

OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
April 19, 2018

OFFICE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

01. Information: Mississippi Virtual Public Schools Update [Goals 2 and 4 – MBE Strategic Plan]

Executive Summary

In 2006, the Mississippi Legislature enacted Miss. Code Ann. § 37-161-3 establishing the Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS) with an annual appropriation of \$500,000. Pursuant to the legislation, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) released a multi-year competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) for the delivery of a turnkey program. For the past 12 years, the MVPS has continued operating with the same appropriation of funds. Due to the increasing number of students needing access to virtual / online courses and the limited amount of funds, legislation amending the law was enacted this past legislative session to provide greater flexibility and choice for districts.

The amended law, which was signed by Governor Bryant at the end of March, states that “the provider of services under the Mississippi Virtual Public School program shall be chosen by the district using a list of vendors approved through the Mississippi Online Course Application process.” This will allow districts to choose from a menu of vendors that have been vetted by the MDE Office of Secondary Education. Districts will then seek reimbursement based on the students’ successful completion of Carnegie Units.

This item references Goals 2 and 4 of the *Mississippi Board of Education 2016-2020 Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

By: Senator(s) Tollison

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2763
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-161-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO PROVIDE THAT THE PROVIDER OF SERVICES UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI
3 VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM SHALL BE CHOSEN BY THE DISTRICT
4 USING A LIST OF VENDORS APPROVED THROUGH THE MISSISSIPPI ONLINE
5 COURSE APPLICATION PROCESS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

7 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-161-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
8 amended as follows:

9 37-161-3. (1) The Legislature finds and declares the
10 following:

11 (a) Meeting the educational needs of children in our
12 state's schools is of the greatest importance to the future
13 welfare of the State of Mississippi;

14 (b) Closing the achievement gap between high-performing
15 students, including the achievement gap among at-risk students, is
16 a significant and present challenge;

17 (c) Providing a broader range of educational options to
18 parents and utilizing existing resources, along with technology,

19 may help students in the state improve their academic achievement;
20 and

21 (d) Many of the state's school districts currently lack
22 the capacity to provide other public school choices for students
23 whose schools are low performing.

24 (2) There is created the Mississippi Virtual Public School
25 Program, which is the responsibility of the State Department of
26 Education. It is the intent of the Legislature that the
27 Mississippi Virtual Public School established under this section
28 provides Mississippi families with an alternative choice to access
29 additional educational resources in an effort to improve academic
30 achievement. The Mississippi Virtual Public School must be
31 recognized as a public school and provide equitable treatment and
32 resources as are other public schools in the state. Private
33 providers, overseen by the State Department of Education, may be
34 selected by the State Board of Education to administer, manage or
35 operate virtual school programs in this state, including the total
36 operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program. Any
37 private provider chosen to provide services under the provisions
38 of this subsection shall be chosen through * * * the Mississippi
39 Online Course Application Process.

40 (3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted as precluding
41 the use of computer- and Internet-based instruction for students
42 in a virtual or remote setting utilizing the Mississippi Virtual
43 Public School.

44 (4) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
45 have the meanings respectively ascribed unless the context clearly
46 requires otherwise:

47 (a) "Mississippi Virtual Public School" means a public
48 school in which the state uses technology in order to deliver
49 instruction to students via the Internet in a virtual or remote
50 setting.

51 (b) "Sponsor" means the public school district is
52 responsible for the academic process for each student, including,
53 but not limited to, enrollment, awarding of credit and monitoring
54 progress.

55 (5) (a) The State Board of Education shall establish the
56 Mississippi Virtual Public School beginning in school year
57 2006-2007.

58 (b) Students who enroll in the Mississippi Virtual
59 Public School may reside anywhere in the State of Mississippi.

60 (6) Subject to appropriation, the Mississippi Virtual Public
61 School shall provide to each student enrolled in the school all
62 necessary instructional materials. Subject to appropriation, the
63 sponsored school must ensure that each student is provided access
64 to the necessary technology, such as a computer and printer, and
65 to an Internet connection for schoolwork purposes.

66 (7) The * * * Mississippi Department of Education shall have
67 approval authority for all coursework and policy of the
68 Mississippi Virtual Public School.

69 (8) Each teacher employed by or participating in the
70 delivery of instruction through the Mississippi Virtual Public
71 School must meet all qualifications for licensure in the State of
72 Mississippi.

73 (9) Any student who meets state residency requirements may
74 enroll in the Mississippi Virtual Public School.

75 (10) Enrollment in the Mississippi Virtual Public
76 School * * * shall be free of charge to students. The costs
77 associated with the operations of the virtual school must be
78 shared by the State Department of Education, subject to
79 appropriation, and/or the local school districts. Once the State
80 Department of Education appropriation and the local school
81 district budgeted funds for Mississippi Virtual Public School have
82 been expended and students choose to enroll in online courses, the
83 costs of the online courses may be the responsibility of the
84 students' parents or guardians.

85 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
86 and after July 1, 2018.

