

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1079 (Delegate Bates)
Ways and Means

State Department of Education - Virtual Learning Opportunities - Survey and Report

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to conduct a survey of the local boards of education to determine each local school system's current use of virtual learning opportunities. By December 1, 2012, MSDE must report to the General Assembly on the current utilization of virtual learning opportunities for students across the State. Using the results of the survey, MSDE must develop and adopt guidelines and policies that enhance the utilization of virtual learning opportunities for all students in the State.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$13,800 in FY 2013 to hire a part-time contractual educational specialist for six months to conduct the required survey of virtual learning opportunities and to develop guidelines and policies that will enhance the utilization of virtual learning opportunities. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	13,800	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$13,800)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: Depending on the guidelines and policies developed by MSDE local school system expenditures may increase.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: MSDE must provide Maryland virtual learning opportunities that include: (1) offering a distance-learning program to provide Maryland public school students with equal opportunities to develop a strong academic foundation; (2) offering expanded educational choices not otherwise available to students through online courses and services; and (3) expanding the professional development opportunities available to educational staff in Maryland public schools through online courses and services.

With the approval of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools, MSDE must:

- develop online courses and services;
- procure online courses and services;
- develop standards for teachers and other school system employees for the offering of courses or services on the Internet or through other developing technologies; and
- review courses and courseware to assure quality and alignment with the Maryland content standards and other appropriate standards.

The State Board of Education may set reasonable fees for online courses and services. The fees are deposited in the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Fund and the amounts charged must be set so as to produce funds to support maintenance of Maryland virtual learning opportunities.

According to the Code of Maryland Regulations, consistent with local school system policy and procedure, credit may be given for correspondence courses and for MSDE-approved online courses. If credit is to be applied toward minimum graduation requirements, the correspondence course or the MSDE-approved online course must be provided by the local school system.

Background: In Maryland, supplemental online courses are offered through the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program (MVLO). MVLO is managed by MSDE and is designed to expand the access of Maryland public school students to challenging curricula aligned to the Maryland Content Standards and other appropriate standards through the delivery of high quality online courses. MVLO offers approximately 62 online courses through the Maryland Virtual School (MVS) in collaboration with the local school systems. While MVS offers online courses, it is not authorized to grant high school diplomas and does not offer a full high school curriculum. Students may only take a course through MVS with the permission of the local school system and their school principal, and credit can only be awarded for MSDE-approved

courses. MVLO is designed for use by high school students; Maryland does not offer online learning opportunities designed for elementary and middle school students.

MSDE does not have the staff or funding to approve any new online courses for MVS and currently has a backlog of 17 courses that need to be reviewed. MSDE anticipates that the number and variety of online courses will continue to grow and local school systems and online course vendors will continue to ask MSDE to review online courses for approval.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$13,841 in fiscal 2013 for MSDE to hire a part-time contractual educational specialist to conduct the required survey of virtual learning opportunities and to develop guidelines and policies that will enhance the utilization of virtual learning opportunities. This estimate reflects a July 1, 2012 start date and completion of the work by December 1, 2012.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 6, 2012
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