By:  Paxton S.B. No. 2244

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the state virtual school network and a study on digital learning.

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

SECTION 1.  Section 26.0031(c), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  A school district or open-enrollment charter school may deny a request to enroll a student in an electronic course if:

(1)  a student attempts to enroll in a course load that is inconsistent with the student's high school graduation plan or requirements for college admission or earning an industry certification; or

(2)  the student requests permission to enroll in an electronic course at a time that is not consistent with the enrollment period established by the school district or open-enrollment charter school providing the course[~~; or~~

[~~(3)  the district or school offers a substantially similar course~~].

SECTION 2.  Section 30A.153(a), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  A [~~Subject to the limitation imposed under Subsection (a-1), a~~] school district or open-enrollment charter school in which a student is enrolled is entitled to funding under Chapter 42 or in accordance with the terms of a charter granted under Section 12.101 for the student's enrollment in an electronic course offered through the state virtual school network in the same manner that the district or school is entitled to funding for the student's enrollment in courses provided in a traditional classroom setting, provided that the student successfully completes the electronic course.

SECTION 3.  Section 30A.155(a), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  A school district or open-enrollment charter school may charge a fee for enrollment in an electronic course provided through the state virtual school network to a student who resides in this state and[~~:~~

[~~(1)~~]  is enrolled in a school district or open-enrollment charter school as a full-time student with a course load greater than that normally taken by students in the equivalent grade level in other school districts or open-enrollment charter schools[~~; or~~

[~~(2)  elects to enroll in an electronic course provided through the network for which the school district or open-enrollment charter school in which the student is enrolled as a full-time student declines to pay the cost, as authorized by Section 26.0031(c-1)~~].

SECTION 4.  Sections 26.0031(c-1) and 30A.153(a-1), Education Code, are repealed.

SECTION 5.  (a)  The Texas Education Agency shall conduct a study regarding the effectiveness of digital learning in public schools. The study must include:

(1)  methods of providing digital learning to students in kindergarten through 12th grade; and

(2)  recommendations regarding the establishment of partnerships between school districts or open-enrollment charter schools and institutions of higher education and other public and private entities to provide digital learning options.

(b)  Not later than September 1, 2020, the Texas Education Agency shall submit to the commissioner of education and each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over public education a report that includes:

(1)  the results of the study conducted under this section; and

(2)  recommendations to improve digital learning, including virtual learning under Chapter 30A, Education Code.

(c)  Based on the results of the study and the report prepared under this section, the commissioner of education shall establish procedures to increase:

(1)  digital learning by students and participation in the virtual school network; and

(2)  participation by school districts and open-enrollment charter schools in establishing partnerships with institutions of higher education and other public and private entities.

(d)  This section expires January 1, 2021.

SECTION 6.  The Texas Education Agency is required to implement a provision of this Act only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that purpose, the agency may, but is not required to, implement a provision of this Act using other appropriations available for that purpose.

SECTION 7.  This Act applies beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

SECTION 8.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2019.