**Guidelines for the Submission of**

**Single District Virtual School Proposals**

**for School Year 2024-2025**

**Overview**

These guidelines provide information to assist school committees, superintendents, and districts that are considering operating a virtual school that only enrolls students who live in the single school district operating the school. Established under G.L. c. 71, § 94(s),[[1]](#footnote-2) a Single District Virtual School (SDVS)[[2]](#footnote-3), is separate and distinct from Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools (CMVS) that also operate under [G.L. c. 71, § 94](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section94), and [603 CMR 52.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr52.html). While virtual schools operated by and for a single district do not follow the same required processes and procedures as CMVS, there are certain requirements that do apply and must be followed. These guidelines provide guidance for a single school district intending to develop and operate a virtual school that only enrolls students from that school district under G.L. c. 71, § 94(s) and [603 CMR 52.13.](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr52.html?section=13)

Single districts that wish to open a SDVS must submit a proposal to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (Commissioner) for review and comment. The district must submit the proposal at least four (4) months before the opening of the SDVS.

**Process for Submitting a SDVS Proposal**

Districts interested in developing and operating a SDVS must submit a proposal as outlined in these guidelines. A complete submission will include the information sheet found in **Part 1** and a proposal narrative which addresses all template prompts found in **Part 2.**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) reviews each proposal and provides comments and feedback. Based on the Department’s comments and feedback, the district may decide to revise the proposal. Once the district finalizes its plan, the local school committee will vote whether to authorize the district to operate a SDVS and to submit the final plan to the Department, along with a Statement of Assurances.

The SDVS proposal review process is summarized below in chronological order:

Department & Commissioner Review

**June 13, 2024: District Submits Final Documents**

School districts will submit to the Department: the final SDVS information sheet (**Part 1**), the final template (**Part 2**), evidence of the school committees vote to approve the SDVS, and the Statement of Assurances, (found in **Appendix A**), prior to opening. The district should also publish the final plan on the district’s website.

Submission of a Proposal

**April 12, 2024: District Submission**

Districts submit a proposal to the Department that provides information about the school and how the district will implement its SDVS. The proposal must be submitted to the Department at least four (4) months prior to the intended opening of the SDVS. The proposal must include the information sheet (**Part 1**) and narrative which addresses all template prompts (**Part 2**). The district should also publish the proposal on the district’s website.

Local

School Committee Vote

**May 10, 2024: Provision of Feedback**

The Department and Commissioner will review the proposal and provide comments about the degree to which the proposal adequately responds to prompts and presents a coherent plan for a SDVS. The Commissioner will return the proposal with comments to the school committee. The district may decide to revise the proposal based on feedback.

Final Proposal Submission

**May 10-June 13, 2024: School Committee Vote**

The local school committee will vote whether to approve the SDVS proposal and operate a SDVS in the upcoming school year, and beyond.

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**Timeline and General Instructions**

The proposal/plan must be an accessible document written for a wide audience, including parents/guardians, policy makers, and the public. The document should be translated, as needed.

* **Due date:** The proposal is due on or before April 12, 2024.
* **Submission method:** Submit the proposal via email to: virtualschools@mass.gov.
* **File format:** The proposal must be submitted electronically in Word or PDF.
* **Length:** The maximum length of the proposal must be no more than 20 pages.
* **Formatting:** Please use the formatting provided in the template.

PART 1– INFORMATION SHEET

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| Name of Proposed SDVS:       |
| School District:  |
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| Contact Person and Contact Information: |
| Please indicate the grade levels and total student enrollment proposed for the next three to five school years  |
| School Year | Grade Levels | Total Student Enrollment |
| 2024-2025 |       |       |
| 2025-2026 |       |       |
| 2026-2027 |       |       |
| 2027-2028 |       |       |
| 2028-2029 |       |       |
| Total Enrollment |       |       |
| Age (year and month) at entry for kindergarten, if applicable: | Year:       Month:       |
| What is the target student-teacher ratio in the proposed SDVS? | 1 teacher to       students |
| Will any of the teachers included in your response to the preceding question be responsible for providing instruction and/or other supports to students enrolled in other district schools?  | Yes:       No:       |
| Will the SDVS permit students to earn credits by demonstrating competency in a grade or subject matter? | Yes:       No:       |
| Is the SDVS considering requesting a waiver of student learning time requirements? If, yes, please visit the [student learning time waiver process website](https://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/SLTwaiver.html) for additional information, including but not limited to the application and timelines.  | Yes:       No:       |
| Will all materials provided to students meet Massachusetts’ [Enterprise IT Accessibility Standards](http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/policies-legal-and-technical-guidance/it-policies-standards-and-procedures/ent-pols-and-stnds/accessibility-standards/enterprise-it-accessibility-standards.html) and [Web Accessibility Standards](http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/policy.html?policy=accessibility)? | Yes:       No:       |
| Will the district contract with any vendors to run the school?  | Yes:       No:       |
| **FOR THE FINAL SUBMISSION ONLY**. [Not required for the Department’s review process.] Is the SDVS Statement of Assurances provided as an attachment? (**Part 3**) The Statement of Assurances for SDVS must be submitted prior to opening. | Yes:       No:       |

PART 2 – PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

***Districts must address the prompts in the proposal template below. Please type in the boxes provided. Boxes will automatically expand with your text.***

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| **Proposed SDVS Name:** |  |
| **District:** |  |

**Mission and Vision**

1. **Access to Opportunity:** The proposal should describe the community of students to be served by the SDVS, how the school will offer access to this opportunity to students, and how the school will meet the needs of students and their families.

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| 1. Describe the student population that will be served by the SDVS, and the needs of that population, in the context of the district community.
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| 1. Describe how the SDVS will offer educational opportunities that will address the needs of the student population.
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| 1. Describe how the proposed SDVS responds to actual, documented demand for a virtual learning option. How does the proposed maximum enrollment and grades served reflect the demand?
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1. **Mission and Vision:** The mission communicates the essence of the proposed SDVS and defines the core purpose and key values of the school to its stakeholders and the public. The mission should be clearly connected to the rest of the proposal. The vision statement is a public declaration of the school's core beliefs and educational values. This usually includes a high-level explanation of future goals, which is more detailed than the mission statement, and paints a picture of how the school will operate, basic organizational principles, long term goals, and what students will learn and be able to do as a result of attending the school.

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| 1. Provide a succinct, meaningful mission statement for the SDVSthat is consistent with high academic standards of the district.
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| 1. Provide a vision statement for the SDVS which outlines the school's core beliefs, educational values, as well as future goals for achieving the school’s mission.
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**Educational Program**

1. **Educational Program:** SDVS are expected to deliver high quality academic programs that result in strong academic outcomes and educational success for all students, and consistently meet state student performance standards as defined by the statewide accountability system.

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| * 1. Describe the SDVS’s pedagogical approach. How is the approach aligned to the school’s mission and founded on an understanding of effective, evidence-based educational practices and high standards for virtual teaching and learning? For more information about high quality virtual education, please see the National Standards for Quality Online Learning (NSQOL) [website](https://www.nsqol.org/).
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| * 1. Describe the SDVS’s synchronous and asynchronous learning expectations and opportunities.
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| * 1. Describe how the SDVS will make online education as good as or better than the in-person delivery provided by the traditional district schools.
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1. **Curriculum and Learning Management System:** A SDVS must provide curriculum and instruction aligned with district standards and expectations. A SDVS may choose from available curricula, or develop curricula aligned with district standards and expectations that reflect the mission of the school and are designed to meet the needs of all students enrolled at the SDVS.

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| * 1. Describe the chosen SDVS curriculum and state whether it is district created or commercially available. Describe how the district evaluated available curriculum and determined the chosen curriculum is aligned with district standards.
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| * 1. Identify the learning management system, digital applications, or platforms that staff members and students will use, specified by grade or content, where relevant.
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1. **Learning supports and services for all learners to enable student success in an online environment:** The SDVS must respond to the educational needs of enrolled students by providing a full continuum of services; students must receive required services in an appropriate setting and be able to participate fully in the educational goals and mission of the school. Students with special learning needs, including English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities, will require additional supports so that they are able to access the whole curriculum, make substantial progress in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and behaviors presented by the curriculum, and particulate fully in all aspects of the school experience.

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| * 1. Provide a detailed plan for the provision of a responsive, general education environment that supports the needs of all students. The plan should describe how the proposed curriculum, learning management system, and instructional methods are accessible and appropriate for all students at all levels, including students with diverse learning styles; English learners; students with disabilities; students who enter below grade level, or students identified as at risk; and advanced students who perform significantly above grade level.
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| * 1. Specifically describe the SDVS’s intended programs, supports, and services for students with disabilities, and how they will be implemented within the virtual context of the SDVS.
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| * 1. Specifically describe the SDVS’s intended programs, supports, and services for English learners, and how they will be implemented within the virtual context of the SDVS.
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1. **School Culture and Family Engagement:** As a public virtual school, the SDVS must support students’ social and emotional health in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that engages students, families, and the broader community. The SDVS must support all students’ sense of belonging and help students develop social and emotional knowledge, skills, and competencies for a multicultural world. The SDVS must develop effective relationships with all families/guardians and effectively communicate with them about the academic progress and social emotional well-being of students.

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| * 1. Describe how the SDVS will support students’ social and emotional health and help them develop social and emotional knowledge, skills, and competencies.
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| * 1. Describe how the SDVS will create and sustain a culture that provides a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that supports all students’ sense of belonging.
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| * 1. Describe how the school will engage families/guardians, develop relationships with families/guardians, and effectively communicate about student academic progress, level of school engagement, as well as social emotional well-being of students.
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| * 1. Describe how the school will prepare families/guardians to be successful in the SDVS.
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| * 1. Describe how the SDVS will ensure high levels of student engagement/attendance that will enable student academic progress.
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**Organizational Structure and Capacity**

1. **Staff:** All teachers hired to work at the SDVS must be licensed in Massachusetts in the areas in which they teach, pursuant to state law. All educators must be evaluated consistent with [regulations](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html) promulgated by the Board and [guidance](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/) developed by DESE. In addition to licensed teachers, a SDVS must have a Massachusetts-licensed school nurse (RN), a special education administrator, an attendance officer, and, if the school serves English learners, a licensed English Language Learner (ELL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher.

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| * 1. Include a staffing chart showing all SDVS employees (note: some employees may work part time at the SDVS and part time for another district school)
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| **Please put staffing chart directly into this text box or attach to the document.** |

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| * 1. Provide a narrative outlining the rationale for the staffing chart.
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| * 1. Describe plans for the recruitment and retention of high-quality educators and staff members for the SDVS.
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| * 1. Describe the professional development plan for SDVS staff.
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1. **Assessment**: All students educated with Massachusetts public funds, including all students enrolled in a SDVS, are required to participate in state assessments. The award of a high school diploma includes the requirement that students earn a [Competency Determination (CD)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr30.html?section=03) in ELA, mathematics, and STE. [ACCESS for ELLs tests](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access/) must be administered annually to all ELs measure the proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking English, as well as the progress they are making in learning English. Likewise, SDVS should implement a school-level system of assessment.

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| * 1. Provide a general overview of how the SDVS intends to administer in-person state required assessments such as the MCAS and ACCESS for ELLs.
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| * 1. How does the SDVS plan to assess student progress in the virtual curriculum, assess student social/emotional needs, or assess student supports needed? How will these plans be similar to and/or different from districts assessments and practices? How will the school demonstrate the students are making progress in the virtual learning environment?
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1. **Accountability:** The School Committee has final approval over whether and under what terms a SDVS operates provided those terms comply with state and federal law. SDVS are subject to the [Massachusetts School and District Accountability System](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/). In addition to its many other responsibilities, the district school committee must ensure that the school is complying with all applicable state and federal laws.

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| * 1. Describe how, and if, the school committee has been involved in the development of the SDVS proposal to-date. How does the school committee plan to hold the district accountable for SDVS results?
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| * 1. Provide the district’s plan to communicate and report SDVS progress to the school committee and public at large throughout the year.
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1. **Organizational capacity and experience**: In addition to areas outlined above,a strong SDVS newly develops or amends district policies for a virtual environment, hires qualified staff to manage the school’s day-to-day operations, holds the staff accountable for meeting established goals and formulates a long-range plan that ensures the school’s continued stability. The SDVS, leadership, and staff must possess a wide variety of skills and qualifications that enable them to develop, open, sustain, operate, and continuously improve an effective school in collaboration with the school district.

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| * 1. Describe the capacity, qualifications, and experience of the school district and staff to develop and implement a successful SDVS.
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| * 1. Summarize some of the standard district policies that may need to be amended to allow for the successful operation of the SDVS.
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| * 1. Describe the district’s plans to hire and evaluate SDVS staff to support the planned level of enrollment and needs of the student body.
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1. **Time and learning requirements:** Every SDVS must meet the [Massachusetts Time on Learning Requirements](https://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/SLTwaiver.html) of state law unless it requests and is granted a [waiver of those requirements](https://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/sltwaiver.html) via an application.

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| * 1. Describe the proposed schedule for the school and outline how the school will meet the required time on learning requirements.
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| * 1. If the school district is requesting a waiver to the time on learning requirements, briefly explain the general rationale for this potential waiver request. Note: Visit the student learning time waiver process website for additional information, including but not limited to the application and timelines.
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1. **Non-consumable instructional supplies:** [State law](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section48) requires schools to purchase textbooks and other instructional materials and supplies intended for use and re-use over a period of years. Schools then in turn "loan" those instructional materials free of charge to students, who must return them at the end of the school year.[[3]](#footnote-4) Costly tools such as a tablet or other computer or a graphing calculator fall in the category of instructional materials and supplies that, similar to textbooks, are intended for districts to purchase and use and re-use over a period of years. A SDVS must be prepared to provide computer or tablet devices free of charge to students whose families do not choose to buy them or cannot afford to do so.

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| * 1. Include a detailed plan for providing instructional tools and supplies for all students enrolled in the school.
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1. **Connectivity:** A SDVS must also be prepared to arrange internet access or connectivity if families do not choose to buy it or cannot afford to do so.

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| * 1. Include a detailed plan for ensuring connectivity for all students enrolled in the school.[[4]](#footnote-5)
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PART 3 – SDVS Statement of Assurances

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| ***Part 3 must be submitted with the final proposal submission, and NOT during the Department’s review phase.*** |
| This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the district school committee and submitted with the final proposal. As the authorized representative of the district, I certify under the penalties of perjury that the information submitted in this proposal. |
| Name of proposed Single District Virtual School (SDVS):       |
| 1. Shall be open to all students who live in the district on a space-available basis.
2. Shall comply with enrollment restrictions and only enroll students who reside in the district M.G.L. c. 71, § 94.
3. Shall ensure access to school meals for all enrolled in the virtual school. M.G.L. c. 69, § 1C(a).
4. Shall provide physical education classes, as required by law. M.G.L. c. 71, § 3.
5. Shall comply with federal and state law and regulations and guidance.
6. Will not charge tuition, fees, or other mandatory payments to students for full-time attendance at the SDVS, for participation in required or elective courses, or for mandated services or programs. M.G.L. c. 71, § 48 (requiring school districts to purchase textbooks and school supplies for students).
7. Will offer required computers, printers, software, and Internet access, connectivity, to all students free of charge. M.G.L. c. 71, § 48 (requiring school districts to purchase textbooks and school supplies for students).
8. Will not charge any public school for the use or replication of any part of their curriculum subject to the terms of any contract between the SDVS and a third-party provider.
9. Will permit parents to enroll their children only voluntarily and not because they must send their children to this SDVS.
10. Will be open to all students, on a space-available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or academic achievement. See 42 U.S.C. 2000d (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); 20 U.S.C. 1703(f) (Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974); 20 U.S.C. 1681 (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972); 29 U.S.C. 794 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973); 42 U.S.C. 12132 (Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990); 20 U.S.C. 1400 (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004); No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 at Title III, Part A, § 3121(c)(1)(C), and Title X, Part C, §§ 721, 722(g)(4) (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001); Mass. Const. amend. art. 114 (prohibits discrimination based upon disability); M.G.L. c. 71A, § 7 (English language education); M.G.L. c. 76, § 5 (prohibiting discrimination in public education base upon race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation).
11. Will be secular in its curriculum, programs, admissions, policies, governance, employment practices, and operation in accordance with the federal and state constitutions and any other relevant provisions of federal and state law.
12. Will comply with the federal Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
13. Will adhere to all applicable provisions of federal and state law relating to students with disabilities including, but not limited to, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws.
14. Will adhere to all applicable provisions of federal and state law relating to students who are English language learners including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, and chapter 71A of the Massachusetts General Laws.
15. Will comply with all other applicable federal and state laws including, but not limited to, the requirement to offer a school nutrition program. M.G.L. c. 69, § 1C.
16. Will meet the performance standards and statewide assessment requirements set by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for all students in public schools. M.G.L. c. 71, § 94(b)(7).
17. Will submit all data required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in a timely and complete manner.
18. Will ensure that all core academic teachers of ELs and the administrators who supervise and evaluate them earn the sheltered English immersion endorsement. 603 CMR 14.07.
19. Will include a daily visual component as part of a “live check-in” between student(s) and teacher.
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| This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.  |
| Digital signature of authorized person: |       |
| Name of authorized person: |       |
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1. G.L. c. 71, § 94(s) “This section shall not apply to a virtual school operated by a single school district if the school enrolls only students residing in the school district; provided, however, that such district shall submit a summary description of the proposed virtual school to the commissioner for review and comment at least 4 months in advance of the opening of the virtual school. The commissioner shall then provide written comments on the proposal to each district's school committee.” G.L. c. 71, § 94 (s). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. As established under G.L. c. 71, § 94, and specified in [603 CMR 52.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr52.html?section=all) there are three types of public virtual schools permitted in Massachusetts.

	* **CMVS 1.** As specified in M.G.L. c. 71, § 94(c) and (d), CMVS 1 may enroll students who live anywhere in Massachusetts or may limit enrollment to students who live in certain districts in Massachusetts.
	* **CMVS 2.** As specified in M.G.L. c. 71, § 94(c) and (d), a CMVS 2 is formed by a single school district, under an agreement entered into by more than one school district or by an education collaborative. A CMVS 2 may enroll only students who live in the school district that formed the CMVS, in the school districts that signed the agreement, or in the school districts that are members of the education collaborative that formed the CMVS.
	* **Single District Virtual School ("SDVS").** A virtual school that is authorized by a school committee under M.G.L. c. 71, § 94(s), whose teachers primarily teach from a remote location using the internet or other computer-based methods and whose students are not required to be located at the physical premises of the school. A SDVS is operated within and by a single school district and only enrolls students who reside in that district. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The exception to this general rule is consumable supplies - those supplies that typically are used up by students during the year. Schools may ask students to supply their own notebooks or binders, papers, pencils and pens, and tissues. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. By law, the SDVS may only enroll students who reside in the district. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)