

Testimony for the Ohio House of Representatives  
Education Committee  
Given by  
Majority Floor Leader Representative Jennifer Garrison

Thank you Chairman Williams and the other members of the committee for the opportunity to speak in support of the interactive distance learning pilot program. Representative Phillips has already outlined the overall goals of and the need for the program, so I'd like to take some time to outline some of the technical aspects and details of the program.

The pilot program will be housed within the eTech Ohio Commission and will collaborate with the Board of Regents and the Department of Education on several aspects of the implementation of the program. The eTech Ohio Commission will be primarily responsible for developing and administering the pilot program beginning with the 2009-2010 school years. The Board of Regents and the Department of Education will assist in course development and evaluation of the pilot program.

This pilot program will be free of additional costs for local school districts that choose to participate. This program will be available to every public High School in Ohio. The eTech Commission will provide funds to purchase necessary equipment and technical assistance in the use of the technology.

Ohio's school districts are well poised to make excellent use of this pilot program due to a strong technology infrastructure already present. This bill would pay the cost for upgrading internet service for schools that currently have only T-1 or slower connections for up to one school year to be able to take advantage of this program. However these costs should be modest, as only 28% of Ohio's school districts have a T-1 or slower connection.

The program will seek to utilize Two-way interactive television (I-TV) to teach the courses. This technology allows for real-time interaction, and questions can be answered immediately. There are currently two states, Indiana and Wyoming, which utilize I-TV in their own distance learning programs. The eTech Ohio Commission will determine how best to utilize this technology in Ohio through its development of this pilot program.

The program will offer two advanced placement courses and one foreign language course. The Department of Education in consultation with the chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents will select the courses that will be offered to students. The Department of Education is currently studying which courses would make the best use of these resources for Ohio's students.

Each high school will be able to determine the manner in which its students may participate in the program. Each participating student's grade will be determined by the instructor hired by the eTech Ohio Commission for that particular subject and transmitted to that student's high school.

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