

LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS



COURSE ACCESS

(H.3972 REP. J. ELLIOTT)



PALMETTO
PROMISE
INSTITUTE

LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW: This bill creates a statewide, comprehensive, dynamic online course catalog from which *all* South Carolina students can choose. Featuring a nearly limitless group of providers, most *any* course available online would be accessible for *any* student in *any* South Carolina public school. The best part? Providers, both non-profit and for-profit, are accountable: they are paid only if students succeed.

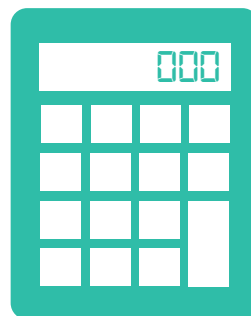
BACKGROUND: Technology has changed modern life. Education may be the most impacted. Now, a wealth of knowledge is a few clicks away. But like the internet, quality & variety is essential: a diverse group of providers of courses could include school districts, institutions of higher education, non-profits, business and industry. School districts may represent the best source for quick expansion: the truly excellent teaching available to *some* South Carolina students in *some* school districts could be available to *all* with adequate technology and a one-stop course catalog platform.

WHY IT MATTERS: Poor districts are among this hardest hit by the teacher shortage and the teacher quality gap. Data from the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) reveals that advanced courses just aren't available (see adjacent chart) in poor and minority majority schools. Virtual learning from a variety of providers will level the playing field by stretching dollars, insuring quality and fostering diversity.

On average, among high schools that serve large percentage of African-American and Latino students:



1 IN 3
DON'T OFFER
CHEMISTRY



1 IN 4
DON'T OFFER
ALGEBRA II

Source: Foundation for Excellence in Education

UNLEASH MORE OPTIONS

Whether a district is large or small, whether a child has a learning disability or not, whether a student is an auditory, visual or kinesthetic learner, and whether a school is thriving or struggling, Course Access provides customized learning opportunities to empower today's students and tomorrow's leaders.

Course Access is a cost-effective tool that harnesses technology to offer students access to high-quality, customized education. By making location irrelevant, Course Access virtual classes could be the most powerful tool lawmakers can use to immediately address inequity issues raised in the *Abbeyville* ruling.

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

How can Course Access help students in so many different situations? By harnessing the power of technology to provide students with a menu of additional courses from a wide variety of providers to supplement those offered at their local school. Course Access has the power and flexibility to connect students to the education resources they need, no matter what school district they live in.

WHY IS COURSE ACCESS NEEDED?

Access—Course Access would dramatically expand the number of courses available to South Carolina students, regardless of their location. The benefits of Course Access in rural counties may be different than the benefits seen in urban districts. A rural school district may use Course Access to provide college preparatory classes that are difficult to teach and expensive for them to maintain. More populated districts may see an increase in students taking fine arts courses or seeking credit in AP classes. Industry certification is also popular content that can be delivered online or live. In all cases, students win because they are *more engaged* when they have *more choices*.

Equity—According to the Foundation for Excellence in Education, “by 2020, 65 percent of jobs will require a post-secondary credential, meaning anything from a bachelor’s degree to industry-recognized credentials. Without access to essential math and science classes in high school, many students will graduate from high school unprepared for postsecondary learning and the opportunities it offers.” **One in four high schools with the highest percentage of black and Latino students do not offer Algebra II and a third of these schools do not offer chemistry.** That means that course access is not just an education issue, but a *civil rights and equity* issue.

Cost Effectiveness – Instead of funding massive overhead costs, Course Access allocates precious resources directly to student learning, allowing them to take advantage of a wide range of the best instruction from public and private providers around South Carolina and beyond. States can even partner together to minimize costs with reciprocity agreements that recognize courses approved by other states.

Expanding the Teaching Pool – With South Carolina facing a growing teacher shortage, especially in rural districts, Course Access provides one common-sense solution to address this mounting challenge.

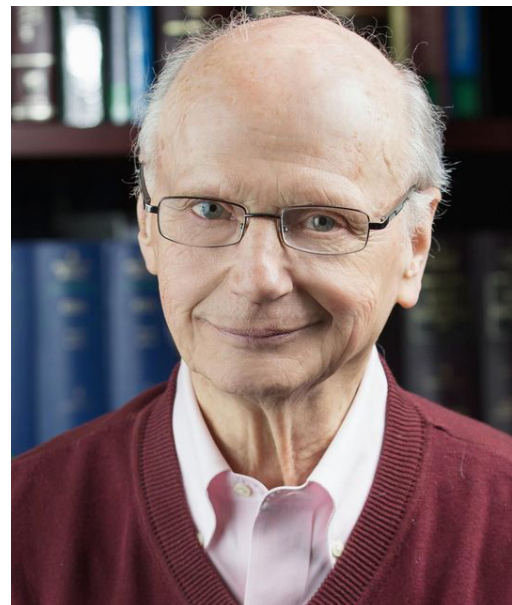
SUCCESSFUL BEGINNINGS

VirtualSC and online charter schools are similar to Course Access, but South Carolina has not fully unleashed the power of online learning. A virtual district with fewer than 100 courses only scratches the surface of what is possible with diversity of providers. Louisiana implemented robust Course Access legislation in 2013 with incredible results. For the 2018-2019 school year, through the Supplemental Course Academy, over 15,000 courses were offered, a 700% increase over just a few years before. Texas, Michigan, Florida, Utah have also enacted successful and growing Course Access programs.

SEVEN KEYS TO COURSE ACCESS SUCCESS

1. Rigorous state review of prospective providers and courses.
2. Strong systems to monitor student achievement.
3. Flexible and sustainable funding models.
4. Alignment with existing state education standards.
5. Sustained engagement with districts and schools.
6. Effective communication with students and parents.
7. Clearly defined student eligibility.

Source: Foundation for Excellence in Education



“By supplementing traditional school course offerings with options from partnering providers, Course Access programs can increase dramatically the learning opportunities available to students.”

—The Hon. Richard W. Riley, former United States Secretary of Education and former Governor of South Carolina