts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with at least 1 online course enrollment</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>+6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with at least 1 online course enrollment</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who took at least 1 online course</td>
<td>23,466</td>
<td>23,651</td>
<td>+0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In previous reports, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) highlighted concerns about student achievement in online courses. Based on the 2013–14 data, there is still cause for concern. Online course enrollments are successfully completed 75 percent of the time, compared to 89 percent for non-online courses. Finally, students in online programs met standard on the state math assessments at a lower rate than the state average, while meeting standard at a roughly comparable rate on the reading assessment. But, when using a measurement of student growth over time, online students ranked well below the state average in both reading and math.

In 2014, OSPI made a significant change in the rules that govern the online provider approval process. The previous process focused largely on program “inputs”—policies, and procedures. With the rule revision, providers must now meet student achievement performance targets (“outputs”) in order to maintain their approved status.

This rule change comes only a year after the Legislature made significant changes to both online learning and Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) laws in 2013. Therefore, we recommend that the Legislature not make further modifications to these laws in 2015. Schools and online providers should have the chance to fully implement the changes in the laws and rules. OSPI and the State Auditor’s Office will continue to closely monitor ALE and online learning, and this will help inform any future policy discussions in this area.
Introduction

In 2009 the Washington State Legislature created an accountability system for online learning (Substitute Senate Bill 5410, RCW 28A.250.005). The Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop an online provider approval system and report annually on the state of online learning in Washington.

As requested, this report covers:

- The provider approval process and results
- Student demographics
- Student achievement (statewide assessment results and course performance)

Process

Definitions

As defined in RCW 28A.250.010, an online course is one where:

- More than half of the course content is delivered electronically using the Internet or other computer-based methods, and
- More than half of the teaching is conducted from a remote location through an online course learning management system or other online or electronic tools.
- A certificated teacher has the primary responsibility for the student’s instructional interaction. Instructional interaction between the teacher and the student includes, but is not limited to, direct instruction, review of assignments, assessment, testing, progress monitoring, and educational facilitation; and
- Students have access to the teacher synchronously, asynchronously, or both.

An online school program is “a school program that offers a sequential set of online courses or grade-level coursework that may be taken in a single school term or throughout the school year in a manner that could provide a full-time basic education program if so desired by the student” (RCW 28A.250.010).

Online course providers offer individual online courses (as defined above) and have the following characteristics:

- Online course providers must supply all of the following: course content, access to a learning management system, and online teachers.
- Online courses can be delivered to students at school as part of the regularly scheduled school day.
- Online courses can be delivered to students, in whole or in part, independently from a regular classroom schedule and must comply with RCW 28A.150.262 to qualify for state basic education funding as an Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) program.

This report uses a number of terms to refer to students:

- **Headcount** measures each unique student served.
- **A full-time equivalent (FTE)** is a measurement of student enrollment for funding purposes. It provides an accurate estimate of the portion of time a student is served by a given program, with 1.0 referring to a full-time student.

- **A course enrollment** refers to a single student enrolled in a single course for a single term. For example, a single high school student taking a full load of courses would have 10 (if the district offers five periods a day) or 12 course enrollments (if six periods are offered) for the school year.

**Data Sources**

This report makes use of three main data sources: the monthly ALE enrollment report, the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), and the Digital Learning Department’s (DLD) registration system.

**ALE Enrollment**

OSPI collects a monthly student headcount and FTE enrollment report from all ALE programs, including information about resident and serving districts. This data source provides information on interdistrict “choice” transfers and FTE funding measurements, in addition to enrollment figures.

As school districts need to complete this report as a part of the enrollment reporting for apportionment, we have a high degree of confidence in the quality of the enrollment figures.

There was one significant change to this data collection during the 2013–14 school year. In Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5496, the 2013 Legislature replaced the three ALE program types with three ALE course types. Prior to 2013–14, the ALE enrollment data included a self-reported program type categorization. Beginning with 2013–14, we no longer asked programs to identify a program type. We did ask them to estimate the proportion of FTE that made use of each of the three ALE course types. Beginning in 2014–15, ALE programs will be required to report the course type into CEDARS for each ALE enrollment. This change is further discussed in the section entitled “Online Learning in the ALE Context.”

The ALE data set used in this report was generated on September 9, 2014.

**CEDARS**

Districts report enrollment and high school grading data to OSPI through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Online courses are designated as such, so that CEDARS may be queried for information about students who have taken high school-level online courses.

The reporting standards required by RCW 28A.250.040 (2), requiring districts to designate online courses, came into effect with the 2010–11 school year. To ensure that we have a more accurate count of online students, we’ve included both students who were enrolled in courses designed as online and students enrolled in schools that are known to be online school programs in the CEDARS data set. In order to qualify as a “known online school program,” the school must offer only online courses (and not face-to-face courses) and the individual district must report data for the program as a standalone school. As a number of online school programs are combined with other brick-and-
mortar programs (such as alternative schools or parent partnerships), some online schools were not included in this method. The known online school programs are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Schools that offer only online courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Kitsap</td>
<td>CK Online Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonds</td>
<td>Edmonds e-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evergreen (Clark)</td>
<td>iQ Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Way</td>
<td>Internet Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelso</td>
<td>Kelso Virtual Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marysville</td>
<td>Marysville On-line Virtual Education Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>Washington Virtual Academy (High School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Franklin</td>
<td>North Franklin Virtual Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omak</td>
<td>Washington Virtual Academy (High School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omak</td>
<td>Washington Virtual Academy (Elementary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omak</td>
<td>Washington Virtual Academy (Middle School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quillayute Valley</td>
<td>Insight School of Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snohomish</td>
<td>APEXOnline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toppenish</td>
<td>NW AllPrep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Salmon</td>
<td>Columbia Tech High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakima</td>
<td>Yakima Online!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When reporting data for all online students in CEDARS, we are counting each student individually. This means that if a student was enrolled in more than one school, the student will be counted only once using the most recent demographic information.

The CEDARS data set used in this report was generated on December 2, 2014.

**OSPI’s Digital Learning Department (DLD) Registration System**

The Digital Learning Department (DLD) data set includes information about students who were enrolled in individual online courses through the DLD’s course catalog and registration system.

See Appendix A for demographics and enrollment information about students enrolling in online courses through the DLD catalog.

**Provider Reviews**

**Background**

[RCW 28A.250.020](http://example.com), as enacted in 2009, directed OSPI to create a set of approval criteria, an approval process, an appeal process, and a monitoring and rescindment process for multidistrict online providers. As a result, OSPI developed [WAC 392-502](http://example.com) to outline these criteria and processes. The
Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC), appointed by Superintendent Randy I. Dorn, assisted and advised throughout this development.

Beginning with the 2013–14 school year, all providers must be approved by OSPI in order for school districts to claim state funding for students enrolled in online courses or programs. OSPI has three approval pathways available for online providers:

- Online school programs serving students from multiple districts ("multi-district online programs"), in addition to companies and non-profits that contract with multiple districts, must participate in a review process whereby the provider submits evidence as to how the provider meets the 54 online approval criteria. The evidence is then scored by a team of outside reviewers.

- Online school programs which have entirely outsourced the content, platform, and instruction of their programs to already approved online school program providers are eligible for the “affiliate” program approval option. This option has been available since fall, 2010. Programs choosing this option do not need to submit evidence demonstrating that the program meets the approval criteria, but they must be accredited with AdvancEd and they must accept the approval assurances.

- Online school programs which serve out-of-district students at a rate of less than 10 percent are eligible to seek approval without participating in the full review process through the “single district” process. Like the affiliate approval option, the single district option does not entail the program’s submission of evidence demonstrating that it meets the approval criteria, but does require the program’s accreditation with AdvancEd and the acceptance of the approval assurances.

### 2014 Full Review Approval Process

#### Approval Reviewers and Scoring

OSPI uses contracted external reviewers to score applications that qualify for the “full” review process. Nine reviewers participated in the 2014 review process. All of the 2014 reviewers conducted reviews in previous review cycles. In earlier review cycles, these reviewers underwent extensive training in preparation for their reviews and scoring. All reviewers participating in the spring 2014 review cycle attended a training to update them on the changes to approval eligibility, to the criteria, and to the review process.

The reviewers scored each application against the 54 criteria, with each item worth a single point. Applicants must have provided evidence to show the reviewer that they met the criteria. Reviewers could score an item 0, .5, or 1. Applicants draw on many sources for this evidence, including sample courses, written policies, and other primary source documents. OSPI provides applicants with extensive feedback on their application, including written comments from the reviewers.

#### Process Changes

After each review cycle, OSPI staff, working with the Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC), updates the criteria based on feedback from applicants and reviewers. OSPI made minor edits to the criteria prior to the 2014 review cycle based on feedback gathered from approval reviewers to
examine each of the 54 approval criteria and 16 assurances. A compilation of all changes to the
criteria can be found on the department’s Changes to the Criteria Web page:
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/criteria/changes.php.

**2014 Approval Cycle Results**

In order to be approved, providers were required to meet or exceed a cut score of 46 points (85
percent of 54 possible points). The cut score was set in consultation with OLAC.

Participants in the spring 2014 approval cycle were comprised of two already-approved providers
seeking approval renewal, one already-approved provider seeking approval of new offerings
emerging from a merger, and two providers completely new to the approval process. All providers,
with the exception of one completely new to the approval process, were approved. The approved
providers are:

- DigiPen Institute of Technology
- Ed Options, Inc.
- Olympia Regional Learning Academy/iConnect Academy
- Northwest Liberty School

**Approved Providers**

As of December, 2014, there are a total of 94 approved providers, including 18 online course
providers, 14 program providers, and 8 affiliate, 54 single district and 21 multidistrict online school
programs. The complete list is available in Appendix B.

**Online Learning Rule Changes**

OSPI has made substantial changes to the rules governing the online provider approval process.
The rule revisions were finalized in October, 2014. The previous system relied heavily on inputs-
based reviews, as described above. The new system will continue to rely on reviews for initial
approval, but will shift the focus of maintaining approval to how effectively the provider’s courses
and programs are serving the educational interests of Washington students.

The previous system’s affiliate and single district approval mechanisms, which allow programs to
seek OSPI approval without supplying a full review application, will remain, but all provider
renewals will be outcomes-based.

The new process incorporates corrective action plans in the event a provider does not meet the
approval thresholds on their outcome data. The corrective action plans are intended to allow the
provider to continue to serve students while making specific monitored plans for programmatic
improvements.
Table 2: Summary of online provider rule changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Previous System</th>
<th>New System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targets</strong></td>
<td>Largely based on review of “input” measurements (policies, procedures)</td>
<td>Largely based on “outcomes” – student performance measurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>Only multi-district providers were reviewed</td>
<td>All providers must meet performance targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single District &amp; Affiliate Program Approvals</strong></td>
<td>Single-district and affiliate programs have streamlined registration-based approval process</td>
<td>Single-district and affiliate programs have streamlined registration-based initial approval process, then must meet performance targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approval Term</strong></td>
<td>Providers approved for four year terms</td>
<td>Providers automatically approved yearly (after initial four year term), but must meet performance targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rescindment</strong></td>
<td>Providers enter rescindment process based on evidence they weren’t maintaining assurances and criteria</td>
<td>Providers enter rescindment process if they fail to meet the performance targets or don’t maintain criteria or assurances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Renewal</strong></td>
<td>Renewals required every four years, using the same methods as the initial approval</td>
<td>Renewals are automatic. Approval can only be lost by failing to meet performance targets or other conditions of approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Review</strong></td>
<td>Curriculum-only products were not reviewed</td>
<td>OSPI will provide information about curriculum-only products, but not review or recommend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OSPI Reporting</strong></td>
<td>Providers required to report to OSPI annually</td>
<td>Providers required to report to OSPI annually to maintain approved status.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new process will go into effect prior to the launch of the 2015 full review approval cycle which will open on January 1, 2015. Already-approved online providers previously facing the need to renew via full review will instead be asked to complete the new annual reporting requirement. Providers will be held accountable to outcome data beginning in the 2015–16 school year. Appendix N includes provider data from the 2013–14 school year as an example.

For more information about the approval system, see [http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/](http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/)
Student and Course Totals

CEDARS
Districts report enrollment and course grade data to OSPI through CEDARS, and we query CEDARS for information about students who have taken online courses.

According to district data submitted to CEDARS, 23,651 students took at least one online course in 2013–14. This is 0.8 percent higher than the 2012–13 count of 23,466 students. In both cases, we are using a statewide total whereby a student is only counted once, even if the student was enrolled in multiple districts throughout the year.

Students took a total of 72,787 K–12 online courses in 2013–14, a 0.8 percent increase from the 72,203 enrollments in the previous year. Note that students in Grades K–8 frequently have their courses reported in a single entry such as “third grade” or “elementary curriculum” rather than multiple courses broken out by subject area. A full-time elementary enrollment would show up in the data as a single course.

A total of 221 schools in 138 districts reported at least one online course enrollment, a 2.6 percent decrease and 6.2 percent increase, respectively, over the 2012–13 figures of 227 schools in 130 districts.

Table 3: CEDARS Online Activity by School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Headcount</td>
<td>16,003</td>
<td>18,649</td>
<td>19,891</td>
<td>23,466</td>
<td>23,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Enrollments</td>
<td>57,303</td>
<td>72,180</td>
<td>66,048</td>
<td>72,203</td>
<td>72,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A complete list of schools with online students can be found in Appendix C.

Alternative Learning Experience Data
Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs are required to report enrollment information to OSPI on a monthly basis. The monthly collections were averaged together to create the annual totals. This means that more students may have enrolled in an online program at any given time, but the figures reported here represent the average over the entire year.

Prior to 2013–14, districts self-identified as having one of three program types: digital/online, parent partnership, or contract-based. Beginning with the 2013–14 school year, OSPI shifted to asking programs to provide an estimate of the percentage of student FTE in each of three course types: online, remote, or site-based.
Districts reported an estimated 10,842 FTE were served in online ALE courses during 2013–14. Based on the program type categorization from the prior year, “digital/online” programs reported 9,920 FTE in 2013–14. This figure was 4.0% higher than the 2012–13 figure of 8,911.2 FTE.

One hundred and seventy-nine ALE programs reported FTE in the online course category.

**Digital Learning Department Course Catalog**

School districts can purchase access to individual online courses through OSPI’s Digital Learning Department (DLD) online course catalog. During 2013–14, 1,551 students enrolled in 2,855 courses. Enrollments came from 73 schools in 57 different school districts.

Both the student headcount and enrollment figures rose as compared to the prior year (16.8 percent and 7.7 percent changes) after being essentially unchanged between 2012–13 and 2013–14. However, the number of participating schools and districts dropped 6.4 percent and 5.0 percent, respectively.

**Mixed Signals on Online Enrollment**

The various indicators of online enrollment — CEDARS, ALE, and DLD — are not entirely consistent as we attempt to assess the growth of online learning within the state. CEDARS showed basically no growth in the number of students and enrollments, while the number of schools reporting online enrollments fell slightly. But, the number of school districts reporting online enrollments grew by 6.2 percent.

Meanwhile, the headcount of students enrolled in "digital/online" ALE programs rose by 7.2 percent. And, the number of students participating in DLD online courses increased by 16.8 percent, even though the number of schools and districts making use of the DLD catalog fell. Neither metric is without issue — the ALE metric is based on program type categorizations from the previous year and the DLD statistics only capture a relatively small subset of students enrolled in online courses. Yet, there is reason to think there has been growth in the number of online students.

In order to clear up the mixed signals, we contacted several districts that showed large year-to-year variability in the number of online students reported into CEDARS. There was no single cause of the differences. Some of the issues included:

- In at least one case, a school district had an issue with the reporting of CEDARS grade history data.
- Several districts reported turnover in staff that may have led to incorrect coding of online courses.
- Other districts reported changes in their online program configuration, including, in one case, a shift to a blended learning instructional model that no longer met the definition of “online.”
- At least one district reported that their online enrollments shifted from a centralized online program to other buildings within the district, and that the courses may not have been properly coded as online in each of the new sites.
- In one district, a miscommunication within the district about the availability of online learning options seems to have caused an unintended dip in student participation.
Another district reports that their online learning program over-extended its budget in the 2012–13 school year and as a result, enrollment was limited by the district in the 2013–14 school year.

One large district with an extensive online learning program reported no online enrollments to CEDARS, almost certainly in error.

We believe there was likely more growth in online learning that is reflected in the CEDARS numbers.

**Student Demographics**

**Gender**

Female students continue to be slightly over-represented among students taking online courses, as compared to the population of non-online K–12 students in the state. Female students made up 51.7 percent of the online student population in 2013–14 (from CEDARS), compared to 48.2 percent of the non-online student population.

The gender ratio had been moving closer to the state average throughout the four years prior to 2013–14. However, 2013–14 saw a slight increase in the percentage of female students in online courses.

See Appendix D for complete demographic data.

**Figure 1: Gender of Online Students, 2009–10 to 2013–14**

![Graph showing gender distribution of online students from 2009–10 to 2013–14]

**Ethnicity**

As compared to the non-online student population, White students are over-represented amongst online students. Hispanic/Latino and Asian students are under-represented compared to non-online students. Over the five years for which we have data, there have been two notable changes:
In 2009–10, 77.1 percent of online students were White, compared to 67.1 percent in 2013–14, a decrease of 10 percent.

In 2009–10, 5.9 percent of online students were Hispanic/Latino, compared to 14.7 percent in 2013–14, an increase of 8.8 percent.

See Appendix D for complete demographic data.

Figure 2: Ethnicity/Race of Online Students, 2012–13

Transitional Bilingual

Of the 23,651 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 439 (1.86 percent) were marked as transitional bilingual students. Although this is significantly lower than the 9.72 percent (107,864) of non-online students in the state with the same designation, it does represent a slight increase over the 2012–13 rate of 1.55 percent (363) of transitional bilingual online students.

See Appendix D for complete demographic data.

Special Education

Of the 23,651 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 2,232 (9.4 percent) were reported as students in special education. This figure is lower than the 14.2 percent of non-online students listed in special education, but it is higher than the 2012–13 rate of 7.5 percent of online students listed in special education.

As shown in Figure 3, the percent of online students in special education has grown steadily since 2009–10. However, some of the increase between 2012–13 and 2013–14 can be attributed to an anomaly as a result of an issue with a district’s CEDARS reporting. Insight School of Washington, one of the largest online schools in the state, reported only five special education students in 2012–13, compared to 220 the prior year. Insight reported 298 special education students in 2013–14. Beyond this issue, there is still clearly growth in the percent of online students in special education.
There are a number of possible reasons for the disparity between the overall special education rate and the online school rate, including:

- Depending on a student’s individual needs, an online school program may not be the most appropriate educational option. Online programs require the ability to operate a computer, as well as the motivation to complete a significant amount of coursework in an independent manner. Students who feel they may not be able to operate within this learning environment are less likely to seek it out.

- Many of the students enrolling in online school programs are transferring from their resident district into an online school in another district. Students who are already receiving special education services in their resident district may be hesitant to transfer for fear that equivalent services will be unavailable or difficult to obtain.

- Online schools may be discouraging special education students from enrolling, either through pre-enrollment counseling or transfer rejections, out of concern for providing special education services to remote students. Rejection of a transfer request solely because of special education status is not consistent with the law.

See Appendix D for complete demographic data.

**Part-time Homeschooled Students**

Students can enroll part-time in a public school district and can be homeschooled for the other part of their education. Parents who intend to home school their children must file a declaration of intent to provide home-based instruction. This is a distinct category apart from students who may have been homeschooled in the past, but are now enrolled full-time in an online program, or from students who are enrolled full-time in an ALE program, yet complete their school work at home. The part-time homeschoolers discussed here are those who were, during the 2013–14 school year, involved in both an online course and a homeschool experience.
Of the 23,651 students listed in CEDARS as participating in an online course, 523 (2.2%) were reported as being enrolled part-time in a public school district in addition to being homeschooled. In comparison, only 0.3 percent of non-online students, or 3,580 total, were part-time homeschooled and part-time enrolled in the public school system.

In last year’s legislative report, we noted a discrepancy in the data reported for Washington Virtual Academy, or WAVA, an online school program located in the Omak and Monroe school districts. Across the four WAVA schools (elementary, middle, and high schools in Omak and a high school program in Monroe), only a single student was reported as part-time homeschooled in 2012–13. This appeared to be the result of a change in how CEDARS tracks part-time homeschooled students. Beginning with the 2012–13 school year, this specific field moved from allowing responses of “Y” or “N” to numerical responses to differentiate the percentage of time a student was enrolled in the school district. This change was driven by an updated assessment requirement in the ALE rules. WAVA’s data submissions reflected the earlier response codes, not the updated ones. For the 2013–14 school year, Omak and Monroe have corrected this issue, and the data for this category appears to be accurate.

See Appendix D for complete demographic data.

**Course Enrollment Patterns**

**Grade Level**

Most online learning is happening at the high school level; 79.3 percent (18,761) of the online student population, down slightly from 81.1 percent in 2012–13, are high school students. In contrast, K–8 students made up 20.7 percent (4,900) of the online students. K–5 students, who tend to be full-time online learning students, made up 9.6 percent of the online student population. Because CEDARS only tracks course enrollment patterns for high school students, we need to identify K–8 online students based on attendance in an online school. As a result, this method could undercount the number of K–8 online students.

The other significant source of data we have about student enrollment is the ALE data set. Of the estimated 12,114.4 FTE that schools reported as using the “online” ALE course type, 3,908.4 FTE were in grades K–8. This represented 32.3 percent of the K–8 ALE FTEs. Based on this, it is fair to conclude that the K–8 online population is approximately 20 to 30 percent of all online students.

The picture is further muddied due to the fact that online learning at the elementary level, especially with the earlier grades, looks fundamentally different than online learning for middle and high school students. Programs aimed at elementary students are often structured to include significant parental involvement. Many of these programs, especially for students in grades K–5, also provide a good deal of non-online curriculum.
Figure 4: Online Students by Grade Level (CEDARS), 2012–13

See Appendix D for more details about online student grade levels.

Part-time and Full-time Course Enrollment Patterns

The majority of online students do not take all of their coursework online. Of the high school students who took online courses during the 2013–14 school year, 74.0 percent (13,870) took fewer than five online courses. Only 12.1 percent (2,271) of students took enough courses (10 or more) to be considered full-time for the entire school year. This data is limited to high school students for which we have a grade history in CEDARS (18,751 students in total).

A course in this context refers to a single semester-long enrollment, so a year-long course (Algebra 1, for example) would be reported as two courses. We have scoped the analysis of part-time and full-time enrollment to high school students only. Each high school course is reported in CEDARS as a distinct course. Full-time high school students will take five or six courses per semester, or 10 or 12 courses for the school year. Students in Grades K–8, however, are more likely to have their courses reported in a single entry (e.g., “elementary curriculum”). A full-time elementary enrollment would show up in the data as a single course. By examining only high school courses, we are better able to distinguish course-taking patterns.
Since 2010–11, the trend has been for more and more students to take fewer than 5 online courses per year. The number of students taking 10 or more courses has held roughly steady, with 2,515 students in that category in 2010–11 and 2,277 in 2013–14. In other words, the growth in online learning has occurred largely amongst students taking only a handful of online courses per year.

**Figure 6: Number of High School Online Courses Taken, 2010–11 through 2013–14**

See Appendix E for the data supporting Figure 5 and Figure 6.
Subjects
Of the 65,576 online course enrollments for which we have CEDARS subject area data in 2013–14, 16.5 percent were English Language Arts courses, 15.2 percent were math courses, 12.8 percent were physical, health and safety education courses, 10.6 percent were history courses, and 10.3 percent were science courses.

See Appendix E for complete details on subjects taken by online students.

Student Motivation
Students seek online courses for a variety of reasons, and those reasons likely vary depending on the type of course. The DLD gathers data about students enrolling in individual online courses. As a part of the registration process, course registrars are asked to report the reason for the student’s enrollment.

Table 4: Student Motivation for Taking DLD Courses, 2013–14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course not available at the school</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course helps student earn credit needed to graduate</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online learning environment perceived as better-meeting student's learning style</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course helps student make up failed credits needed to graduate</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online course venue helps alleviate scheduling conflict</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course offers student enrichment or subject matter of interest</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course allows student to better prepare for college-level coursework</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course is needed to earn the second half of a full online credit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course allows student to prepare for the state assessments (MSP/HSPE)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course helps student earn college credit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,839</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results only apply for students taking individual online courses, and not those enrolling in an online school program, as motivations likely vary dramatically for students enrolling in a full-time online school program. Currently, there is no data that speaks to student motivation for enrollment in online school programs.

Payment
School-based registrars are asked to identify the funding source for course payments when registering students for individual DLD online courses. Most courses, according to the registrars, were paid for by the school, not the student. Note that if the course is taken as a part of the student’s basic education, then the school must pay for the course. If the course is taken outside of
basic education—for example, as an after-school course—local district policy determines responsibility for payment.

### Table 5: Payment Source for DLD Online Courses, 2013–14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School will pay full amount</td>
<td>2,244</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/family will pay full amount</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/family will pay partial amount; school will pay partial amount</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,854</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools spent, in total, $674,184 on DLD online courses, an increase of $38,852 over the previous year. Fifteen schools spent more than $10,000 during the school year on DLD courses, and fourteen spent between $5,000 and $10,000.

Schools paid an average of $272 for each completed DLD course. The highest single semester course cost was $375. The lowest cost was $175 for a summer-term course. Note that many credit recovery courses have a lower cost structure, averaging $182 per semester, to reflect the fact that students can often quickly move through material they have previously mastered.

Dropped DLD courses are charged based on when the drop occurred. If the student drops prior to the course start, there is no charge to the school. If the student drops within two weeks of the start date, the school pays a fraction of the overall fee, and the school pays the full fee if the drop occurs outside of the two-week window. On average, schools paid $77 for dropped courses.

### Non-Resident Students

Based on the non-resident district data submitted by ALE programs, an average annual headcount of 8,156.7 students were enrolled in a “digital/online” ALE program in a district other than their resident district. In order to do this, some students completely transferred to a non-resident district. In other cases, a student’s resident district contracted with a non-resident district to allow the student to split their coursework between two districts. Based on the total annual average headcount, non-resident students represented 69.4 percent of students enrolled in online ALE programs, a percentage that was up from the 65.6 percent of students in this category during the prior year. The annual average non-resident FTE was 7,483.9 FTE, representing 77.4 percent of all digital/online ALE FTE. The percentage of non-resident FTE was higher than the 2012–13 figure of 73.6 percent.

One hundred and ten (110) digital/online programs reported ALE enrollment to OSPI. Of those, 46 programs (43.8 percent) enrolled non-resident students. Twenty-two programs had more than 10 percent of their students enroll from out-of-district.
The bulk of the non-resident students (87.9 percent) were enrolled in the ten programs that had over 90 percent non-resident students. In other words, a few large programs—including Insight School of Washington, the WAVA programs, and NW AllPrep—accounted for the vast majority of non-resident students.

See Appendix F for the complete list of schools with non-resident ALE enrollments.

**Standard Choice Transfer System**

In 2013, the Legislature directed OSPI to create a standard form to be used by all districts for "choice transfers" for online school enrollments. (See [RCW 28A.250.070](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billstatus/StandardChoiceTransferSystem)). A choice transfer is the process by which a parent can transfer a child from the resident school district to a non-resident school district. OSPI developed the Standard Choice Transfer System (SCTS) was developed to meet the legislative directive and to help streamline the paperwork required to carry out the transfer process. SCTS is a web-based application that provides a resident district the ability to submit a parent request for a Choice Transfer to a nonresident district, signifying the intent to release the student upon acceptance. The nonresident district will accept or deny the request within the system. Email notices are sent automatically from the system at milestones throughout the process to the parent and the districts. The system features include the ability to rescind, renew and resubmit appealed requests, as well as the ability for the two school districts to create an agreement to share student funding and services. The system was launched in the spring of 2014.

**Online Learning in the ALE Context**

The ALE data set helps us understand online course enrollment patterns. However, ALE is a much broader category, and it is useful to understand how online learning fits into ALE.

ALE exists to provide students a public education option that takes place, in whole or in part, independently from a regular classroom setting or schedule. The ALE rules determine how school districts can claim state funding for students who are not following the “seat time” model.

While most online learning is claimed under ALE, districts can also offer online courses and use the seat time rules by assigning the student to work on the course in a classroom on a regular schedule.

Prior to the 2013–14 school year, there were three types of ALE programs:

- **Online programs**, as defined earlier in this report.
- **Parent partnerships** are characterized by significant participation from parents.
- **Contract-based programs** do not refer to programs that have been contracted out to a company. Instead, the “contract” refers to an agreement between the program and the students. Contract-based programs tend to serve largely at-risk high school students.

In Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5496, the 2013 Legislature replaced the three ALE program types with three ALE course types:
Online course means an alternative learning experience course that has the same meaning as provided in RCW 28A.250.010;

Remote course means an alternative learning experience course or course work that is not an online course where the student has in-person instructional contact time for less than twenty percent of the total weekly time for the course;

Site-based course means an alternative learning experience course or course work that is not an online course where the student has in-person instructional contact time for at least twenty percent of the total weekly time for the course.

Total ALE enrollment declined by 1,409 FTE from 2012–13 to 2013–14. The two prior years had seen declines of 1,799 and 4,585 FTE, respectively.

Figure 7 shows the FTE distribution using the now-defunct program types. Digital/online programs continued to see growth, increasing enrollment by 359 FTE while contract-based programs were down 669 FTE and parent partnerships lost 1,099 FTE.

Figure 7: ALE FTE from 2005–06 through 2013–14

Figure 8 shows the transition between the three ALE program types (on the left) and the three new ALE course types (on the right). Programs that had labeled themselves as “digital/online” indicated that the 93.0 percent of their courses fell in the “online” course type in 2013–14. “Contract-based” programs reported that 61.6 percent of their courses were site-based, although online and remote courses made up 18.1 percent and 18.6 percent of their totals, respectively. Parent partnerships saw the most diversity in course types, with 52.9 percent of courses falling into the site-based course type, along with 35.1 percent labeled as remote and 8.4 percent online.
Based on the program type categorizations, parent partnerships represent the bulk of K–8 enrollments, along with a smaller proportion of digital/online programs. Contract-based and digital/online programs are more prevalent in high school.

Examining the grade level differences using the new ALE course types in Figure 10, we see that elementary and middle school ALE programs offer the three course types in roughly similar proportions. High school programs are more likely to offer online and site-based courses, with remote courses making up only 13 percent of the high school enrollment.
The monthly ALE report also gives us some insight into the physical location of students enrolled in ALE programs. Of the 27,660.7 annual average FTEs reported by all ALE programs, 49.5 percent transferred from another school district. Nearly fifteen percent of the total FTE resided out of the resident school district, but within the same county, compared to 34.6 percent of FTE that resided in another county.

More information about ALE programs can be found in Appendix G.

**Assessment**

Scores on the state assessments—the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), and End-of-Course (EOC) exams—can help gauge the effectiveness of online school programs.

This year marks a change in how we are reporting assessment scores. In previous years, we’ve only reported scores for students enrolled in one of the exclusively online schools. This resulted in a report of a subset of online students, as many students are enrolled in schools that offer both online and non-online courses. Beginning with the 2013–14 school year, we will report assessment scores for online students regardless of the school they are enrolled in. Online students were identified as a result of either taking an online course or attending an online school included in Table 1. Furthermore, for high school students, we have only included assessment scores in a given subject if the student took an online course in that subject. So, a student's math assessment results would be included in the totals here only if the student was enrolled in an online math course during the 2013–14 school year. For K–8 students, because we don’t have course-specific data in CEDARS, and because the majority of K–8 online students appear to be enrolled full-time and are thus likely to be taking both math and English Language Arts courses online, we have included all students attending an online school identified in Table 1.
Taken together, these changes should present a much more accurate picture of online student achievement.

**Students Tested**

In previous reports, we’ve highlighted concerns with the participation rates for online students – how many students took the test, compared to the number that *should* have taken the test. For the math assessments, the online student participation rate was 91.0% percent, compared to 98.7 percent. In the reading assessments, online students participated at a slightly lower rate: 88.1% compared to 98.7 percent.

**Assessment Results**

**Met Standard**

In math, online students met standard at a lower rate (35.3 percent) than both all 4th grade students (61.8 percent) and all 7th grade students (58.6 percent). In reading, online students (68.3 percent) were roughly comparable to all 4th grade students (71.0 percent) and all 7th grade students (68.6 percent), but below the 10th grade mark (85.5 percent).

The scores reported are for the MSP and HSPE assessments administered during spring 2014, using the percentage of student who met standard, excluding those with no score. This measurement includes only those students who actually took the assessment.

**Figure 11: Math, Percent of Students that Met Standard, Excluding No Score Results**
Student Growth Percentiles
A student growth percentile (SGP) describes a student’s growth compared to other students with similar prior test scores (their academic peers). We calculated median student growth percentiles for both online schools and all online students statewide.

The median SGP for online students in math, across all grades, was the 29th percentile (2,146 students). For all students across the state, the median math SGP ranged from the 44th percentile to the 51st percentile, depending on grade.

The median SGP for online students in reading, across all grades, was the 42nd percentile (2,342 students). For all students across the state, the median reading SGP ranged from the 49th percentile to the 57th percentile, depending on grade.

More information on SGP can be found at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/StudentGrowth.aspx State median SGPs by subject and grade can be found at http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/SGP/GuidetoSGPFilesOnWAMS2013-14.pdf
Additional assessment results can be found in Appendix H.

**Student Achievement: Course Success Rates and Grades**

CEDARS provides us with data on course completions and grades through “grade history” data submitted by school districts to OSPI. Grade histories are only submitted for students in grades 9–12, so we do not have any course-based achievement data for students in grades K–8.

In previous years, we have reported two statistics from this data set: a course completion rate and a course pass rate. Beginning with the 2013–14 school year, we will report a single number: a course success rate. Course success rate is one of the metrics that will be used to evaluate online providers as a part of the new OSPI provider approval monitoring process.

As defined in [WAC 392-502-010](#):

> “Course success rate” is the percentage of total online enrollments where the student received a grade for the course that was one of the following: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, P, CR, S. Courses marked as E, F, N, NC, U, or W are not considered successful outcomes.

The course success rate offers several advantages over the course completion and passing rates that were reported in previous years:

- We have noticed variations among school districts in the use of the F, NC, and W grades. This lack of consistency made it difficult to determine if a given course should be considered “completed” or not. By considering all three outcomes to be unsuccessful, the success rate helps to clarify overall student performance.
- Due to reporting variations, two programs with very similar student outcomes could have had very different completion and pass rates. For example, a program could have a high completion rate and lower pass rates because students who dropped a course where coded with an “F”, not a “W”. Meanwhile, another program could have a lower completion rate and higher pass rate, because those same students were coded with an “F” (a completed course). This made it difficult to compare programs using these metrics. By using a single metric, it is now more straightforward to compare programs.

The downside of this metric, and indeed the completion and pass rate metrics, is that they don’t speak to why a student did not have a successful outcome.

Of the 65,662 online courses for which we have grade information in 2013–14, students had a successful outcome in 75.1 percent of enrollments. This compares to 89.3 percent of 3,576,841 non-online courses taken that same year.

Looking back on the previous five years, we see that the online course success rate has improved each year, although the increase from 74.2 percent in 2012–13 to 75.1 percent in 2013–14 was fairly modest.
Figure 13: Online Course Success Rates, 2009–10 through 2013–14

See Appendix I for online course success rates by school. For comparison with previous years, course completion and pass rates are also included in Appendix I.

Grades
CEDARS provides us with a breakdown of grades earned in online courses. See Appendix I for the grading scale used.

Figure 14: Percentage of Grades Earned in High School, 2013–14
High school students in online courses are more likely to earn a D, F, or a P/CR/S and less likely to earn an A or a B, as compared to students in non-online courses. But, with five years of data, we see that that fewer students are failing their courses and the rates of passing grades (A, B, C) are rising or holding roughly steady. This suggests that performance in online courses is beginning to mirror performance in non-online courses.

Even with this encouraging trend, we cannot look past the fact that nearly a quarter of online courses end in failure. Online learning programs attract a very diverse student population in terms of prior academic achievement and motivation for using online learning. Many programs specifically target students who are at risk of dropping out, and many students come to online learning programs having had limited academic success in the past. Although programs that advertise to this population must be prepared to meet their academic needs, clearly the population being served has some effect on the overall performance.

Withdrawal and Graduation Rates

Graduation Rates
Traditional graduation rates can be difficult to apply to online school programs. Graduation rates for 2013–14 will not be finalized until after the writing of this report, due to the process by which both districts and OSPI verify and analyze the data. We do have graduation rate data available from 2012–13, but this data set should be used with some caution due to the following concerns:

1. The majority of high school online learners appear to be enrolled in online courses on a part-time basis. During 2012–13, 12.1 percent of online students took enough online courses to be considered full-time online students for the entire school year. Given this, we face a number of issues, including:
a. If we see graduation rate as a tool to measure the effectiveness of a program, a large number of part-time students involved in the analysis can make it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the online program, as there is at least one other non-online program that was providing courses to the student.

b. For most schools, we simply do not have many full-time students upon which to base an analysis. Including part-time students, as is done, only serves to muddy the analysis.

2. There appears to be a fairly high level of mobility in online school programs. In the traditional schooling environment, it is common for students to attend the same school for grades 9–12. With online, many students attend an online school for just a single year or two. Given that a high percentage of students have not attended a school for all four years of high school, graduation rate may not fully speak to a school’s effectiveness.

Of the twelve programs with a cohort of more than 10 students, the adjusted five-year cohort graduation rates ranged from 0.0 percent to 56.2 percent. The complete list of graduation rates for online school programs can be found in Appendix J. For more information on the calculation of graduation rates, see http://k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/pubdocs/GradDropout/GradRateCalculationsinWAStateSchYrsMarc h2012.pdf

Given the limitations of graduation rates, we have used the withdrawal rate in an attempt to speak to online program effectiveness. Whenever a student leaves a school, the reason is recorded using a withdrawal code (see Appendix J). We examined records for twelfth grade students based on enrollment data, and found the last enrollment record for a student. The online student data set includes any twelfth grade student who took at least one online course, including students who graduated from online schools, who attended an online school but transferred elsewhere, and students who took individual online courses at a non-online school. For comparison, we also examined records for twelfth graders who did not take an online course during 2013–14.

In the online student data set, 6,623 twelfth graders took at least one online course, up from 6,225 in the previous year. Of those, 3,780 (57.1 percent) had a year-end status that indicated a successful outcome, such as graduation or completion of an individualized education program (codes C2, G0, GA, and GB). Of the 85,361 twelfth graders who had not taken an online course in 2013–14, 61,000 (71.5 percent) had a successful outcome.

Given the large number of students enrolled in online experiences in a part-time manner, we also examined withdrawal rates based on the number of online courses a student had taken in twelfth grade.
Students taking one to four online courses had a successful outcome in 60.3 percent (3,035) of the cases, compared to 44.3 percent (423) of students taking five to 10 online courses, and 50.6 percent (322) of students taking more than 10 courses. Notably, the rate for students taking more than 10 courses was higher than the previous year’s rate of 41.6 percent (251).

There are some caveats that should be applied to this data. Given that students taking online courses may have been looking to this medium as a means to make up needed credits, it is difficult to assign causality to the students’ use of online learning and their graduation status. In other words, the students’ use of online learning may not be the cause of their unsuccessful outcome, but rather an unsuccessful attempt to complete high school.

Online students have a higher rate of transfer both out of the school (but remaining within the district) and out of the district, as compared to non-online students. Again, this could be a reflection of the student’s academic situation prior to engaging in online learning, or it could be related to students who had an unsuccessful experience with online learning.

It appears that many online students either drop out or are at risk of dropping out, which is concerning. But, there are several factors that somewhat mitigate the concerns presented here. Online learning is often seen as the option of last resort for students who are credit deficient and at risk of dropping out. Many of the twelfth grade students taking individual online courses are likely doing it to make up a previously failed course. We would expect to see a higher dropout rate among credit-deficient students. And, on a positive note, there are a significant number of students who use online learning as a strategy to successfully complete high school.

Complete withdrawal code information can be found in Appendix J.
Online Courses in the Credit Recovery Context

Many students turn to online courses as a strategy to make up credits needed for graduation. Based on the 1,929 course enrollments as a student taking an online course after failing a non-online course, students were able to earn at least some credit in 62.6 percent of those enrollments.

Compared to the total number of online enrollments, 1,929 is a fairly small number that warrants explanation. Courses included in this data set were identified using the state course code. State course codes were first required in the 2012–13 school year and were optional in prior years. To construct this data set, we identified students who took an online course in 2013–14 and had not earned credit in a non-online course with the same state course code in either 2013–14 or a prior year. The 1,929 courses in this data set do not represent every instance when a course was taken for credit recovery, but it was a 38.8 percent increase over the same data extract from the 2012–13 school year.

Examining the course-by-course breakdown, we see that the most popular online courses taken in the credit recovery context are ninth and tenth grade English/Language Arts, Biology, Geometry, and Algebra. Of those, Algebra stands out as having the lowest success rate: only 40.7 percent (61) of enrollments resulted in the student earning credit. Ninth grade English/Language Arts also had a low success rate—51.1 percent (165) of enrollments resulted in credits. Students were more successful in history courses: students earned credit in 78.9 percent (60) of Modern U.S. History enrollments, 83.3 percent (45) of World History enrollments, for example.

See Appendix K for the results, by subject, for courses taken in the credit recovery context.

Teacher/Student Ratios

ALE programs are required to report the number of certificated instructional staff (CIS) in each program, and their ratio of CIS per 1,000 students is calculated. In non-ALE settings, districts are required to maintain a ratio of 46 CIS per 1,000 students across the entire district. ESHB 2065 (2011) exempted ALE programs from this ratio, but the figure remains useful when comparing online programs to traditional programs.

We calculated the ratios based on the percentage of FTE that each ALE program reported in the three new ALE course types. Programs that reported more than 75 percent site-based courses reported, on average, 46.3 CIS per 1,000 students. This staffing level is nearly identical to the 46/1000 standard in non-ALE schools. Programs that reported more than 75 percent online courses had, on average, 36.5 CIS per 1,000 students, and programs that reported more than 75 percent remote courses had, on average, 26.8 CIS per 1,000 students. This relatively low figure reflects the larger role that parents often take in remote courses. Programs where no one course type made up more than 75 percent of the total averaged 36.7 CIS per 1,000 students.
Table 7: Annual Average Certificated Instructional Staff (CIS) per 1,000 Student FTE in ALE Programs, 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CIS FTE</th>
<th>Student FTE</th>
<th>CIS per 1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 75% Online</td>
<td>343.8</td>
<td>9,421.9</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 75% Remote</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>3,189.1</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 75% Site-Based</td>
<td>423.8</td>
<td>9,154.3</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>178.4</td>
<td>4,865.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Appendix L for school-level teacher/student ratios.

Student Satisfaction Survey

In January 2014, OSPI surveyed students and parents to examine student and family experiences with approved online providers and to provide a way for prospective students, parents, and schools to compare the options available to them. Providers distributed the survey to enrolled students, and student/parent participation was not mandatory. The results of the survey, as well as all comments submitted by students and parents, are available on the OSPI Web site, displayed by provider, at [http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/](http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/).

Overall, students were slightly less satisfied with their online provider in 2014 compared to 2013. The percentage of students choosing “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” decreased from 85.0 percent to 83.5 percent. Throughout all four years of survey data, the percentage of students who were “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” has held roughly steady, with a high of 87.2 percent and a low of 83.5 percent.

In 2013–14, students felt well-served by the online teacher (70.3 percent) and agreed that the online course met the student’s academic needs (70.2 percent), although both of these figures were lower than the previous year (76.5 percent and 78.3 percent, respectively).

Some caveats should be noted with this data:

- Some programs had very low response rates.
- The survey included both online school programs and online course providers.
- OSPI instructed high school students to answer the survey on their own, middle school students could work with a parent, and parents were to answer on behalf of elementary-aged students.

For full results, see Appendix M.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Mirroring last year’s online learning report, we recommend that the Legislature not modify either the ALE or online learning laws in 2015. By maintaining a stable regulatory environment, schools...
will have the chance to fully implement the recent changes in the laws and rules. And, it will afford OSPI and the State Auditor's Office more time to collect additional data about ALE and online learning. This will help inform any future policy discussions in this area.

In order to ensure that students have access to high-quality online learning options, OSPI will continue to review and monitor online programs. OSPI will also work to implement the new online provider approval system, focusing more on student achievement outcomes. Finally, OSPI will continue to provide technical assistance to school districts around the implementation of online learning programs.
Appendices

Appendix A: DLD Catalog, Enrollment and Demographics.
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_A_DLD_Catalog.xlsx

Appendix B: Approved Online Providers
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_B_Approved_Providers.docx

Appendix C: Demographics for Schools with Online Students
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_C_Demographics_By_School.xls

Appendix D: State-level Demographics for Online Students
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_D_State_Demographic_Totals.xls

Appendix E: Online Course Enrollment Patterns
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_E_Enrollment_Patterns.xlsx

Appendix F: Non-resident Attendance
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_F_Nonresident_ALE_Enrollment.xls

Appendix G: ALE
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_G_ALE_Totals.xls

Appendix H: Assessment
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_H_Assessment.xls

Appendix I: Student Achievement (Completion Rates, Pass Rates, Grades)
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_I_Online_Grades.xls

Appendix J: Graduation Rates and Withdrawal Rates
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_J_Graduation_and_Withdrawal_Rates.xls

Appendix K: Credit Recovery
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_K_Credit_Recovery.xls

Appendix L: Teacher/Student Ratios
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_L_ALE_CIS_Ratios.xls
Appendix M: Student Satisfaction Survey
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_M_Student_Satisfaction_Survey_2014.docx

Appendix N: Online Provider Performance Targets
http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/2013-14/Appendix_N_Approved_Provider_Performance_Targets.xls
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