



ACELLUS NATIONAL CYBERSCHOOL

Launching Hybrid Independent Study in Your District

An In-Depth Guide for Superintendents,
Administrators, and Senior Teaching Staff

*How a national partnership helps your district keep students,
protect enrollment, and run a flexible program your staff can succeed with.*

Executive Summary

Across the country, public school districts are watching families leave for independent study at home, for full-time online charters, and for statewide virtual schools. When a student leaves, the district loses more than a name on a roster: it loses the per-pupil funding that keeps teachers employed and programs running. In many districts the cumulative effect has meant cut positions and, in extreme cases, closed buildings.

Acellus National Cyberschool gives your district a way to offer these families a flexible, study-from-home option **without losing them**. Students remain fully enrolled in your district, earn **your district's diploma**, and stay connected to local life through sports, band, theater, and clubs. The program pairs the Acellus Gold learning platform — which delivers personalized, self-paced instruction — with your own credentialed teachers, who lead weekly live lessons and provide the human connection that makes learning stick.

The most common question we hear from district leaders is simple and fair: *“Can our teachers and administrators actually run an independent study program?”* Having now worked with hundreds of schools, our answer is an unequivocal yes — because you are not doing it alone. Acellus carries the heaviest parts of the load: recruiting families, delivering and grading the core coursework, supporting parents at home, and training your staff. This guide explains exactly how the work is divided, what your team is responsible for, and the support structure that stands behind them at every step.

The Enrollment Reality Districts Are Facing

Independent study is no longer a fringe choice. Since 2020, families have grown comfortable with learning that happens outside the traditional bell schedule, and many now expect their district to offer a flexible option. When it doesn't, they look elsewhere:

- **Families attempting to teach at home on their own.** Without a structured curriculum and a connected school, students often fall a grade or two behind, then re-enter the system needing costly remediation.
- **Large online charter schools.** These have absorbed enormous numbers of students — in many cases more than they can effectively serve — and the students they enroll come directly off neighboring district rolls.
- **Statewide virtual schools.** Authorized to enroll students regardless of where they live, these programs compete directly for the families in your boundaries.

Here is the part that surprises many superintendents: districts that offer their own flexible option tend to **keep** students rather than lose them. As one superintendent told us, “I was worried that offering a cyber school option would cause families to leave our brick-and-mortar schools. So far the opposite is happening.” A district-supported program keeps families inside your system, where a connected student can be drawn back into in-person classes and activities over time.

The bottom line for enrollment

When a family in your boundaries begins enrolling in a cyber school, the system lists the schools available to them at their address — and the local public district is always listed first. Districts that participate hold that home-field advantage. Districts that offer nothing are simply skipped over.

What Acellus National Cyberschool Is

Acellus National Cyberschool is a hybrid independent study model. It blends self-paced, asynchronous online coursework on the Acellus Gold platform with structured, teacher-led live instruction — a combination designed for students who learn best outside the traditional classroom while keeping them anchored to your school community.

Three things that stay true for every student

- **They remain fully enrolled in your district** and count toward your enrollment and average daily attendance (ADA) reporting, subject to your state’s rules.
- **They earn your district’s diploma**, on your graduation requirements, just like their peers in traditional programs.
- **They keep access to in-person school life** (at your option) — sports, band, theater, clubs, and other activities your school chooses to extend to them.

Families no longer have to choose between academic flexibility and belonging to a school. That single fact is what brings hesitant families back to the public system — and what keeps them there.

“Can Our Staff Handle This?” — How the Work Is Divided

This is the heart of the decision, so we will address it directly. An independent study program sounds like it would multiply your staff’s workload. In this model not so much, because Acellus takes on the startup function of helping find students and helping them get enrolled and in the system. That is hardest part for a district to stand up from scratch, and leaves your educators free to do the high-value work only they can do.

The division of responsibility looks like this:

Function	Carried by Acellus	Carried by your district
Recruiting & enrolling families	Leads outreach and digital marketing; guides families through enrollment	Signs the independent study agreement; confirms eligibility and residency, and processes enrollment documentation

Function	Carried by Acellus	Carried by your district
Delivering core instruction	Acellus Gold delivers the full courses, with built-in lessons, practice, and assessments	Reviews course selections so graduation requirements are met
Grading core coursework	The platform grades assignments, homework, and exams automatically	Spot-checks progress; provides weekly live interaction
Monitoring progress	Real-time dashboards flag students who need help	Watches the dashboard and intervenes when a student needs a nudge
Supporting parents at home	We help find new students and help parents get enrolled in our system	Work closely with students and parents to ensure success
Training your team	Provides onboarding, online courses, and optional on-site training	Completes the training programs

Read that table again from your teachers’ perspective. The exhausting parts of running a program — building curriculum, chasing down families, grading stacks of homework, and answering technical questions at the kitchen table — are handled for them. What remains is focused and professional, and it is the work that drew most of them into teaching in the first place.

The Supervising Teacher’s actual day

Each student is assigned a district-employed, credentialed Supervising Teacher. On a typical day, the Supervising Teacher:

- Checks the Acellus dashboard, which automatically sorts students by who needs help most — a student in the “red” zone gets attention first.
- Responds to student messages in the platform for help, clarification, or encouragement.
- At your option, the system supports the hosting of one live video “Special Lesson” per week (daily, in short sessions, for grades K–3), using resources Acellus provides — project-based learning, discussion, and hands-on activities that go deeper than a screen can.

Notice what is *not* on that list: writing curriculum, building assessments, or grading the bulk of coursework. The platform and the Acellus teachers handle those. Your teacher is freed to mentor, motivate, and lead — the human work that machines cannot do.

Dr. Billings on the role of the teacher

“The answer is not technology *or* teachers. The answer is technology *and* teachers, working together in a way that has never been possible before.” This model does not replace your educators; it removes the tasks a machine does better so they can spend their time where it matters most.

How the Learning Works: The Acellus Gold Platform

Acellus Gold is the engine of the program. It is more than a video library — it is a diagnostic, adaptive, and motivational system refined over nearly two decades of use. Four capabilities matter most to a district evaluating quality:

Vectored Instruction® — finding and fixing the real gap

When a student struggles, the cause is usually not the current lesson; it is a missing building block from an earlier year. Vectored Instruction reaches back as far as necessary to find that gap, builds a bridge of targeted instruction to close it, and brings the student forward — all while keeping them enrolled in their grade-level course and on track for on-time graduation. A tenth grader stuck in algebra because of a fraction concept missed in fifth grade is taken back, caught up, and returned to grade level, without being pulled out or labeled “behind.”

Prism Diagnostics™ — understanding why a student missed it

Most systems mark an answer wrong and move on. Acellus examines *which* wrong answer a student chose, because wrong answers follow predictable patterns that reveal the specific underlying misconception. Two students who miss the same question for different reasons receive different, precisely targeted help — in the moment, not weeks later.

The Gold Store — motivation that competes with the phone

Students earn Gold credits for mastering concepts and completing work, and redeem them for real merchandise — hoodies, backpacks, STEM kits, and Acellus gear. The point is not the prizes; it is the lesson that effort produces visible reward. Engagement and recognition that once belonged to games and apps are redirected toward learning. (This program is optional but highly recommended.)

The Success Zone — keeping progress on track

Real-time “Success Zone” reporting shows whether each student is maintaining satisfactory progress, giving Supervising Teachers and the District Administrator an early, objective signal of who needs intervention or re-engagement.

Independently reviewed quality

District leaders rightly ask about rigor and accreditation. Acellus courseware carries credentials from three independent bodies:

- **More than 75 courses certified by Quality Matters**, a leading peer-review standard for online course quality.

- **University of California A–G approval since 2015**, meeting college-preparatory standards for the UC and Cal State systems.

Acellus AP courses can be added to your College Board AP ledger, and core high school courses can be adopted in your NCAA account so student athletes receive recognition for their work.

The Operational Framework, Step by Step

The program is designed to minimize district administrative demand while keeping you firmly in control as the local educational agency (LEA).

1. **Recruitment & enrollment.** Acellus leads outreach to interested families and guides them through enrollment.
2. **Course selection.** Families select Acellus courses through the parent portal; the Supervising Teacher reviews selections to ensure graduation requirements are met.
3. **Self-paced digital learning.** Students progress through courses at their own pace, with Vectored Instruction and Prism Diagnostics working continuously in the background.
4. **Built-in motivation.** The Gold Store and daily goals keep students engaged and moving.
5. **Daily live interaction.** Students can message their teacher anytime; teachers monitor progress in real time and intervene early.
6. **Hybrid school activities.** Students join in-person extracurriculars at your schools, building social skills and community ties. (Optional program for some schools.)
7. **Work sample reporting.** Teachers can export portfolios of student work to support state auditing requirements.

Roles and Staffing

The program runs on a small, clearly defined team:

- **District Administrator – Acellus National Cyberschool.** The central coordinator: interfaces with the Acellus team, supports teachers, ensures state compliance, oversees re-engagement and special-population supports, and files reports needed to collect ADA funding.
- **Assistant District Administrator (optional).** Shares the load as participation grows, contributing to operational and compliance tasks.
- **Supervising Teachers.** District-employed, credentialed educators who guide each student’s independent study, monitor progress, and evaluate work. They must be certified for the grade levels and subjects they oversee.

The Support and Training System Behind Your Team

This is the second half of the answer to “Can our staff handle this?” — the structured, layered training that gets your people confident quickly. Most of it is online and fast; deeper, optional support is available as you grow.

Training	Who	Time & format
Cyberschool Startup Webinar	District Administrator	Online; program setup and coordination
New Teacher Training	Supervising Teachers	Online; typically under one day
Advanced Teacher Course	Supervising Teachers	Online; usually under two days, after 1–2 weeks of practice
Acellus Gold Administrator Training	Administrators	Online; covers the admin interface and setup
Administrator Course in Kansas City	Administrators (and a version for Principals & Superintendents)	3 days, on campus at the Institute of Science and Technology
On-site training (optional)	Teachers & administrators	2 days; Acellus trainers travel to your school
Embedded on-site coaching (optional)	Teachers & administrators	~3 months in; trainers help your team master the data and tools

Teachers who have used Acellus before are typically up and running overnight. Teachers new to the platform usually complete the new-teacher course in less than a day and are able to use the interface successfully right away. Throughout, an Acellus support and training team works alongside your local team to resolve problems as they arise.

Our commitment to you

The single most important thing to take from this guide is this: the Acellus team works directly with your team to ensure the program succeeds. We do not hand you software and walk away. Having launched this program with hundreds of schools, we know where the friction points are, and we are there to help you through them. Working together, your district can absolutely do this.

Compliance and Audit Readiness

As the LEA, your district remains responsible for compliance, and the program is built to support that responsibility. The District Administrator should become thoroughly familiar with the state laws, regulations, and district policies governing alternative, independent, or flexible learning — typically covering agreements, attendance and engagement tracking, progress evaluation, re-engagement procedures, supports for special populations, and documentation for funding or apportionment where applicable.

Two platform features directly support audit readiness: exportable **Student Work Sample Portfolios** that document completed assignments and assessments, and **Success Zone reports** that evidence satisfactory educational progress.

Your Launch Path

At a high level, standing up the program follows a clear sequence:

8. **Board approvals** — approve joining the program, adopt the curriculum, and accept the independent study agreement template. A board review packet is available to support this discussion.
9. **Staffing** — appoint a District Administrator (and optional assistant) and assign qualified Supervising Teachers.
10. **Authorization** — approve the paperwork to begin implementation.
11. **Setup & training** — complete the startup webinar and online training, and set up your school in the Acellus portal.
12. **Course approvals** — adopt Acellus AP and NCAA-approved courses where relevant.
13. **Launch** — start enrolling students and begin, with the Acellus team supporting you throughout.

The Decision in Front of You

Every district will make its own choice. But the choice is not really between running an independent study program and keeping things as they are — because the families seeking flexibility are already leaving for someone else. The real choice is whether those students leave your rolls entirely or stay enrolled, funded, and connected to your community through a program your staff is fully supported to run.

Acellus National Cyberschool was built so that your district can say yes to flexible learning without taking on the burden alone.

Important Note: This guide contains some information of a legal nature regarding legislation, regulations, and best practices. It is provided for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal opinion or guidance. Please rely upon your legal advisers in making decisions of a legal nature regarding this program.