



June 21, 2011

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Education

From: David S. Doty

Subject: Action Item: Formation of the program "Canyons Virtual High School."

Issue

The Utah Legislature has enacted Senate Bill 65 (codified at *53A-15-1201 Utah Code Annotated 1953 et seq.*) giving high school students the opportunity, regardless of economic or other status, to earn high school credit via virtual/online learning. Canyons District has the innovation, the model, and the infrastructure to create and sustain an effective online school, giving students an accessible, challenging option to earn credit while helping to preserve District WPU funding.

Background

In August, 2010, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush met with Utah legislators to report on innovations assisting Florida schools' jump from 29th to 6th in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. *The Deseret News, August 24, 2010*. Utah legislators then announced plans to pattern some of its education policy after Bush's innovative approach to education reform. *Ibid*. One of the Florida innovations was the creation of a state-wide virtual school, the "Florida Virtual School." *www.flvs.net*. During the 2011 legislative session, the Utah Legislature passed a bill enabling the creation of a similar online learning program.

On July 1, 2011, First Substitute Senate Bill 65, called the "Statewide Online Education Program Act" takes effect. *53A-15-1201 Utah Code Annotated 1953 et seq.* The Act enables "an eligible student to earn high school graduation credit through the completion of publicly funded online courses." *53A-15-1203(1)*. Along with private and charter schools, public schools (LEA's) are eligible to provide a program of such online courses, so long as it is approved by the LEA's governing board and is created exclusively for the purpose of serving students online. *53A-15-1205 (3)*.

Other sections of the Act require that a student's public school may not restrict the student's choice of an online course, so long as it meets graduation requirements and the student's SEOP, and does not give preference to an online course or provider (*53A-15-1204 (5) (a) and (b)*); public education funds will be used to pay for online courses, regardless of through whom they are offered (*53A-15-1006*); a limit on the number of online courses an eligible student is permitted to



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take per year (§1204 (2)); a process for the State Board of Education to deduct education funds from LEA's and make payments to online providers (§1207); course credit acknowledgement (§1208); statewide assessments for online students (§1210); provider performance reports (§1211); and the State Board of Education is the rule-making entity for the Act (§1213).

A Utah student would not have to pay for online school. According to a Fiscal Note attached to the Act, Online Course providers would receive a fee equal to the average charter high school per pupil revenues, estimated in a Fiscal Note at "approximately \$904 per course." *See Fiscal Note, Statewide Online Education Program, February 17, 2011.* These funds would be withheld from a school district, and paid to the online course provider. Great potential exists that school districts will have significant funds withheld from WPU funding.

1. Why Would Canyons District Choose to Create an Online School?

A. Innovation.

As an educational leader in the state of Utah, Canyons District has as its mission that each Canyons student is supported to become college and career ready. *Canyons District Website.* Most Utah colleges and universities now offer a plethora of online classes. *See www.utah.edu/catalog/; <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/>; <http://distance.usu.edu/hom/online/online-courses>.* By creating an online school, Canyons District can ensure more of its graduates have experience in and success with completing online coursework. Moreover, because online school legislation has not yet gone into effect, Canyons would be poised to become potentially the first Utah school district to offer all high school students, regardless of where they live and attend school, the option to attend a virtual school where learning is completely online and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

B. Improve Access to Richer Curriculum.

A virtual school can offer a rigorous, college-preparatory online school program that meets the needs of 21st century learners; preparing graduates for successful careers in a competitive global marketplace. This includes opportunities for accelerated learning, Advanced Placement courses, and credit recovery.

C. Preserve WPU Funding.

Pursuant to a Fiscal Note attached to the Act, Online Course providers would receive a fee equal to the average charter high school per pupil revenues, estimated in the Fiscal Note at "approximately \$904 per course." *See Fiscal Note, Statewide Online Education Program, published February 17, 2011.* [Another estimated but as yet unverified fee being reported by Sean B. Thomas, Audit and Finance Specialist, USOE is \$826.03 per course credit]. This fee would be deducted from the district in which a pupil resides by the State Board of Education, and paid to the student's online course provider. *53A-15-1207 (1) - (4).* Other financial analysis estimate that a 1% diversion of high school students in LEA's (3,300 primary LEA course credits) could divert \$2.7 M from LEA's to online providers. *April, 2011 Powerpoint Presentation, Sean B. Thomas & Emily Eyre, USOE.*

2. Proposed Model for the Canyons Virtual High School Program.

A. Structure.

Canyons School District is particularly well situated to create and run an online education program, as it already utilizes a NovaNET virtual/digital curriculum program at the NWAC accredited Entrada Adult High School, as well as in District programs for K-12 students who are economically disadvantaged, culturally and linguistically diverse, homeless, migrant, refugee and Native American. In keeping with the Act, the proposed structure is an open-entry, open-exit, 24-hour accessible online learning program. Pursuant to the Act, students could select courses for which they are eligible based on course prerequisites, individual SEOP, and academic goals. To shorten time needed to start the online learning school, administration could be via the RevTrak online registration program currently being used by Canyons Community Education for Credit Recovery signup. Students could simply login to the online school entity created on RevTrak, set up an account, have it reviewed by a staff counselor, and begin the course, all within hours of first signing up. Tutoring would be available by telephone, text or email, provided by Canyons highly qualified teachers after school, evening, and weekend hours, allowing for maximum access to academic resources outside of the digital curriculum.

As an added innovation, Canyons could work with Utah State University, Utah Valley University, and Salt Lake Community College to offer a concurrent enrollment program via Canyons Virtual High School program. This would be a great attraction to students throughout the state of Utah and region who are interested in attending college and earning college credits while they are still in high school. Courses with requisite rigor could be developed in cooperation with existing virtual courseware curriculum.

B. Curriculum.

NovaNET and "Virtual Learning" would be used in combination as the curriculum for the Canyons Virtual High School program. NovaNET is an evidence-based, common core curriculum digital program of the Pearson company and is currently in use by Canyons District. As a result of the District's Office of State and Federal Programs purchase of NovaNET licenses, the Pearson company has also given Canyons access to its "Virtual Learning" product – powered by Florida Virtual School. Virtual Learning gives students the opportunity to access a multitude of accelerated, academic resources not currently available in the NovaNET or Canyons District K-12 system, and world languages like Chinese I, II and III. An online school as proposed here also provides additional ways for Canyons to support students in improving digital learning, including tutoring for students enrolled in online courses, and curriculum alignment to develop courses that mirror traditional face-to-face classrooms. Digital curriculum would be vetted and approved by the EBL department consistent with the requirements of the Act and Canyons School Board guidelines.

C. Marketing.

The Act directs the State Board of Education to establish a website for the State Online Program, including information about eligibility and a directory of providers. Once the Canyons Board approves this program, the USOE will list Canyons as an approved on-line high school, and will provide a link to our program. There also are a variety of existing resources within Canyons



and new methods which can be used to inform the community about a new online school program: the Canyons District website; and the Community Education Catalog, which reaches 70,000 residents and is published three times per school year. Other innovative marketing approaches include the creation of a Facebook page; a Twitter account; articles in local and regional newspapers; flyers, Public Service Announcements (PSA's) and other innovative communication methods.

D. Budget.

Fees for the three categories of potential students are estimated as follows:

- i. In-district students. Those in the Canyons District would cost the District approximately \$100 for each credit a student earns. Students are limited to two on-line credit hours the first year, with additional allowances each year.
- ii. Out-of-district students. Pursuant to the Fiscal Note attached to the Act, Online Course providers would receive a fee equal to the average charter high school per pupil revenues, estimated to be between \$826 and \$904.
- iii. Out-of-State Students. The Act permits the State Board of Education to set a fee for out of state students enrolled in such an online course.

As indicated above, districts will lose between \$826 and \$900 per credit their students earn in online programs outside of the district. Estimated costs for the Canyons School District to run a virtual program are at \$100 per credit earned, and annual costs per 1,000 online enrolled credits would include:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>	<u>Actual Cost</u>
Software and technology	\$120,000*	\$ 0
part-time 12 month administrator	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
part-time administrative assistant	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
counseling	\$ 30,000*	\$ 20,000
tutoring	\$ 65,000*	\$ 45,000
Total	\$250,000	\$100,000

(* costs have either been subsidized by other programs, or are at no cost to the district)

Actual cost must be balanced against the potential loss of WPU funding if Canyons students elect to participate in an on-line provider outside our district.

E. Estimated Implementation Calendar.

The effective date of the Act is July 1, 2011. Because the Act directs the State Board of Education to develop a program website and operating guidelines and rules for the Statewide



Online Education Program by July 1, 2011 as well, implementation is proposed as follows:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
Hire/assign administrator	by June 22, 2011
Develop program operating procedures	by July 15, 2011
Develop program website	by July 15, 2011
Hire hourly counselors/teachers	Ongoing
Train staff	June 27, 2011
Site becomes active and virtual school begins	July 15, 2011

An accelerated implementation schedule is recommended for several reasons. Being among the first online schools shows Canyons District's commitment to excellence and innovation, and makes Canyons very competitive with new and existing private and charter online providers. Finally, a quick implementation would place Canyons as a frontrunner in public school digital learning in Utah.

Recommendation

The Superintendent recommends the Board approve the formation of the program "Canyons Virtual High School."



David S. Doty
Superintendent