

Positive news for virtual schools

Quick action by Legislature will keep Wisconsin's virtual schools online

Frederic, WI - January 23, 2008 -

On Jan. 21, Rep. Ann Hraychuck visited the Insight School of Wisconsin's administrative office and Grantsburg High School to learn more about online educational programming. Hraychuck met with students in Mr. Watt's virtual school lab while they were working on online classes. The Grantsburg students presented their classes to the representative, explaining how their classes functioned and shared the experiences of their daily work. Hraychuck engaged the students in questions to gain a better understanding of how online classes improved their educational experience. By the end of the meeting, Hraychuck was able to experience the quality online programs provided to students by the Grantsburg School District. - submitted

GRANTSBURG - Grantsburg Schools Superintendent Joni Burgin said the news is good for the district's Insight School and all of Wisconsin's virtual schools.

Burgin made the comment after receiving a phone call Monday from state Sen. Luther Olsen updating Burgin on legislative action which will keep the state's virtual school's operating for years to come.

Olsen, who is on the Senate Education Committee, told Burgin he and Sen. Lehman had reached a compromise on the Senate Education Committee's bill.

Olsen went on to say State Assembly Education Committee Chairperson Brett Davis has also given his support to the compromise proposal.

Under the now bipartisan virtual school bill, outdated statutes will be corrected allowing virtual schools to continue to operate. And while the bill will provide regulations, funding will be maintained. Also included in the bill is the removal of the 15-percent local attendance requirement.

According to Olsen, if everything moves ahead in a timely manner and the governor supports the effort, the plight of Wisconsin's virtual schools should be resolved by mid-February.

Insight School Executive Director Jeff Bush had these comments on the legislative action.

"We are glad our state senators and representatives are working together to fashion legislation to address the issues surrounding the recent court ruling. Virtual education is a quality option for many students who need the flexibility a quality online program presents. Updated legislation protects this option for families and students who need an optional educational alternative. "We appreciate the hard work of Reps. Davis and LeMahieu and Sens. Olson and Lehman for a

compromise allowing virtual schools to serve thousands of students who depend upon virtual education to complete their educations.”

The specifics of the bill are as follows:

- Legalizes virtual charter schools (from Davis Bill)
- Not allowed for 2 R Charter Schools in Milwaukee
- Allows DPI to start a Web Academy of online courses
- Vendor contracts must be open records
- Requires 960 hours of educational opportunities during the school year (Ohio Language)
- School open 150 days.
- Certified Wisconsin-licensed teacher in the content areas
- Staff must be responsive within 24 hours to inquiries
- School must notify parents and students of school board members at the start of the class (input into local control)
- Virtual schools must have a parent advisory board
- Out-of-state tuition must be at least that of the open enrollment transfer
- Truancy = no response after five days. Habitual truancy = three occurrences of truancy
- 30 hours of online teacher training is required within two years

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