



Guide to Implementing Online Homebound Education for Schools and Districts

Comparing traditional
models of delivery to
an online model



HOMEBOUND EDUCATION

What is homebound education?

Imagine waking up in the morning to prepare for the school day. But instead of getting dressed, eating breakfast and walking to the school bus, you attend a doctor’s appointment, go through physical rehabilitation and give blood all before your first lesson. No, it’s not a typical school student routine in America, but for millions of school aged children this is their normal day.

According to the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, more than 6 million children with disabilities receive special education and related services in schools nationwide each year – and the number is rising. Special focus on these children, and their needs, increased in the last decade, with many groups and laws arising to ensure that these children’s’ education needs are taken into consideration.

In school districts across the country, a number of students face short term health issues that cause them to miss schools for weeks and sometimes months. Regardless of the time they are not able to physically attend their school, continuing with their education is essential.

“Homebound instruction shall be made available to students who are certified at home or in a health care facility for periods that would prevent normal school attendance based upon certification of need by a licensed physician or licensed psychiatrist.”

Virginia Department of Educations
Homebound Instructional Services
Guidelines, February, 2012

Homebound education and the law

Federal law mandates that children with disabilities receive an education, even if the disability is temporary. Under federal guidelines, any child with a disability is permitted to obtain an education in the least restrictive environment possible. Thus, if a student is unable to physically attend school due to a temporary or long term disability, the student’s parent or school district may seek alternative education delivery through a hospital homebound education program. One education option that is becoming more prevalent is online homebound education.

CHALLENGES



Both school districts and the families of homebound educated students face multiple challenges when it comes to implementing and participating in a homebound education program. Districts deliver traditional homebound education through periodic home visits along with telephone conference calls. It is often difficult to plan these visits given the unpredictability of the students' schedule.

When scheduling meetings with their teachers, students are confined to what time works best for the teacher, as opposed to what time works best for the student.

In addition to finding the time and availability of teaching staff to assist with homebound education, districts are faced with the additional cost of tutoring homebound students when they need extra help, paying staff for the additional time, especially when subject specific instruction is required.

Homebound educated students are faced with a difficult challenge in keeping up with their studies. Often times, they are juggling multiple doctor appointments, long-term hospital visits, and physical rehabilitation with lesson participation and school work. When scheduling meetings with their teachers, students are confined to what time works best for the teacher, as opposed to what time works best for the student.

And when a student is fatigued from a treatment or doctor's visit, it can be overwhelming to complete school work as a specific subject. If the student is sick or fatigued from an appointment or treatment, but is confined to the time that works for the teacher, the student will struggle.

In addition, the enrollment period for homebound education is often short term and difficult to predict its length. It is critical for students to stay on track to ensure a smooth transition back to their assigned school once they have completed the homebound education program.

Elements of a Successful Homebound Education Program

In order for any homebound education program to be successful, there must be a clear understanding of and commitment to the roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers, students, and administrators. In addition, clear goals for an individualized learning plan must be set and monitored.

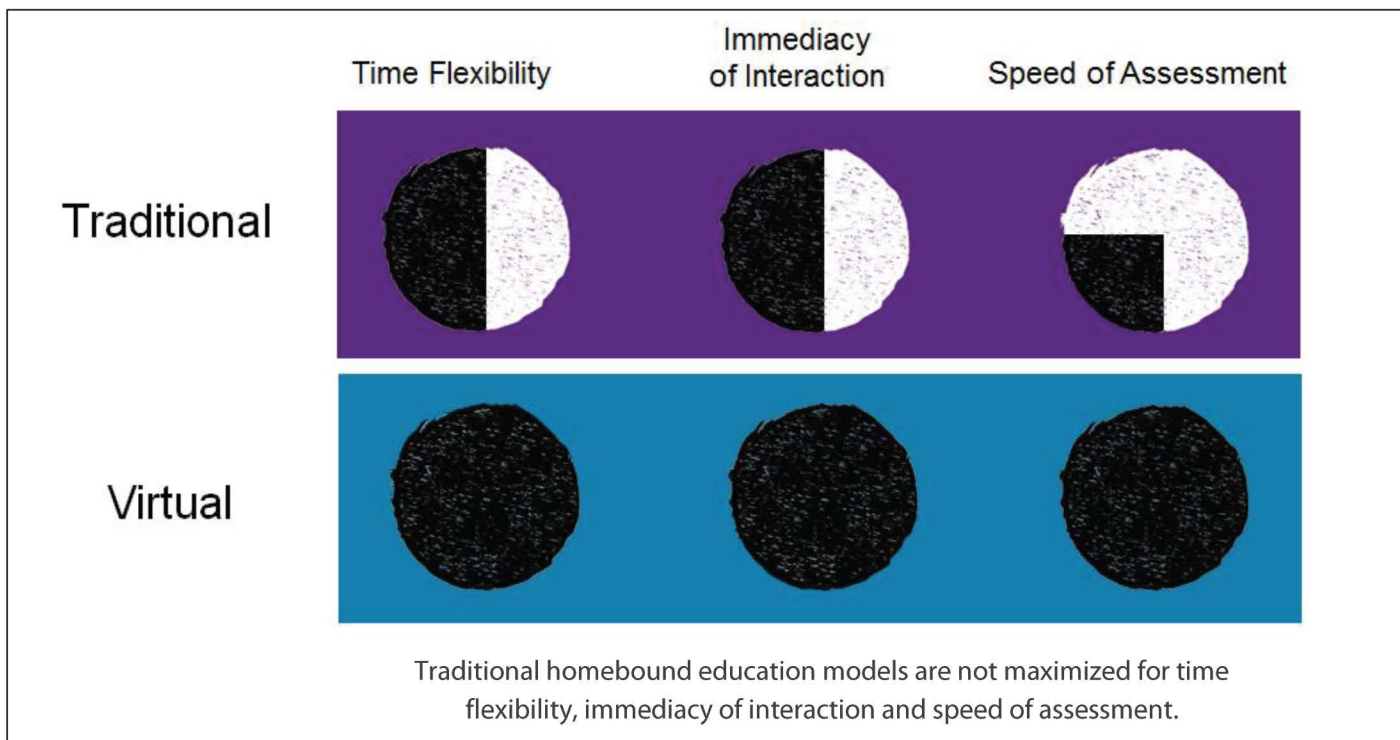
The following are five critical items needed to optimize the students' opportunity to succeed in a homebound education environment:

1. **Student/Guardian Orientation:** It is imperative that the student and parent or guardian participate in an orientation at the program onset to understand policies and expectations.
2. **Clear Pacing/Progress Goals:** Individualized pacing and progress goals need to be established and clearly communicated.
3. **Assessment & Intervention:** Continuous, close monitoring is required should modifications or adjustments to the individualized learning plan become necessary. It is critical to intervene early if the student is struggling so that he/she can get back on track quickly and not become disorganized.
4. **Flexible Learning Environment:** Make sure the student has options as to when and where they learn. Students often have changes in their schedules due to healthcare issues, including changing locations.

5. **Keep the Student Engaged:** Once a student feels like he/she is not connected to the school, it is likely that the students' attitude and performance will suffer, often dramatically. Keep your students engaged – with other students and with a teacher – during the entire homebound period.

NEW MODEL: DELIVERING HOMEBOUND EDUCATION ONLINE

Traditional homebound education delivery models require a teacher to travel to the student's home once or twice a week, and to otherwise engage with the student over the phone or via email. Learning content is often delivered via textbooks and learning packets (an assortment of hardcopy materials). This model is very inefficient, since a great deal of the teachers time is spent traveling and requires a great number of teachers to serve students located throughout the district. Also, there is little flexibility in this model, since the home visits must be timed around the teacher's schedule and the teacher is often not available at the point the student needs assistance. Finally, since graded work and teacher/student interaction is limited, it can take days or even weeks to understand how the student is performing academically.



Online homebound education has the advantage of being location independent, since the curriculum and interaction with the teacher and other students is delivered over the internet. If the student has a short hospital stay or has long hours in the waiting room, school work can still be accomplished. Each student goes through the curriculum at his or her own pace, and can do the work anytime – day or night. And the curriculum is rigorous and can be tailored to the learning level of the student, so that the student can stay on pace and re-enter school without falling behind.

Perhaps the most important reason online homebound education is successful is that it keeps the student engaged and therefore better motivated to keep on pace. Not only does the student regularly interact with a

teacher, but students interact with other students in online learning sessions, chat rooms and in small online groups. In addition to providing a stronger and more flexible education model, the online learning model is often a lower cost method of providing homebound education, since travel and other costs in a traditional program are not required.

Key advantages of the online homebound education learning model include:

- **Engaged** - Continue to be part of a school community (interact with other students, teachers and virtual clubs).
- **Individualized learning** - Access to curriculum and e-classes so the student can review and go at their own pace.
- **Schedule flexibility** – Studies can be completed anytime at day or night.
- **Anyplace access** - Virtual, so the student can continue to be in school from hospital, home or anyplace with internet access.
- **Continuous assessments** – Quickly identify if student is struggling and needs additional help.
- **Immediate help** - Teacher and mentors available via chat, phone, email.

FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT – A CASE STUDY

During the 2010–2011 school year, K¹² partnered with a district in the state of Florida to provide 163 homebound students online education and support—resulting in excellent results.

The K¹² solution offers a level of personalization simply not possible under their previous traditional models. Starting with the student’s initial IEP meeting, an individualized learning plan established benchmarks and pacing goals tailored to their abilities.

From there, each student was supported by K¹² certified teachers as they embarked upon online lesson plans and assignments custom tailored to their learning styles and aptitude. What’s more, homebound educated students were able to tackle their learning tasks at a time and place that was most convenient for them – so learning and healing were never compromised or in competition.

For every homebound educated student in the Florida program, depending on their level and pace, their Hospital/Homebound education program included:

- Initial IEP meeting and individualized learning plan
- State-certified, expert teachers in every subject area high school students
- Assessment of every objective to ensure mastery
- Online classroom for completion of lessons, assignments, and assessments
- Additional teacher interaction through online office hours, optional live/recorded synchronous sessions, and threaded discussions
- Recordings of e-classes and workshops to provide flexibility
- Integrated student planning and time management tools

RESULTS

Since implementation of the Virtual Hospital/Homebound Education Program in the district not a single student was held back as a result of being homebound. The program has substantially improved the curriculum and teaching for homebound students by providing continuous and ongoing instruction where that was not possible before while being able to obtain 20% cost savings to the district.

K¹² provides a complete, fully integrated online program for Homebound Education. Through the use of a broad catalog of course offerings, as well as engaging technology that can be accessed anywhere, anytime, K¹² offers the flexibility that traditional Homebound Education programs have not been able to achieve, including:

- **Curriculum** - the most extensive catalog of online courses in the K-12 industry with more than 550 complete online courses
- **Technology** - All classes are conducted using web-based conferencing, which provides a live, interactive, online classroom that allows students to take classes, talk with their teachers, and participate in a virtual homeroom class, and all classes are recorded for later viewing.
- **Instruction** - Each student is provided with an advisor/mentor to monitor progress and act as the teacher liaison working to develop individualized pacing and learning plans
- **The Highest Standard in Administrative and Mentor Services** - All programs include an Annual program review to tailor the curriculum, services, and process to serve the district's needs as well as an advisor/mentor to monitor progress for each student and act as teacher liaison, and helps with scheduling if a surgery or a hospital stay is required.

The goal of the K¹² Homebound education program is to ensure that the students continue to receive the highest quality education, continue to engage with other students, and progress at a rate that keeps them on track to graduation.

To find out more about establishing a K¹² Homebound education program in your district call us at 1-866-912-8588 or visit our website at www.k12.com/educators/contact-us

My daughter was a straight A student when she got sick. The Homebound Education program has truly allowed her to maintain her studies approved by her high school while she goes through her ordeal. The Hospital Homebound program has made an important difference in the life of a sick young lady.

Parent of a 5th Grader



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