



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

Bill Analysis

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H.B. 4

128th General Assembly
(As Introduced)

Reps. Phillips and Garrison, S. Williams, Letson, Luckie, Harris, Okey, Ujvagi, DeBose, Bolon, Stewart, B. Williams, DeGeeter, Murray, Newcomb, Fende, Hagan, Heard, Evans

BILL SUMMARY

- Requires the eTech Ohio Commission, with assistance from the Department of Education and in consultation with the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, to develop and implement an interactive distance learning pilot project to begin operating in the 2009-2010 school year.
- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chancellor, and the Commission, by December 31, 2010, to submit a formative evaluation and legislative recommendations regarding the pilot project to the Governor and the General Assembly.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Distance learning pilot project

(R.C. 3353.20(A) to (F))

The bill requires the eTech Ohio Commission¹ to develop and implement a pilot project to provide access to at least three interactive distance learning courses in each

¹ The eTech Ohio Commission is a state agency that provides financial and technical assistance to school districts, other educational entities, public television and radio stations, and radio reading services for the acquisition and use of educational technology and for the development of educational materials. The Commission consists of 13 members, nine of whom are voting members and four of whom are nonvoting legislative members. The voting members include the Superintendent of Public Instruction (or a designee), the Chancellor of the Board of Regents (or a designee), and the state chief information officer (or a designee).

school year free of charge for all high schools operated by school districts. The courses offered must include two advanced placement (AP) courses and one foreign language course. It must begin offering courses for the 2009-2010 school year.

In developing the pilot project, the Commission must contract with and pay teachers to develop and teach the courses. However, the bill requires the Department of Education, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, to select the courses to be offered by the pilot project and to develop the standards for the curriculum of each course. Then, the Commission and the Department, jointly, and again in consultation with the Chancellor, must select the teachers who will be paid by the Commission.

The Commission is solely responsible to:

- (1) Produce and broadcast the courses;
- (2) Provide funds for schools to purchase necessary video conferencing telecommunications equipment and connectivity devices;
- (3) Assist schools in arranging for the purchase and installation of telecommunications equipment and connectivity devices;
- (4) Pay, for up to one school year, the cost of upgrading internet service for schools that currently have only a T-1 or slower connection;²
- (5) Offer training in the use of the telecommunications equipment necessary to participate in the pilot project; and
- (6) Administer and oversee the operation of the pilot project.

Finally, the Commission, the Department, and the Chancellor, jointly, must notify schools about the pilot project and promote their participation in it.

The bill specifies that each school will determine how and where its students will participate in the courses, consistent with specifications for technology and connectivity required by the Commission. The grade for a student enrolled in a course will be assigned by the course teacher and transmitted to the student's high school.³

² A T-1 connection is a phone or data connection that can support the transfer of up to 1.544 Mbits (Mb) of data per second.

³ The bill does not specify the manner of transmitting a student's grade or whether the student's school must record that grade and award credit for the completed course.

Evaluation of the pilot project

(R.C. 3353.20(G))

The bill requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chancellor, and the Commission, by December 31, 2010, to submit to the Governor and General Assembly a formative evaluation of the implementation and results of the interactive distance learning pilot project. They also must include in their report legislative recommendations for changes in the pilot project.

HISTORY

ACTION	DATE
Introduced	02-17-09

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