

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
91st General Assembly
Regular Session, 2017

As Engrossed: S3/23/17

A Bill

SENATE BILL 506

By: Senator J. English

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF TITLE 6 OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A DIGITAL LEARNING TASK FORCE; TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING DIGITAL LEARNING COURSES; TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A DIGITAL LEARNING TASK FORCE; TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING DIGITAL LEARNING COURSES; AND TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-1406 is amended to read as follows:

6-16-1406. ~~Pilot program~~ Digital learning courses.

~~(a)(1)(A) Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, all public school districts and public charter schools participating in a pilot program shall provide at least one (1) digital learning course to their students as either a primary or supplementary method of instruction.~~

~~(B) The Department of Education shall adopt rules to implement the pilot program, the purpose of which shall be to more smoothly implement the requirements under subdivision (a)(2) of this section.~~

~~(2) Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, all All public school districts and public charter schools shall provide at least one (1)~~



digital learning course to their students as either a primary or supplementary method of instruction.

(b) All digital learning courses provided by public school districts or public charter schools shall:

(1) Be of high quality;

(2) Meet or exceed the curriculum standards and requirements established by the State Board of Education; and

(3) Be made available in a blended learning, online-based, or other technology-based format tailored to meet the needs of each participating student.

(c) Digital learning courses shall be capable of being assessed and measured through standardized tests or local assessments.

(d) Beginning with the entering ninth grade class of the 2014-2015 school year, each high school student shall be required to take at least one (1) digital learning course for credit to graduate.

(e) ~~The State Board of Education~~ state board shall not limit the number of digital learning courses for which a student may receive credit through a public school or a public charter school and shall ensure that digital learning courses may be used as both primary and secondary methods of instruction.

(f) The state board may promulgate rules to implement this section.

SECTION 2. TEMPORARY LANGUAGE. DO NOT CODIFY. Quality Digital Learning Provider Task Force.

(a) There is created the "Task Force on Quality Digital Learning Providers".

(b) The task force shall be composed of thirteen (13) members as follows:

(1) The Commissioner of Education, or his or her designee;

(2) The Director of the Department of Career Education, or his or her designee;

(3) The Executive Director of the Arkansas Public School Resource Center, or his or her designee;

(4) The Executive Director of the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, or his or her designee;

(5) The Executive Director of the Arkansas Association for

Supervision and Curriculum Development, or his or her designee;

(6) The Executive Director of the Arkansas Education Association, or his or her designee;

(7) The Executive Director of the Arkansas School Boards Association, or his or her designee;

(8) The Executive Director of the Arkansas Rural Education Association, or his or her designee; and

(9) Five (5) members appointed by the commissioner as follows:

(A) An employee of the Department of Education;

(B) A representative from an education service cooperative;

(C) A superintendent of an Arkansas public school district;

(D) A director of an Arkansas open-enrollment public charter school; and

(E) A representative from a private digital learning provider.

(c)(1) The commissioner shall call the first meeting of the task force within sixty (60) days of the effective date of this act.

(2) At the first meeting of the task force, the members of the task force shall elect from its membership a chair and other officers as needed for the transaction of business.

(3)(A) The task force shall conduct its meetings at the Department of Education or another site selected by the chair.

(B) Meetings of the task force shall be held at least one (1) time every three (3) months but may occur more often at the call of the chair.

(4) If a vacancy occurs on the task force, the vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(5) The members of the task force shall serve without compensation.

(6) A majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for transacting business.

(7) The Department of Education shall provide staff for the task force.

(d) By December 1, 2018, the task force shall provide a report to the

Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the State Board of Education.

(e)(1) The report shall make recommendations concerning methods to:

(A) Improve the quality and educational benefit of digital learning for Arkansas students;

(B) Expand the availability, efficiency, and quality of digital learning available to Arkansas public schools;

(C) Create the proper environment and delivery structure for digital learning and delivery of digital learning;

(D) Develop and improve standards for digital learning content;

(E) Attract additional high-quality digital learning providers to the Arkansas market; and

(F) Ensure affordable and efficient delivery of digital learning with broad access for both providers and consumers.

(2) To make these recommendations, the task force shall review various factors and approaches, including without limitation:

(A) The current availability and cost of digital learning content and courses for kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) education, concurrent credit, and career education;

(B) The structure and cost for delivering digital learning content;

(C) Resource availability within Arkansas public schools, the public sector at large, and the private sector;

(D) Quality control measures and standards that may effectively be applied to digital learning;

(E) Digital learning experiences in other states and in the private sector;

(F) Any appropriate legislative changes, if any, to the Digital Learning Act of 2013, § 6-16-1401 et seq., or other state law; and

(G) Any appropriate changes, if any, to the rules of the department and state board related to digital learning.

(f) The task force shall expire upon the submission of the report.

SECTION 3. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that The Digital Learning Act of

2013 expanded the need for digital learning courses in Arkansas public schools; that the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly directed the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education to implement a study concerning quality digital learning; that the report that resulted from this study made significant recommendations regarding the expansion of internet bandwidth for Arkansas public schools; that under the leadership of the Governor, the Department of Information Systems and the Department of Education are making rapid progress in expanding the availability of high-speed broadband connectivity for Arkansas public schools; that with the expanded broadband connectivity now available to Arkansas public schools, it is necessary and appropriate for the state to expand and improve the availability, efficiency, quality, and educational benefit of digital learning content from both public and private providers; that time is of the essence to ensure that the Quality Digital Learning Provider Task Force created by this act may conduct a comprehensive review and develop in-depth recommendations in time for those recommendations to be considered by the Ninety-Second General Assembly in 2019; and that this act is immediately necessary in order to constitute a task force to immediately begin the work required in this act. Therefore, an emergency is declared to exist, and this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:

(1) The date of its approval by the Governor;

(2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor, the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the bill; or

(3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto.

/s/J. English