HB245

165570-1

By Representatives Henry, Baker and Johnson (K)

RFD: Education Policy

First Read: 11-MAR-15
SYNOPSIS: This bill would require, at a minimum, each local board of education to adopt a policy for providing a virtual school option for eligible students in grades nine to 12, inclusive.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to public K-12 education; to require, at a minimum, each local board of education to adopt a policy for providing a virtual school option for eligible students in grades nine to 12, inclusive.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. (a) Before the 2016-2017 school year, each local board of education shall adopt a policy providing, at a minimum, a virtual education option for eligible students in grades nine to 12, inclusive, beginning with that school year.
(b) The policy adopted by the local board of education pursuant to this act shall govern the virtual school program offered by the local board of education. The policy shall offer students in grades nine to 12, inclusive, an online pathway for earning a high school diploma and, at a minimum, shall include all of the following:

(1) The scope and delivery of virtual options.
(2) Student eligibility criteria for initial and continuing participation in the virtual program.
(3) Specific requirements for monitoring performance and testing protocol consistent with this act.
(4) Attendance requirements, if any.

(c) A local board of education shall not be required to utilize a state program or vendor for the provision of virtual school options.

Section 2. (a) A full-time student enrolled in a virtual program shall be counted in the average daily membership of the local school system, participate in state testing and accountability requirements through the local school system, and, upon satisfying the graduation requirements of the local board of education, receive a diploma from the local school system.

(b) Any provision of this act to the contrary notwithstanding, a student participating in a virtual school program offered by his or her local school system shall be treated as if he or she is attending his or her zoned traditional public school system for purposes of participating
in extracurricular activities and shall be subject to the same
requirements imposed on a traditional student enrolled in the
traditional school.

    (c) A board of education shall be exempt from any
provision of general law, local law, or administrative rule
that applies to the traditional delivery of instruction
including, but not limited to, requirements relating to the
physical presence of a student, student monitoring and
security, staffing requirements, transportation obligations,
facility requirements, space and location requirements, time
requirements, and physical education requirements to the
extent any of the foregoing conflict with the delivery of the
virtual program.

    (d) A local board of education is not subject to
online course restrictions imposed by the State Department of
Education.

    (e) Any online course delivery that is not supported
by the State Department of Education shall be accredited by an
institution recognized pursuant to administrative rule adopted
by the department.

    (f) Coursework offered through a virtual program
shall contain the required content as identified in the
applicable Alabama course of study.

Section 3. The State Department of Education shall
provide a repository of quality content and curriculum for
local boards of education providing virtual education. The
department shall continue to provide its virtual platform
Section 4. (a) A legislative task force representing local school superintendents, local school board members, administrators, teachers, and technology practitioners is established to review and make recommendations for realigning the funding, structure, and curriculum of the ACCESS program and to aid in the implementation of this act. The task force shall consist of all of the following:

(1) Four members, with two appointed by the Chair of the Senate Education and Youth Affairs Committee and two appointed by the Chair of the House of Representatives Education Policy Committee.

(2) Two members, with one appointed by the Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee and one appointed by the Chair of the House of Representatives Ways and Means Education Committee.

(3) Two members appointed by the Governor.

(4) Two members appointed by the State Superintendent of Education.

(5) One representative from each of the following: The Alabama Association of School Boards, the School Superintendents of Alabama, the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, the Alabama Educational Technology Association, and
the Office of Educational Technology of the State Department of Education.

(b) The membership of the task force shall be inclusive and reflect the racial, gender, geographic, urban/rural, and economic diversity of the state.

(c) At the organizational meeting of the committee, the members shall select a chair and a vice chair. The chair of the committee may create advisory subcommittees and appoint members thereto, which may include members of the committee, representatives from governmental agencies, and members of the public with interest and expertise in the objectives of the committee.

(d) The committee shall thereafter meet at the call of the chair or any majority of the members thereof; provided, that the committee shall meet at least once each four months. The committee may meet, act, and conduct its business at any place within this state during the sessions of the Legislature or any recess thereof and in the interim period between sessions. Each legislative member of the committee or any subcommittee, if created, shall be entitled to his or her legislative compensation, per diem, and travel as provided in Amendment 871 of the Constitution of Alabama of 1901.

(e) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature on or before the 2016 Regular Session, and then shall meet as needed to fulfill the purposes of this act.
Section 5. This act shall become effective on the first day of the third month following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.