

By: Shapleigh

S.B. No. 699

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to establishment of a public education Internet portal.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 32, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter D to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER D. EDUCATION INTERNET PORTAL

Sec. 32.151. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "portal" means the education Internet portal required by this subchapter.

Sec. 32.152. EDUCATION INTERNET PORTAL; GENERAL PURPOSES.

(a) The agency, with assistance from the Department of Information Resources and with participation by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, interested school districts, and interested persons in the private sector, shall establish and maintain an education Internet portal for use by school districts, teachers, parents, and students.

(b) The portal must serve as a single point of access to educational resources. In addition to any other purpose specified by this subchapter or any other educational purpose, the portal may be used to:

(1) alleviate inequities in access to educational resources by providing access to on-line courses;

(2) improve student academic performance by providing access to tutorial materials and other interactive materials, including materials that assess an individual student's knowledge

1 and prepare the student for the administration of a standardized  
2 assessment instrument, including an assessment instrument  
3 administered under Section 39.023;

4 (3) provide school districts with access to  
5 administrative software and other electronic tools designed to  
6 promote administrative efficiency and intra-district  
7 communication;

8 (4) provide secure access to student assessment data;

9 or

10 (5) provide links to appropriate educational  
11 resources and experts available through the Internet.

12 Sec. 32.153. ADMINISTRATION. (a) The agency has  
13 responsibility for general administration and oversight of the  
14 portal and for approving the content of all information made  
15 available through the portal.

16 (b) The Department of Information Resources shall:

17 (1) provide the infrastructure necessary for the  
18 portal;

19 (2) organize the portal in a manner that simplifies  
20 portal use and administration;

21 (3) provide any necessary technical advice to the  
22 agency, including advice relating to equipment required in  
23 connection with the portal;

24 (4) assist the agency in contracting with vendors for  
25 services in connection with the portal;

26 (5) provide a method for maintaining the information  
27 made available through the portal; and

1           (6) cooperate with the agency in linking the agency's  
2 Internet site to the portal.

3           (b) The joint advisory committee established under Section  
4 61.077, or any successor to that committee with advisory  
5 responsibility for coordination between secondary and  
6 postsecondary education, shall serve in an advisory capacity to the  
7 agency and the Department of Information Resources in connection  
8 with functions relating to the portal.

9           Sec. 32.154. ON-LINE COURSES. (a) The agency shall  
10 coordinate the identification and development of on-line courses  
11 made available through the portal. A course may not be made  
12 available through the portal unless the course is reviewed by the  
13 agency and approved by the commissioner.

14           (b) In coordinating, developing, and reviewing courses to  
15 be made available through the portal, the agency shall give  
16 priority to any course that is not readily available to students  
17 throughout the state and for which there is a critical need.

18           (c) A course made available through the portal must be  
19 aligned with state curriculum requirements under Section 28.002 and  
20 the essential knowledge and skills identified under that section.

21           (d) The agency shall develop quality assurance criteria to  
22 be used by the agency in developing and reviewing courses made  
23 available through the portal. The criteria must include components  
24 relating to:

- 25           (1) course content;
- 26           (2) instructor qualifications;
- 27           (3) validity of assessment procedures;

1           (4) security features; and

2           (5) degree of interactivity.

3           (e) The agency shall seek proposals from vendors and school  
4 districts for providing courses to students, school districts, and  
5 parents.

6           Sec. 32.155. ON-LINE COURSE SCHOLARSHIPS. (a) Using funds  
7 available for that purpose, the agency may award a scholarship for  
8 the costs of an on-line course to a student who demonstrates that:

9           (1) the student has inequitable access to the course;  
10 and

11           (2) access to the course would improve the likelihood  
12 of the student's academic success.

13           (b) The commissioner shall adopt criteria to be used in  
14 awarding scholarships under this section.

15           Sec. 32.156. ON-LINE TEXTBOOKS. (a) The agency shall  
16 develop and adopt strategies for making textbooks available through  
17 the portal or through other means in an electronic format as an  
18 alternative or supplement to traditional textbooks.

19           (b) In developing and adopting strategies under this  
20 section, the agency shall seek to achieve a system under which a  
21 student may, in addition to a traditional textbook, be provided  
22 with secure Internet access to each textbook used by the student.

23           Sec. 32.157. SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE SOFTWARE AND  
24 ELECTRONIC TOOLS. (a) The agency shall:

25           (1) identify effective Internet-based administrative  
26 software and other electronic tools that may be used by school  
27 districts to improve district administrative functions; and

1           (2) pursue efforts to make that software and other  
2 electronic tools available through the portal for use by school  
3 districts on a voluntary basis.

4           (b) The agency shall assist school districts in identifying  
5 sources of funding that may be used by districts to pay any costs  
6 associated with using administrative software and other electronic  
7 tools available through the portal. To the extent that funds are  
8 available to the agency, the agency may provide administrative  
9 software and other electronic tools through the portal at no cost to  
10 specific school districts selected by the agency based on  
11 demonstrated need.

12           Sec. 32.158. STUDENT ASSESSMENT DATA. (a) The agency shall  
13 establish a secure, interoperable system to be implemented through  
14 the portal under which school districts can readily access student  
15 assessment data for use in developing strategies for improving  
16 student performance.

17           (b) In establishing the system required by this section, the  
18 agency shall seek to further the goal of providing school districts  
19 with access to student performance information at the classroom  
20 level.

21           Sec. 32.159. FEES. (a) The agency may charge school  
22 districts, teachers, parents, students, and other persons a  
23 reasonable fee for services or information provided through the  
24 portal.

25           (b) The total amount of fees charged under this section may  
26 not exceed the amount necessary to pay costs associated with  
27 administering the portal.

1       (c) An individual fee charged to a person under this section  
2 for a service or information may not exceed the amount that the  
3 person would be required to pay to obtain the service or information  
4 from a commercial source or through another means of access other  
5 than the portal.

6       (d) To the extent possible, the agency shall make services  
7 and information available through the portal at no cost to school  
8 districts, teachers, parents, students, and other persons.

9       Sec. 32.160. FUNDING. As provided by Section 57.046,  
10 Utilities Code, and the General Appropriations Act, the agency  
11 shall pay the costs of establishing and maintaining the portal  
12 using amounts available to the agency from the telecommunications  
13 infrastructure fund.

14       Sec. 32.161. STATEWIDE LICENSING AND CONTRACTING. As  
15 appropriate to promote the availability through the portal of  
16 services and information specified by this subchapter at no cost to  
17 users or at a reasonable cost, the agency shall negotiate statewide  
18 licenses or discounts with software vendors and other persons  
19 offering applications that are suitable for use through the portal.

20       Sec. 32.162. OUTREACH AND TRAINING. (a) The agency shall  
21 conduct outreach activities to provide information regarding the  
22 portal to school districts, teachers, parents, and students.

23       (b) The agency shall provide training to school districts  
24 and teachers in use of the portal. Training in use of the portal  
25 shall be made available to parents and students by the agency or  
26 school districts, as determined by commissioner rule.

27       SECTION 2. Section 57.046(a), Utilities Code, is amended to

1 read as follows:

2 (a) The board shall use money in the public schools account  
3 to fund the education Internet portal established under Subchapter  
4 D, Chapter 32, Education Code. The board shall use any remaining  
5 money in the public schools account to award grants and loans in  
6 accordance with this subchapter to fund:

7 (1) equipment for public schools, including  
8 computers, printers, computer labs, and video equipment; and

9 (2) intracampus and intercampus wiring to enable those  
10 public schools to use the equipment.

11 SECTION 3. Not later than January 1, 2005, the Texas  
12 Education Agency shall submit a report to the legislature that  
13 contains recommendations for maximizing the benefits of providing  
14 access to textbooks or other educational materials through the  
15 Internet using the education Internet portal required by Subchapter  
16 D, Chapter 32, Education Code, as added by this Act.

17 SECTION 4. The Texas Education Agency and the Department of  
18 Information Resources shall coordinate agency and department  
19 activities in implementing Subchapter D, Chapter 32, Education  
20 Code, as added by this Act, with relevant ongoing activities  
21 relating to modification of the Public Education Information  
22 Management System (PEIMS) and other systems necessary to conform  
23 state educational reporting processes with educational reporting  
24 requirements imposed by federal law.

25 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
26 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
27 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this

S.B. No. 699

- 1 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
- 2 Act takes effect September 1, 2003.