



**2011-2012 Student and Family Handbook  
June 2011**



# SOCRATES Online Student and Family Handbook

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Dear Students and Families,

**Welcome to SOCRATES Online**, a supplemental online learning program that offers you online courses in addition to the courses you take at your local school.

Online education is an exciting new learning opportunity that lets you “take the wheel” of your education. Just as planning a trip requires you to choose which roads to follow, and when to follow them, online learning offers the same decisions—which courses to take and when to log in and work on them.

An exciting feature of taking this journey is there are no speed limits, and it is safe to go as fast as you’d like as long as you fuel up at all the learning stations and follow your tour guide.

Please note that your online trip will be much more successful if you follow some traffic advisories:

- Travel every day. Don’t let yourself get behind. Online courses aren’t easy. Learning takes effort. Be persistent – it is the most reliable quality that contributes to your success.
- Don’t take shortcuts. They will shortcut your education. Remember that your future bank account (and chance to buy that really fancy car) depends on today’s habits of study.
- Pay attention to your tour guides—your online learning teacher is an expert who knows all the best places to stop and explore, and how to get the best value for your travel dollar.
- Honk if you need help. The most successful online learners are those who ask questions. Let your online teachers give a personal tour. They really like that! Your local online learning site facilitator (school counselor) and SOCRATES Online staff can also come to your assistance.
- Enjoy the scenery. Online learning can take you to interesting and engaging places. Your teacher has linked your coursework to different sites and learning objects designed to make your journey even better.
- Tire yourself out. The best trips are those packed with the adventures that only come from total engagement.

If you need roadside services, contact SOCRATES Online Student Services Coordinator, Sue Zarn. She’s a great source of assistance who can be reached at [szarn@projectsocrates.org](mailto:szarn@projectsocrates.org) or 507-340-6285.

Thanks for traveling with us. We hope the journey is a good one!

Karen Johnson, SOCRATES Online Program Director [kmjohnson@projectsocrates.org](mailto:kmjohnson@projectsocrates.org)

## RULES OF THE ROAD



### Know how it works

SOCRATES Online provides online courses to supplement the curricula offered by local schools. Students accessing SOCRATES Online courses typically are scheduled into the regular school day of their local schools; i.e., students go to a computer lab or other school location with a computer during a set period during the day to work on the online course.

The course is taught by an online teacher who interacts personally with students via the numerous online course tools of the course management system, Moodle. Interactions include a course website, discussion forums, email, online chat tools, links to other web-based resources or activities and by phone. Your online teacher is most often a teacher from one of the school partners in the SOCRATES Online network (see Appendix A).

The courses are asynchronous, which means you can access them at any time during the day or night. The courses also allow a certain amount of self-pacing, so you can complete requirements as quickly as you would like within certain assignment time periods. Also teachers may direct you to participate in- group work with other students during specific weeks of the semester.

### Signing up for a class and coordinating with your school

Since SOCRATES Online is a supplemental online learning program, you can register for one online class or several - up to 50% of your academic schedule per semester. The registration process follows several steps noted below:

**Review considerations for enrolling in online learning (Appendix B).** Carefully think about making the commitment to enroll in an online learning course by reviewing the expectations for student participation, parental or guardian support and technical guidelines (Appendix D).

**Meet with your high school counselor** or district online learning site facilitator to discuss your academic schedule. To enroll in supplemental online learning and register for an online course, you will need to have an available slot in your local class schedule. If you do not have an assigned study hall, then you will need to identify an equivalent course at your school that you can drop. For example, if you are looking for an elective online course, you will need to drop an elective course from your local school schedule. The online course should apply to your plan for graduation. The registration form requires your school counselor to verify that the online course will apply to your academic plan and meet your local school's graduation requirements

**Review the online courses available through SOCRATES Online.** There are courses scheduled throughout the year and are listed as year long or fall or spring semester classes. You will find the registration timelines for 2011-12 in Appendix C. If you do not find a class listed that you are interested in taking, please contact the SOCRATES Online staff to express your interest. It is possible that through collaboration with other online learning programs you could be placed in a course of your choosing.

**Log on to the GENIUS registration system.** In this system you will create a student account and request a course. Your parents and counselor will be alerted by email that you have requested a course and will be asked to affirm and verify your request for online learning through the Genius system.

**Finalizing registration.** Everyone (your counselor, your parent and you) will all be sent an automatic email confirming that your enrollment in the course is complete once your counselor, parent and the SOCRATES enrollment coordinator have signed off on your request.

**Make sure you know who your local online school site facilitator is, and work closely with that person.** This is the person who adjusts your academic schedule, signs your registration form, monitors progress, troubleshoots any issues that arise in cooperation with the Socrates Online Student Support Coordinator and makes sure your final grade is recorded on your transcript.

**Enrollment is complete!** You will be contacted with acceptance into the online course and be given instructions on how to begin your online course(s).

## Technical guidelines

Students registering for online classes should have daily access to a computer and a reliable Internet connection. You also are allowed by law to have access at your school to computer hardware and educational software to the same level as other enrolled students. Review the technical guidelines in Appendix E for further information to see if your current computer and Internet service will be adequate.

## Online courses count

Online courses are as important as onsite courses and count toward grade level progression, state academic standards, GPA's and graduation. Additionally, they factor into weekly eligibility processes required for participation in extracurricular activities.

## Grades count, too

Final grades are reported to your local school as a letter grade. Grades will be based on the online teacher's assessment of your work and the degree to which you have met course requirements. Course requirements may include:

- Student participation, effort and completion of homework;
- Responsibility, as reflected in timely preparation of online coursework;
- Growth and achievement in meeting content standards;
- Skills/knowledge gained as evidenced by performance on assignments, exams and projects.

Course requirements, including grading and assessment procedures will be available to students, parents, counselors, online learning contact people and administrators at the beginning of each course in a prescribed syllabus format determined by the commissioner of education (Appendix F). The course syllabus is made available on the SOCRATES Online website by each individual course listing. Your online teacher will identify the value of each assignment and determine student grades. Penalties and consequences for late submission of work are the responsibility of the online learning teacher as noted in the syllabus.

## **Get started right away**

Students who immediately engage with their courses and online teachers are far more likely to succeed. Once you have logged in, your online teacher will post instructions on how to begin and what to get started on. Don't procrastinate! Ask questions!

## **Work every day**

Online courses require more self-discipline than traditional courses because there is no teacher reminding you to be attentive when you are "in class". Successful students log into courses every day, follow instructions, and initiate communication with online teachers. Remember that the technology records your daily "attendance" in the course—and what work you were doing. Are you ready to be a successful online student? See Appendix G for tips for success and you are also encouraged to take the assessment linked there.

If your online teacher or the SOCRATES student support coordinator has noted that you are no longer an active participant in the course, you and your parents will receive several notifications to contact the teacher as noted in Appendix H. Lack of active online participation could result in being withdrawn from the course if you don't immediately respond. You must respond immediately to these notifications to ensure your continued enrollment in the online course.

## **Don't use the "computer ate my homework" excuse**

Always keep dated electronic copies of any homework that you submit on your computer hard drive. Email copies of your homework to yourself as well as your teacher. This confirms that you sent your homework, even if some techno-glitch keeps it from getting to your online teacher.

## **Follow the Internet Use Agreement**

This is the document you sign that says you will use the Internet wisely, appropriately and that you will refrain from inappropriate sites and behavior. SOCRATES Online Internet use policy is in Appendix I.

## **Demonstrate proper conduct**

Your district has a conduct and disciplinary code with associated rights and responsibilities. As with any classroom, online instructors will attempt to address conduct and discipline problems directly with you prior to referring you to the next level. If your online teacher is unable to resolve the problem or if the infraction requires administrative notification, your online teacher will contact your school site coordinator and the SOCRATES Online student services coordinator. The site coordinator will either address the problem directly or bring it to the attention of your school's administration. The site coordinator will also have the responsibility of sharing with the instructor any action taken in

the situation. Local discipline codes and policies/procedures for student rights and responsibilities will be used in handling the situation. If you are experiencing a problem with your online teacher, you should talk with your site coordinator who will address the issue with the SOCRATES Online program director if necessary.

Improper conduct is defined as interfering with the teaching and learning occurring on the web site by posting profane, threatening, abusive or inappropriate language—including demeaning written or oral comments of an ethnic, sexist, or racist nature and unwanted sexual advances or intimidations—to an online teacher, staff member, or student via verbal, email, threaded discussion, chat room or other communication. Improper conduct also includes using the computer system to post inappropriate graphics or links to inappropriate web sites or “hacking” into another person’s computer files for any reason.

## Don’t cheat

Academic dishonesty includes breaches of academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, and attempts by a student to show possession of knowledge and skills he/she does not possess. These breaches can include:

- The use of non-permissible materials in any form during a quiz or examination.
- Copying the answers of another student, whether on a test, quiz or homework.
- Plagiarizing, or using someone else’s work that is evaluated as the student’s own work.
- Impersonating another student on any assessment.
- Helping someone else commit these infractions.

Cheating/plagiarism is not typically much of an issue since online teachers get to know their students—and their writing styles—so well that they can spot many instances of cheating. Online course pedagogy also employs a variety of means to minimize unethical behavior. For example, more performance-based assessments are used, as well as timed assessments. Another strategy is to do an Internet search for a string of words that may be used by students. Online teachers speak with students personally via web conferencing or phone calls to reinforce instruction and validate student ethics. SOCRATES Online staff will contact a student’s site facilitator anytime that cheating is suspected. If cheating is confirmed, school officials will advise online staff regarding consequences in accordance with local school policy.

## Withdrawal permission is required

Online students have 14 days from the start of the semester to withdraw from an online course and replace the online course with a study hall or onsite class. Students may drop the online course only with permission from the SOCRATES Online student support coordinator and the school online learning site facilitator.

Dropping an online course after the 14-day period at the beginning of the semester can result in a negative grade. It is up to your local school to determine if you will receive credit for work done up to the time of withdrawal. The student’s school will determine whether the student will receive a grade, an indication of withdrawal, or any other annotation on the student transcript.

All withdrawals from online learning courses should be made by submitting the SOCRATES Online course withdrawal form available online through the Genius registration system by selecting "Drop a Course" tab and "request new drop" link. Re-entry to an online course after receiving a withdrawal

email requires a signed letter from your parents detailing how you will make progress in the course and an agreement from your local school to allow re-entry.

## **Know the misconceptions about online learning**

There are many misconceptions about online learning. Please read the common myths about online learning in Appendix J (based on a document created by International Association for Online Learning [iNACOL] and revised by IDEAL-NM).

## **SOCRATES Online and federal and state regulations**

Go to Appendix K for federal and state legislation concerning anti- discrimination/harassment, equity, FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act), Title VI/IX, and other civil rights legislation and Minnesota legislation guiding certified online learning.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A SOCRATES 2011-12 School Districts

Consortium school districts serviced by SOCRATES include the following.

<b>District #</b>	<b>Member Name</b>
242	Alden-Conger Public Schools
716	Belle Plaine Public Schools
2860	Blue Earth Area Public Schools
391	Cleveland Public Schools
2752	Fairmont Area Public Schools
2365	Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop Public Schools
2886	Glenville-Emmons Public Schools
2536	Granada-Huntley-East Chain Public Schools
2835	Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Public Schools
2071	Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial Public Schools
392	Le Center Public Schools
2397	Le Sueur-Henderson Public Schools
837	Madelia Public Schools
77	Mankato Public Schools
2135	Maple River Public Schools
2448	Martin County West Public Schools
6027	Minnesota Valley Education District
394	Montgomery-Lonsdale Public Schools
2168	New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Public Schools
88	New Ulm Public Schools
507	Nicollet Public Schools
6049	River Bend Education District
2310	Sibley East Public Schools
75	St. Clair Public Schools
840	St. James Public Schools
508	St. Peter Public Schools
458	Truman Public Schools
2134	United South Central Public Schools
829	Waseca Public Schools
2143	Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Public Schools

## Appendix B Considerations for Online Learning Enrollment

### Student Considerations

Are you considering taking some of your courses online? Good for you!

But first, make sure you have understood what it takes to be an online learning student. Online learning can sound so wonderful that some students start online courses with an unrealistic vision. In reality, online courses generally require just as much, if not more, time and energy as traditional classroom courses. Also, online learning requires specific computer skills and learning strategies in order to succeed.

To see if you're ready, see how many items you can check off on the following checklist:

#### 1. Persistence

Persistence is perhaps the biggest key to success in online learning. Students who succeed in online learning are those who are willing to tolerate technical difficulties, seek help when needed, work daily on every class, and persist through challenges.

- When you run into a challenge, keep trying and ask for help.
- Set up a manageable study schedule for yourself and stick to it. Students who succeed are those who log in and make progress every day— even after the novelty of going to school online starts to wear off!

#### 2. Effective time-management skills

You must be able to manage your time well. Most courses are not taught in real time and there are no set times for classes.

This flexibility is one of the great benefits of online learning. However, it can also be a drawback for a student who procrastinates, is unable to stick to a routine study schedule, or is not able to independently complete assignments without daily reminders from a teacher.

Effective time-management skills don't just happen. They have to be learned. Once you learn them, they will benefit you throughout your life. Follow this list of tips to develop your own good time-management skills:

- Review the syllabus for each of your courses and develop a long-term plan for completing your major assignments. Use the assignment calculator at the University of Minnesota to develop a plan: <http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/>
- Make a daily "To Do" list and have fun checking things off the list as you complete them.

It takes time to develop good habits, but over time, you'll start to enjoy the satisfaction that comes from being well-organized and accomplishing important task.

#### 3. Effective and appropriate communication skills

Communication skills are very important in online learning because students have to be willing to seek help when they need it. Teachers are very willing to help students, but they are unable to pick up on non-

verbal cues, such as a look of confusion on a student's face. Follow these tips:

**Use the tools provided by the school to communicate with your teachers.** Many online schools and programs provide several ways for students and parents to communicate with teachers and staff, including email, discussion groups, chat room office hours, cell phones, and even text messaging. Teachers and staff are glad to take questions from students and want to help you to succeed in your classes. At first it may feel awkward to talk to your teachers this way, but don't worry. Your teacher has chat room or cell phone office hours; so don't be shy about using those tools to communicate with your teacher.

**Use appropriate style and language for school.** It's also important to understand appropriate communication for a school setting. When communicating with teachers and other staff members, you should write in full, grammatically correct sentences and with a respectful tone. Many students are used to a very informal style of writing in chat rooms, blogs, text messages, and so forth.

Online teachers are professionals and must be treated with respect and courtesy. Because of the distance, it's tempting for some students to say things out of anger, frustration, or even just to be friendly that they would never say to a teacher in person. Online teachers are professionals and must be treated with respect and courtesy.

#### **4. Basic technical skills**

The ability to create new documents, use a word processing program, navigate the Internet, and download software are some of the basic technical skills needed by online learners.

If you are unfamiliar with basic computer skills, you may want to find an online tutorial or consult the technical coordinator at your school for assistance.

You'll also want to review the SOCRATES Online technical guidelines (Appendix E), to make sure your computer meets program requirements.

#### **5. Reading and writing skills**

Reading and writing are the main ways you'll communicate in an online class. Although some hard copies of textbooks are available at school, you should be relatively comfortable reading extensive documents on a computer screen and typing without frustration.

Some tests and quizzes have multiple-choice questions, but many of your assignments will involve writing short or long answers.

#### **6. Motivation and independence**

To be successful in online learning, a student has to want to be successful. Online learning requires independence, internal motivation, responsibility, and a certain level of maturity.

- Have you given some thought to your own personal reasons for attending school?
- Are you determined and self-motivated to succeed in school?

There are many worthwhile reasons to work hard in school. These might include a greater level of personal satisfaction with your future career, personal pride in your accomplishments, a wider range of opportunities available to you with higher education, and substantially higher lifetime earnings.

## 7. A good study environment

Another critical component of academic success is a good study environment.

- **Get some peace and quiet.** You will need a quiet place to work without distractions like television or siblings.
- **Avoid games.** Consider uninstalling any computer games to avoid temptation, or keep the games on a different computer in the house.
- **Turn off your cell phone.** Let friends and family members know the hours that you will be "at" school.
- **Beware surfing** the black hole of the Internet. It is easy to wander off through the Internet for much longer than planned.
- **Consider ergonomics.** Adjust the height of your chair, keyboard, and screen so that you are comfortable. Forearms and thighs should be level and parallel to the floor. Wrists should not be bent while typing.
- **Set up good lighting and comfortable seating.** Lighting in the room should be at least as bright as the computer screen to avoid eyestrain.

*Adapted from ISEEK K-12 Online Learning website and the Minnesota Department of Education*

## Parental Considerations

### Is your son or daughter prepared for online learning?

Success in an online course or program requires specific student attitudes and approaches to learning. To ensure academic success in online education, your child should have:

- Maturity to complete tasks with little supervision from the class instructor
- Motivation to complete work alone when you are not around
- Time management skills to study and complete assignments
- Technology skills required to take on an online course

Students who are most successful in online programs are those who:

- Have completed homework on a consistent basis in a traditional classroom setting
- Have encouraging supervision at home
- Have a positive attitude about school
- Are conscientious and persistent in accomplishing goals

### Parents' checklist for supporting student success

- ✓ Encourage your child and give positive feedback.
- ✓ Allow your child or teen to ask you for help.
- ✓ Encourage your teen or young adult to take responsibility for contacting his or her teachers, rather than having you contact them.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the curriculum. Work with your child or teen to develop a manageable study schedule.
- ✓ Model good time-management strategies, such as developing a personal schedule or daily "to do" list. Help your child to use these strategies.
- ✓ Talk to your child or teen about appropriate ways to communicate with teachers and classmates.
- ✓ Make sure your child has the necessary basic typing and computer skills.
- ✓ Evaluate your child's level of self-motivation. Talk about the many advantages of getting an education and earning a degree.

- ✓ Check your child's progress by using whatever methods the school provides (like a parent portal website). Talk directly with your child about his progress and grades and check in with the teachers periodically.
- ✓ Provide an optimal study space at home with minimal distractions, good lighting, comfortable seating, working computer and good wrist support.
- ✓ Never hesitate to call or write to school staff when you have questions or concerns.

*Adapted from ISEEK K-12 Online Learning website and the Minnesota Department of Education*

## Appendix C

### Expectations for Online Learning

Please review these expectations of students who register for a course with SOCRATES Online. If you understand how to participate actively and take responsibility for learning in the class, you will achieve successful results.

**You will be asked to verify that you understand these expectations when you register for an online course through the SOCRATES Genius Online Registration System.**

The SOCRATES Online Learning program is committed to providing equal access to high quality online learning opportunities for all students. Taking an online course can be a great experience, but it does require some special skills, like good time management and being able to work independently. Students and parents should also make sure that the online course would meet the student's educational goals.

***As an online student you will be expected to:***

- Participate and share your experiences, ideas and perspective with your teacher and other students. You will use critical thinking and decision-making skills in an online course and be expected to apply what you learn.
- Take the program and yourself seriously. Online learning is **not** easier than traditional classroom learning and it's easy to get behind in an online course.
- Make sure you can spend the time needed to do a good job on the course. This is typically 4-15 hours per week per class.
- Be self-motivated and self-disciplined. Make sure you have a private place to study and set aside time 5-6 days a week to work on your course.
- Be willing to "speak up" if any problems arise. Your instructor needs to know right away if you are having any problems with the technology or the course requirements.
- Be able to communicate through writing and use good "netiquette" when communicating online.
- Have access to a computer with an Internet connection and be able to complete basic computer tasks like saving files, looking for information on a web site and sending email.
- Be willing to try new skills and be open to learning new things.
- Review the course outline(s) or other materials for the online course(s) you plan to take.
- Read and understand the expectations for being a successful online student and the Student and Family Handbook for SOCRATES Online.

#### **Attendance and Withdrawal Policy**

By accepting enrollment in a SOCRATES Online course, the student agrees to the following attendance and withdrawal policy: I acknowledge that during the first 14 days of being enrolled into my SOCRATES Online course, I may drop the course without penalty. If I withdraw from a course after the first 14 days, my enrolling district will assign a grade. I understand that for each online course there are a minimum number of assignments that must be completed each week. Failure to submit the minimum number of assignments on a weekly basis may result in my removal from the course and no credit earned in the course. . If I withdraw from the course after completing 50% or more of the class requirements and fail to take the final exam or complete the final project, SOCRATES Online teacher will issue a grade and make a recommendation for completing the credit(s) to the student and enrolling district.

#### **Questions? Please contact:**

Sue Zarn, SOCRATES Online, 2075 Lookout Drive, North Mankato, MN 56003  
szarn@projectsocrates.org or 507-340-6285.

## Appendix D Registration Timelines for 2011-12

Enrollment in SOCRATES Online courses is on a fixed schedule designed to follow school district schedules as closely as possible.

Steps in Enrollment	First Semester	Second Semester
Online Learning Enrollment targeted deadlines. <i>Target Date. Registrations accepted after this date if seats area available in online classes.</i>	August 23, 2011	January 13, 2012
Start of Online Learning Courses	September 13, 2011	February 7, 2012
Last Day to Drop	September 27, 2011	February 21, 2012
End of Quarter: <i>Progress reports to enrolling district</i>	November 11, 2011	April 6, 2012
Last Day Last of Classes	January 27, 2012	June 1, 2012
Final Grades Submitted	February 3, 2012	June 8, 2012

Tuition for SOCRATES member school districts is \$400 per student per semester course. Enrolling districts **would not reduce** ADM for local students taking part time online learning.

Tuition for students not eligible for public funding is \$400 per student per semester course.

All other public school students will be reported directly to the state for supplemental online learning aid. Enrolling districts **would reduce ADM** for local students taking part time online learning when direct state reporting is used.

## Appendix E Technical Guidelines

Because SOCRATES Online instruction and curriculum is delivered via a web-based course management system, most students will be able to access their courses using any computer that has a reasonably current Internet browser.

Students are expected to be competent at using the Internet including downloading and uploading files. A valid email address is necessary for student/teacher communication, and students are expected to be able to access their e-mail account and send and receive email attachments.

In addition, some courses may require that students be able to use word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software.

### Internet Browser

Moodle, the course management system in use by SOCRATES Online, seems to work best in the Firefox browser.

You can download the current version of Firefox for free from <http://www.firefox.com/>.

Apple's Safari browser is not recommended because it has compatibility issues with Moodle.

### Hardware

You can access SOCRATES Online courses from any computer that is able to run a modern browser, but at a minimum you'll want

#### **Operating System:**

Windows: 2000, XP, or Vista; Macintosh: OS 9.1 or OS X

#### **Processor:**

Windows: Pentium 233 or higher; Macintosh: Power PC G3 or higher

#### **Memory:**

128 MB minimum; 256 MB or greater recommended

#### **Internet connection:**

56 Kbps modem minimum; broadband—DSL or cable—recommended

#### **A sound card and speakers**

Up-to-date sound card and speakers are recommended. Using a headset with microphone is the best way of attending a class session that requires sound if you are in a public setting.

Individual teachers may have additional requirements, depending on the content of the course. If you are unsure if your computer setup is adequate, contact the instructor of the course you wish to take before registering.

## Appendix F Online Learning Syllabus Format



### Online Course Syllabi POLICY

Online Learning Providers are required to develop a course syllabus for each course using a format prescribed by the Minnesota Department of Education and communicate the syllabus to the student, parents and enrolling district prior to enrollment. This policy outlines the required components of a syllabus.

For the purposes of this policy, a syllabus is a written or electronic document that contains information students need to know in order successfully to complete the work of the course and enrolling districts will use to determine if the supplemental online learning course meets local district graduation requirements.

Each syllabus should include the following information:

#### **A. Instructional Contact, Communication and Academic Support Information**

1. Instructor name and contact information (if available at time of student registration).
2. Expectation for actual teacher contact time.
3. Expectation for other student to teacher communication.
4. Expectation for student participation (attendance).
5. Academic support available to online students.
6. Communication with enrolling district (supplemental enrollment).
  - a. Format and frequency of progress reports.
  - b. Format and timeline of submission of the final grade and credits earned to enrolling district.

#### **B. Information Specific to the Course**

This information must be provided by the online learning program to enrolling districts of supplemental online learning students prior to the student enrolling in the course for review and approval by the enrolling district.

1. Course outline
  - a. Course name and credits.
  - b. Course pre-requisites if any exist.
  - c. Course goals and objectives.
  - d. Topic outline.
  - e. Required books and/or educational materials including how they will be made available.
  - f. Minimum technical requirements of program and/or course.
  - g. The date, time and place of the final examination if one is scheduled.
  - h. An explanation of extra credit if that option is provided to all students.
2. Assessment of student work
  - a. General description of assignments, papers, projects, exams and other student work with a schedule of due dates and relative weight in the grade.
  - b. Policy for making up missed exams and grading late assignments.
  - c. Policy for addressing academic dishonesty.
3. State academic graduation requirements embedded in course.

## Appendix G

### What Makes a Successful Online Student?

As an online learning student the following suggestions will help you have a positive and successful experience:

- ✓ Participate and share your experiences, ideas and perspective with your teacher and other students. You will use critical thinking and decision-making skills in an online course and be expected to apply what you learn.
- ✓ Take the program and yourself seriously. Online learning is not easier than traditional classroom learning and it's easy to get behind in an online course.
- ✓ Make sure you can spend the time needed to do a good job on the course. This is typically 4–15 hours per week.
- ✓ Be self-motivated and self-disciplined. Make sure you have a private place to study and set aside time 5–6 days a week to work on your course.
- ✓ Be willing to “speak up” if any problems arise. Your instructor needs to know right away if you are having any problems with the technology or the course requirements.
- ✓ Be able to communicate through writing and use good “netiquette” when communicating online.
- ✓ Have access to a computer with an Internet connection and be able to complete basic computer tasks like saving files, looking for information on a web site and sending email.
- ✓ Be willing to try new skills and be open to learning new things.

These guidelines were adapted from resources developed by the Illinois Online Network.

To take an online, self-evaluation for potential online students, go to <http://www.ion.illinois.edu/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/selfEval.asp>

## Appendix H

### Attendance Expectations, Notifications and Withdrawal Procedures

By accepting enrollment in a SOCRATES Online course, the student agrees to the following enrollment and participation expectations:

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

If a student is not meeting the attendance expectations for a course, a stepped approach will be implemented:

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

**STEP 2: 8-13 days of Not Making Academic Progress.** If the student does not respond to the phone call by submitting assignments within the next seven (7) consecutive days or does not continue to submit an acceptable number of assignments each week, the instructor will send an email to the student/parent(s) to remind them of the importance of submitting work and describing the withdrawal process. Counseling and administrative staff at the enrolling district and/or the SOCRATES Online student support facilitator will also be notified and involved, as appropriate, to determine whether the student can be successful in the course and what specific steps are required for successful continuation in the course.

**STEP 3: Withdrawal after 14 days of Nonattendance.** If the student does not respond by submitting assignments within fourteen (14) days of the initial phone call, SOCRATES Online will assume that the student does not intend to remain in the course, and the student will be administratively dropped from the course. If this occurs after the 14-day drop period, all appropriate fees and tuition will apply. Exceptions to this policy will be made with the consent of the enrolling district.

**STEP 4: Final Grade and Transcript.** An official final grade report will be sent to the student and the enrolling district at the time the student is withdrawn from the course.

## **Appendix I**

### **SOCRATES Online Acceptable Use Policy**

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

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

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

#### **GENERAL USE POLICY**

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

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

Sharing your user account with any other person is prohibited. If you do share your user account with another person, you will be solely responsible for the actions of that other person while he or she is using the account.

Deletion, examination, copying, or modification of files and/or data belonging to other users without their prior consent is prohibited.

Attempts to evade or change resource quotas are prohibited.

Use of SOCRATES resources for commercial, political or other non-educational purposes is prohibited.

Any unauthorized, deliberate action that damages or disrupts these resources, alters the normal performance, or causes malfunctions is a violation regardless of system location or time duration.

#### **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

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

- Forgery or attempted forgery of electronic messages is prohibited.
- Attempts to read, delete, copy, or modify the electronic messages of other users are prohibited, unless these actions are part of a specific course assignment.
- Attempts to send harassing, obscene and/or other threatening electronic communications to another user are prohibited.  
Attempts to send unsolicited junk mail, "for-profit" messages or chain letters are prohibited.

- In addition, all users will be expected to abide by accepted guidelines of Internet etiquette (Netiquette) in all electronic communications

## **NETWORK AND SYSTEM SECURITY**

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

- Use of systems and/or networks in attempts to gain unauthorized access to remote systems is prohibited.
- Use of systems and/or networks to connect to other systems, in evasion of the physical limitations of the remote system/local, is prohibited.
- Decryption of system or user passwords is prohibited.
- The copying of system files is prohibited.
- The copying, downloading or unauthorized use of copyrighted materials, such as third-party software or course content, without the express written permission of the owner or the proper license, is prohibited. This provision also applies to the use of pirated software, which is prohibited.
- Intentional attempts to "crash" Network systems or programs are punishable disciplinary offenses.
- Any attempts to secure a higher level of privilege on Network systems are punishable disciplinary offenses.
- The willful introduction of computer "viruses" or other disruptive/destructive programs into the organization network or into external networks is prohibited.

## Appendix J

### Misconceptions About Online Learning

*Adapted from information provided by the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL), A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning written by John F. Watson and IDEAL – NM Student Handbook.*

**Misconception 1: Online learning is just a high-tech version of the old correspondence course.**

Response: Most correspondence courses were not “taught” by anyone—unknown persons graded assignments and sent them back to students. Online courses are taught by highly-qualified teachers with interactive tools and instant messaging. Highly-qualified teachers with interactive tools and instant messaging teach online courses. Students typically have more one-on-one interactions with their teachers and fellow students in online courses, especially when team projects are assigned. Teachers report getting to know their students better, and students who are shy or do not think well “on their feet” tend to contribute more in online environments. Students are often actively interacting with both resources and others in online environments.

**Misconception 2: Online courses are for gifted and talented students only.**

Response: Online courses have worked well with students of all kinds, including at-risk students, students in urban and rural areas, those with limited English proficiency, and those with special needs. Online learning has also been used successfully as part of systemic reforms to help students who are performing below grade level in large urban school districts.

**Misconception 3: Online course are easier for students than regular courses.**

Response: Most online courses are not condensed or easier versions of regular courses. They are aligned to rigorous state standards. They require active participation and operate in settings under supervision of state-certified teachers, require students to take state assessment tests, have attendance policies, and have competency-based academic progress requirements in effect. They require high levels of initiative to complete.

**Misconception 4: A student is more likely to cheat online.**

Response: Cheating is no more prevalent online than in the classroom. In addition, there are many technological ways to deter it and track it. In many cases, the online venue and communication enables teachers to get to know their students’ idiosyncrasies, skills and writing patterns much better. Teachers say that student writing has a voice and that it is often easier to spot work that is inconsistent or unlike earlier communication in online environments.

**Misconception 5: Online students are isolated and therefore will be socially disadvantaged.**

Response: In fact, students often engage actively both online and off as they complete assignments and socialize with other students and adults in their schools, at home, and in the community. Online students typically take only one or two courses online, blending their learning opportunities with traditional instruction in brick-and-mortar schools.

**Misconception 6: Virtual schools are about technology.**

Response: Virtual schools are about curriculum and instruction for students. The “medium” is not the message because the student, instructor, content, and learning goals are key. Networks simply make it possible to provide communication, access to extended resources, and use of sound, graphics, video, text, interactivity, and other digital capabilities to strengthen instruction. Most schools have the basic technology, Web browsers, plug-in software, and access that are needed.

**Misconception 7: Online teachers have easy jobs.**

Response: Online teachers report that they work much harder and spend more hours online than in the classroom, but that they love it. They do not simply “move a class online” and “put up what they teach.” Online instructional design, writing, management of instruction, and communicating with students can take considerable time and be quite different from what goes on inside a traditional classroom.

**Misconception 8: Online learning is much cheaper than face-to-face instruction.**

Response: Studies show that the total costs of online learning approximate those of traditional settings. Course development costs are higher, and the required technology must be adequate. Onsite support is an important element of student success, and is often overlooked as part of the cost equation. Teacher costs equate to those of brick and mortar schools.

**Misconception 9: Online courses represent an “add-on” to already burdened school systems and teachers.**

Response: Online education does not represent an “add-on.” It represents an opportunity to take advantage of online resources, enable teachers to help students learn in ways that match students’ needs and learning style, and transform schools. Online courses may or may not decrease costs, depending on how budgets are allocated and how online courses are integrated into instruction. Training and support of teachers is important.

## **Appendix K**

### **Federal and State Regulations**

#### **STUDENT RECORDS AND PRIVACY PROTECTION**

SOCRATES Online is committed to the secure and appropriate handling of personal information and adheres to the requirements of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and actively pursues policies and procedures that protect the privacy of student records. SOCRATES Online will employ physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard the security and integrity of personal information collected by SOCRATES Online.

In addition:

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

#### **AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) COMPLIANCE**

Courses are developed in accordance with federal policies on ADA compliance. ADA compliance follows the universal principles of design. Resources on designing an online course according to these principles and information on providing online services for students eligible for accommodative services are provided in a number of web sites:

About.com's Web Design and HTML

[http://webdesign.about.com/od/accessibility/Web\\_Accessibility\\_Web\\_Usability.htm](http://webdesign.about.com/od/accessibility/Web_Accessibility_Web_Usability.htm)

and the University of Washington's

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Technology/universal.design.html>

#### **EQUITABLE ACCESS**

SOCRATES Online is committed to providing equitable and safe access to the Internet-based resources provided by SOCRATES Online, including access for disadvantaged and underserved students, and will recommend policies and procedures to ensure that all students can take advantage of the opportunities created by SOCRATES Online. Schools should set a priority on recruiting disadvantaged and underserved students. Online instructors will make every effort to ensure that the content, approach, and goals of the online education courses meet their needs.

In addition:

1. The enrolling district shall allow an online student to have the same access to the computer hardware and education software available in the school district as for all other students in the school district.
2. The enrolling district will insure that all computers supplied by the enrolling district for online learning will have appropriate active Internet filtering and blocking technology. The enrolling district will periodically check all computers to insure that this filtering and blocking software is active and meets CIPA requirements.
3. The enrolling district shall assist an online learning student whose family qualifies for the education tax credit to acquire computer hardware and educational software for online purposes.

4. The enrolling district shall provide non-academic services to online students on the same basis as other enrolled students, including the participation in extracurricular activities.

### **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT**

SOCRATES Online is committed to safeguarding the right of all participants to work and learn in an environment that is free of discrimination or harassment. Discrimination/harassment on the basis of race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or disability in any form will not be tolerated. All schools in the SOCRATES network should have an anti-discrimination policy and procedures for addressing discrimination/ harassment complaints. Compliance with these policies and procedures will be the responsibility of each participating school. Complaints should be filed with the complainant's school and the SOCRATES Online Program Director, and should follow procedures of the policy for that school. Situations involving two or more schools will require the collaboration of administrators in each of those schools. SOCRATES Online can assist when appropriate.

### **Title VI/IX and OTHER EQUITY LEGISLATION**

All schools must be in compliance with all Federal Civil Rights legislation. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 insures that no person shall, on the basis of gender, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any federally assisted program. In addition, state civil rights legislation will apply to SOCRATES Online courses. Compliance with all civil rights legislation will be the responsibility of each school and complaints should be filed with the complainant's school and should follow the school's grievance procedure.

*The SOCRATES Online Student and Family Handbook has been adapted, in part, from IDEAL-NM*