

JAN 20 2006
EDUCATION

HOUSE FILE 2099
BY KURTENBACH

Passed House, Date _____ Passed Senate, Date _____
Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____ Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____
Approved _____

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to virtual public schools.
2 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

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HF 2099

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 256G.1 VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
2 ACT.

3 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the
4 "Virtual Public Schools Act".

5 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. 256G.2 LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.

6 1. The general assembly finds and declares the following:

7 a. Meeting the educational needs of children in the
8 state's schools is of the greatest importance to the future
9 welfare of the state of Iowa.

10 b. Closing the achievement gap between high-performing and
11 low-performing students, including the gap between minority
12 and nonminority students and between economically
13 disadvantaged and advantaged students, is a significant and
14 present challenge.

15 c. Providing a broader range of educational options to
16 parents and utilizing existing resources, along with
17 technology, may help students in Iowa improve their academic
18 achievement.

19 d. Many of our school districts currently lack the
20 capacity to provide other public school choices for students
21 whose schools are low performing.

22 2. The general assembly further finds and declares the
23 following:

24 a. That virtual schools established pursuant to this
25 chapter will provide Iowa families with an alternative choice
26 to access additional educational resources in an effort to
27 improve academic achievement.

28 b. That virtual schools established pursuant to this
29 chapter should be recognized as public schools and provided
30 equitable treatment and resources as any other public school
31 in this state.

32 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 256G.3 DEFINITIONS.

33 For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise
34 requires:

35 1. "Sponsor" means the board of directors of a school

1 district, the board of directors of a charter school, or the
2 state board of education that has a fiduciary responsibility
3 for the operation of the virtual school.

4 2. "Virtual school" means a public school that uses
5 technology in order to deliver a significant portion of
6 instruction to its students using the internet in a virtual or
7 remote setting. A virtual school shall be considered an
8 attendance center of a public school district or public
9 charter school for purposes of reporting and funding, but
10 shall be exempt from the requirements of chapters 283A and
11 285.

12 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 256G.4 ACCOUNTABILITY AND SERVICE
13 REQUIREMENTS.

14 1. SPONSOR. A virtual school shall be evaluated annually
15 by its sponsor based on the following criteria:

16 a. The extent to which the school increases student
17 achievement based on the student achievement goals established
18 by the school district pursuant to section 256.7, subsection
19 21.

20 b. The accountability and viability of the virtual school,
21 as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal, and operational
22 performance.

23 2. STUDENT AND FAMILY SERVICES.

24 a. A virtual school shall do all of the following:

25 (1) Provide each student with access to a sequential
26 curriculum that meets or exceeds the school district's
27 academic standards and that has an interactive program with
28 significant on-line components.

29 (2) Assess each student regularly in language arts,
30 mathematics, science, and social studies.

31 (3) Provide instructional materials.

32 (4) Ensure access to necessary technology, such as a
33 computer and printer.

34 (5) Ensure access to an internet connection used for
35 schoolwork.

1 b. A virtual school shall not provide allotments of moneys
2 to students or families to purchase instructional programs or
3 materials. However, a virtual school may from reimburse
4 students or families for costs associated with their internet
5 connection for use in the virtual school program.

6 3. TEACHERS. A teacher, as defined in section 272.1,
7 employed by a sponsor shall hold a valid license with an
8 endorsement issued by the board of educational examiners under
9 chapter 272 for the type of service for which the teacher or
10 administrator is employed.

11 4. OFFICE WITHIN STATE. A virtual school shall maintain
12 an administrative office within this state, which shall be
13 considered its principal place of business.

14 5. OPEN ENROLLMENT. A student who is a resident, as
15 defined in section 282.6, of any school district in this state
16 may enroll in a virtual school established pursuant to this
17 chapter.

18 Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. 256G.5 EFFECT OF CHAPTER.

19 Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to preclude the
20 use of computer-based and internet-based instruction for
21 students in a remote setting.

22 EXPLANATION

23 This bill establishes the virtual public schools Act, which
24 permits a school district board, charter school board, or the
25 department of education to sponsor a public virtual school.
26 The bill includes legislative findings and declarations, which
27 include the statement that virtual schools should be
28 recognized as public schools and provided equitable treatment
29 and resources as any other public school in the state. Any
30 student who is a resident of the state as defined in Code
31 section 282.6 may enroll in a virtual school.

32 The bill defines a "virtual school" as a public school that
33 uses technology in order to deliver a significant portion of
34 instruction to its students using the internet in a virtual or
35 remote setting. A virtual school shall be considered an

1 attendance center of a public school district or public
2 charter school for purposes of reporting and funding, but
3 shall be exempt from the requirements of the state's school
4 transportation and school meal requirements.

5 The bill requires the sponsor of a virtual school to
6 evaluate the virtual school's student achievement data against
7 the school district's student achievement goals and to
8 evaluate the accountability and viability of the school.

9 A virtual school must provide each student with access to a
10 sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds the school
11 district's academic standards and has an interactive program
12 with significant online components; assess each student
13 regularly in language arts, mathematics, science, and social
14 studies; provide instructional materials; ensure access to
15 necessary technology, such as a computer and printer; and
16 ensure access to an internet connection used for schoolwork.

17 A virtual school is prohibited from providing allotments to
18 students or families to purchase instructional programs or
19 materials, but may reimburse families for costs associated
20 with their internet connection.

21 A teacher providing instruction at a virtual school must be
22 licensed and hold the appropriate endorsements issued by the
23 board of educational examiners.

24 A virtual school must maintain an administrative office
25 within the state.

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