

## **General FAQs**

### **How does an online course work?**

Students are guided through their courses by certified instructors, many of whom hold advanced degrees and are National Board Certified. Before students begin a course, teachers make welcome phone calls to discuss course details including pace expectations and materials required for the course, if any.

At any hour of the day, active students open the website, log into the class, work on assignments and projects then submit work to be graded. Teachers evaluate student work and send back grades and comments. Teachers and students also communicate by phone to check on progress or answer questions.

While students are welcome to work ahead, they must maintain a minimum pace to remain in the course.

### **How do online courses differ from traditional classroom courses?**

Like courses offered in a traditional classroom, the courses offered online count towards high school graduation, and grades earned at the end of each course count as part of a student's GPA. Content in each course aligns with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and meets all state standards. Like a traditional classroom, assignments are given by teachers, graded, and returned to the student. If students have questions about the content, their teacher, who is certified in that subject, is available via phone or online to answer questions and clarify concepts.

The major difference between online and traditional classroom courses is the pace at which students can progress with the material. There is a minimum pace which students must maintain and students are monitored by their teacher to ensure they are keeping up with their coursework. During the course, students can monitor grades and assignments daily (as can parents), and if students fall behind, the teacher proactively contacts them. There are monthly progress reports and regular contacts with the instructor and with other students.

### **Does the virtual school have real teachers?**

Absolutely. The Virtual School Network employs teachers that must hold current certificates in their subject area. Some are National Board Certified. All are carefully selected and trained to be excellent online teachers. The teachers are supported by experienced online instructional professionals who assist them in every area, from content to teaching strategies.

### **How soon after registration can a student begin the course?**

Students can normally start in about a week from when we receive their registration information.

**What happens after registration? How do students get started?**

During the registration process, students receive a User ID and Password which is sent to the email address provided by the students in their Student Profile. (Use the User ID and Password to check back regularly.) Once registration is processed, students will receive a welcome email in their student email account. Once the student makes contact with the teacher, the course(s) can be accessed through the web address and directions will be provided in the welcome email.

**How do students register?**

After the students receive approval from the guidance counselor, the registration form must be taken to office 204 at the RISD Administration building along with payment for the course.

**Can parents or guardians monitor their students' progress?**

Yes. Students will have a user name and a password. Parents can use this information to access to their student's grades. Parents can also create a Guardian Account and contact the teacher whenever additional information is needed.

**What happens when students finish the course?**

Students will receive a final grade report which will appear on their official student transcript.

**What kind of students succeed in a virtual school program?**

In order for students to succeed in an online course, they need to first track their pace using the pace chart that is included in every course. Second, students should contact their teachers as soon as they have questions. Teachers are there to help, and students are encouraged to contact them as soon as they need help. Finally, students should communicate with their teachers if they are falling behind for any reason. Teachers will work with students individually to keep them up to speed.

**Can virtual courses be used by students with special learning needs?**

Yes. There are distinct advantages to an online environment for students with exceptional needs.

Courses can be taken at an accelerated, traditional, or extended pace, depending on the needs of the student and a mutual agreement between the student, teacher, and parent or guardian. Although there is

an online teacher for each course, students must be motivated and able to manage their time and work independently.

If the student does not understand the material the first time they attempt it, they are allowed to try again, after receiving instructional feedback, to attempt for an improved score.

Examinations are timed, but the learning management system can make adjustments if the teacher deems it appropriate.

### **What computer skills are required?**

The courses are user -riendly, and just basic computer skills are required.

### **What type of equipment is needed?**

A full list of technical requirements is available [here](#).

#### **Technical requirements:**

The following basic requirements for our online learning programs, which are standard for most computers purchased in the last five years.:

**Processor:** Any processor of 1.2GHz or faster

**Minimum system memory:** 512MB for Windows XP, 1 GB for Windows Vista

**Display:** 1024 x 768 or larger

**Printing:** Any supported Windows printer

**Internet Access:** Broadband access is required.

**Internet Browser:** Any browser that is Flash-compliant. (Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, etc.)  
The following basic requirements for our online learning programs, which are standard for most computers purchased in the last five years.:

### **When do courses begin?**

After a student has been approved by their counselor to take a course, and has registered online with RISD's Virtual School, students can begin courses within a week of registration. When a student begins a course, teachers make welcome phone calls to discuss course details, including pace expectations and any materials required for the course.

## **JUST FOR PARENTS**

### **Can parents preview a course?**

Yes! Go to [www.virtualschoolnetwork.com](http://www.virtualschoolnetwork.com) to complete the Contact Us form and indicate that you would like to preview a course. A login and password will be sent to the email you provide within 24 hours.

### **What kind of support will my child have while taking these courses?**

Every course is taught by highly qualified, certified instructors—experts in their subject areas. Teachers and students interact regularly through email, voice mail, telephone conversations, and instant messenger. Teachers are available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, as well as during weekend hours. Students are encouraged to contact the teacher when there is a need of any kind. Teachers speak via telephone with students and their parents at least once per month.

### **What role do parents play in this type of learning?**

RISD values parents as partners. Parents work in conjunction with the teacher to provide students with in-home leadership and mentoring. Parents are encouraged to monitor their student's progress to ensure their student is keeping pace with the coursework assigned. If there are concerns, the teacher will contact the student, and the parent is welcome to contact the teacher as well.