

2013-15 Budget Issue Paper Digital Learning

[LFB 2013-15 Budget Summary: Page 396, #23 and Page 397, #24]

Governor's Proposal:

Require the State Superintendent to promote digital learning (Item #23) but prohibit the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) from promulgating a rule requiring a licensed teacher or instructional staff member to be physically present in a classroom to facilitate and supervise digital learning (Item #23) and from requiring a virtual charter school teacher to complete additional professional development to help prepare that individual for online teaching (Item #24).

DPI Position: Support Item #23; Oppose Item #24

Rationale for Opposition/Support:

❖ Maximize Learning Opportunities for Students

DPI supports digital learning because it allows students to use resources that might not otherwise be available in the traditional classroom. Digital learning also develops students' familiarity with different technologies. If used properly, digital learning can improve students' education, save time for teachers, and save money for schools.

❖ Ensure Students Have Qualified Teachers

DPI is not opposed to preventing the promulgation of a rule that requires the classroom presence of teachers. This reflects the status quo. The main concern is that instruction needs to be provided to students with a licensed teacher leading the instruction regardless of whether that licensed teacher is physically present or not. Another concern is that someone should be supervising students engaged in digital learning at school for safety and instructional purposes. As long as these concerns are addressed, DPI is not opposed to this provision even if it is unnecessary.

❖ Account for Unique Needs of Online Instruction

DPI opposes eliminating the professional development requirement for virtual school teachers. Additional professional development specifically related to online teaching is needed to account for the unique needs of online instruction. Unlike regular classes, online courses are courses where the student and teacher are geographically remote; most communication between the teacher and the students is done through asynchronous or text-based interactions including email and discussion boards; and students are usually communicating with the teacher via a computer. Additionally, research shows that a teacher's skill in face-to-face teaching does not necessarily transfer to an online classroom so teachers that may be very good teaching in the classroom may do poorly teaching online.