



MISSOURI SENATE

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Governor Signs Goodman's Bill Creating Virtual School

JEFFERSON CITY— Beginning in July of 2007, students with unique needs will have a new and innovative way to learn thanks to a measure Gov. Matt Blunt signed into law last week.

Senate Bill 912, sponsored by Sen. Jack Goodman, R-Mt. Vernon, uses the Internet and other cutting-edge technologies to establish a virtual-curriculum extension for Missouri public school students.

Missouri's virtual school will be subject to the same educational standards as every other public school district in Missouri. Because the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will have direct oversight, the Missouri School Boards Association and the Missouri State Teachers Association have both endorsed the bill.

"The virtual school is not meant to gradually replace public schools, and it is not meant to compete with homeschooling," Goodman said. "This program is specifically designed to make sure Missouri's public education system is doing everything possible to provide a first-class education to those who need a comfortable alternative to the traditional classroom setting."

For a variety of reasons, some students have difficulty being productive in a bricks-and-mortar classroom. With Missouri's new virtual school, students can use a home computer to access daily lesson plans that teach the same concepts being learned by other students of that grade level. Especially gifted students can use the virtual school to take advanced courses not offered in their districts. Additionally, those who are homebound for medical reasons could utilize the virtual school to receive an uninterrupted education. The program also provides for personal interaction between teachers and online students via chat rooms, online social connections, phone calls, and frequent trips by the teacher to the student's home.

"Missouri's virtual school will enhance students' opportunities to receive a public education in an environment that is conducive to learning," Goodman said. "Using 21st-century technology, students will be able to learn at their own pace, maximize their potential, track their progress and have a fair chance at getting an education they can be proud of."