

By: Representative Brown

To: Universities and
Colleges; Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1130

1 AN ACT RELATING TO THE EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC HIGH
2 SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI; TO AUTHORIZE THE
3 ESTABLISHMENT OF A MISSISSIPPI VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM AND
4 TO PRESCRIBE CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROGRAM; TO CREATE A NEW
5 SECTION TO BE CODIFIED AS SECTION 37-15-38, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF
6 1972, TO PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY OR
7 COMMUNITY COLLEGE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS, TO PRESCRIBE
8 CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM, TO PROVIDE FOR THE
9 PAYMENT OF TUITION AND COSTS FOR UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
10 LEVEL COURSES, AND TO CLARIFY THAT COURSE WORK TAKEN UNDER THE
11 PROGRAM SHALL BE DUAL CREDIT; TO AMEND SECTION 37-29-1,
12 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO DELETE THE AUTHORITY OF THE BOARDS OF
13 TRUSTEES OF THE COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES TO ESTABLISH DUAL
14 ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS; TO CODIFY SECTION 37-15-39, MISSISSIPPI CODE
15 OF 1972, TO REQUIRE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO OFFER PRE-ADVANCED
16 PLACEMENT COURSES, TO REQUIRE FUNDING TO BE MADE AVAILABLE IN THE
17 2007-2008 SCHOOL YEAR FOR ALL SOPHOMORES TO TAKE A NATIONALLY
18 RECOGNIZED APTITUDE TEST FOR ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES, AND TO
19 REQUIRE ALL HIGH SCHOOLS TO OFFER AT LEAST FOUR ADVANCED PLACEMENT
20 COURSES BEGINNING IN THE 2007-2008 SCHOOL YEAR; TO AMEND SECTIONS
21 37-16-7, 37-31-61, 37-31-69, 37-31-205 AND 37-31-207, MISSISSIPPI
22 CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE
23 STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES TO UTILIZE FEDERAL
24 WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT AND OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS TO ESTABLISH
25 INDUSTRY SPECIFIC CURRICULA IN ORDER FOR STUDENTS TO EARN
26 INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION WHILE COMPLETING THEIR HIGH
27 SCHOOL COURSE WORK, TO INCLUDE SUCH COURSE WORK IN APPROPRIATE
28 GRADUATION STANDARDS, TO DEVELOP A UNIT OF SPECIALISTS IN
29 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND
30 TO ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO OFFER
31 POTENTIAL HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT STUDENTS A SEMESTER SCHOLARSHIP FOR
32 INDUSTRY SPECIFIC TRAINING AFTER THEIR GRADUATION; TO ESTABLISH A
33 LIFELONG LEARNING COMMISSION TO STUDY THE RELEVANCE OF THE HIGH
34 SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN MISSISSIPPI; TO CODIFY SECTION 37-3-95,
35 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
36 EDUCATION AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF
37 HIGHER LEARNING TO JOINTLY PREPARE AN ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
38 LEGISLATURE ON THE SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION IN THE STATE; TO CODIFY
39 SECTION 37-7-346, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO DIRECT THE STATE
40 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE
41 AGENCIES TO JOINTLY DEVELOP A PLAN FOR INCREASING THE DUTIES AND
42 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AGENCIES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

43 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

44 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Legislature finds and declares the
45 following:

46 (a) Meeting the educational needs of children in our
47 state's schools is of the greatest importance to the future
48 welfare of the State of Mississippi;

49 (b) Closing the achievement gap between high-performing
50 students, including the achievement gap among at-risk students, is
51 a significant and present challenge;

52 (c) Providing a broader range of educational options to
53 parents and utilizing existing resources, along with technology,
54 may help students in the state improve their academic achievement;
55 and

56 (d) Many of the state's school districts currently lack
57 the capacity to provide other public school choices for students
58 whose schools are low performing.

59 (2) There is created the Mississippi Virtual Public School.
60 It is the intent of the Legislature that virtual schools
61 established under this section provide Mississippi families with
62 an alternative choice to access additional educational resources
63 in an effort to improve academic achievement. Virtual schools
64 must be recognized as public schools and provided equitable
65 treatment and resources as are other public schools in the state.

66 (3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted as precluding
67 the use of computer- and Internet-based instruction for students
68 in a virtual or remote setting.

69 (4) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
70 have the meanings respectively ascribed unless the context clearly
71 requires otherwise:

72 (a) "Virtual school" means an independent public school
73 in which the school uses technology in order to deliver a
74 significant portion of instruction to its students via the
75 Internet in a virtual or from a remote setting.

76 (b) "Sponsor" means the public school district,
77 regional education service agency, charter school or the State
78 Board of Education having a fiduciary responsibility,

79 independently or cooperatively, for the operation of the virtual
80 school.

81 (5) A virtual school must be evaluated annually by its
82 sponsor according to the following criteria:

83 (a) The extent to which the school demonstrates an
84 increase in student achievement according to the goals of its
85 authorizing contract and state academic standards.

86 (b) The accountability and viability of the virtual
87 school, as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal and operational
88 performance.

89 (c) The access of each student in the virtual school to
90 a sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds the state's academic
91 standards and which has an interactive program with significant
92 online components.

93 (d) Whether or not each student achieves the required
94 number of hours of learning opportunities per academic year, as
95 established by the State Board of Education, or alternatively, has
96 demonstrated mastery or completion of appropriate subject areas.

97 (e) The results of students on regular assessments,
98 including the required Mississippi Curriculum Tests, Subject Area
99 Tests and those tests required by the "No Child Left Behind Act."

100 (6) The virtual school shall provide to each student
101 enrolled in the school all necessary instructional materials. The
102 school must ensure that each student is provided access to the
103 necessary technology, such as a computer and printer, and to an
104 Internet connection for school work purposes. A virtual school
105 may not provide an allotment to any student or the student's
106 family for the purchase of instructional programs or materials.
107 However, nothing in this subsection shall prohibit a virtual
108 school from reimbursing students or families for those costs
109 directly associated with their Internet connection for use in the
110 virtual school program.

(7) Each teacher employed by or participating in the delivery of instruction through a virtual school must meet all qualifications for licensure in the State of Mississippi.

(8) Any student who meets state residency requirements may enroll in a virtual school.

(9) Enrollment in the Mississippi Virtual Public School must be free of charge to students. The costs associated with the operations of the school must be shared by the State Department of Education and the local school district.

SECTION 2. The following shall be codified as Section 37-15-38, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-15-38. (1) A local school board, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges may establish a dual enrollment system under which students in the school district who meet the prescribed criteria of this section may be enrolled in a postsecondary institution in Mississippi while they are still in school.

(2) **Student eligibility.** Before credits earned by a qualified high school student from a community or junior college or state institutions of higher learning may be transferred to the student's home school district, the student must be properly enrolled in a dual enrollment program.

(3) **Admission criteria for dual enrollment in community and junior college or university programs.** The boards of trustees of the community and junior college districts and the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning may recommend admission criteria for dual enrollment programs under which high school students may enroll at a community or junior college or university while they are still attending high school and enrolled in high school courses. Students may be admitted to enroll in community or junior college courses under the dual enrollment

programs if they meet that individual institution's stated admission requirements.

(4) **Tuition and cost responsibility.** Tuition and costs for university-level courses and community and junior college courses offered under a dual enrollment program may be paid for by the postsecondary institution, the local school district, the parents or legal guardians of the student, or by grants, foundations or other private or public sources. Payment for tuition and any other costs must be made directly to the credit-granting institution.

(5) **Transportation responsibility.** Any transportation required by a student to participate in the dual enrollment program is the responsibility of the parent, custodian or legal guardian of the student. However, transportation costs may be paid from any available public or private sources.

(6) **School district average daily attendance credit.** When the tuition for a dually enrolled student is paid for by the local school district, the student may be counted, for adequate education program funding purposes, in the average daily attendance of the public school district in which the student attends high school.

(7) **High school student transcript transfer requirements.** Grades and college credits earned by students admitted to a dual enrollment program must be recorded on the college transcript at the university or community or junior college where the student attends classes. The transcript of the university or community or junior college course work may be released to another institution or applied toward college graduation requirements only after the student has received a high school diploma or has successfully completed the General Educational Development (GED) test.

(8) **Determining factor of prerequisites for enrollment in dual credit courses.** Each university and community or junior

college participating in a dual enrollment program shall determine course prerequisites for enrolling and receiving dual credit.

(9) **Process for determining articulation of curriculum between high school, university, and community and junior college courses.** Postsecondary curricula for eligible courses currently offered through Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks must meet the prescribed competencies requirements. Eligible courses not offered in Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks must meet the standards established at the postsecondary level. Postsecondary level developmental courses may not be considered as meeting the requirements of the dual enrollment program. Dual credit memorandum of understandings must be established between each postsecondary institution and the school district implementing a dual credit program.

(10) **Ineligible courses for dual credit programs.** Unless waived by a school principal, any course that is required for subject area testing as a requirement for graduation from a public school in Mississippi is not eligible for dual credit.

(11) **Eligible courses for dual credit programs.** Courses eligible for dual credit include, but are not necessarily limited to, foreign languages, advanced math courses, advanced science courses, performing arts, advanced business and technology, and career and technical courses. These courses and any additional courses considered for dual credit must receive unconditional approval from the superintendent of the local school district and the chief academic officer at the participating community or junior college or university. A university or community or junior college shall make the final decision on what courses are eligible for semester hour credits. The local school superintendent shall make the final decision on the transfer of college or university courses credited to the student's high school transcript.

(12) **High school Carnegie unit equivalency.** One (1) three-hour university or community or junior college course is

equal to one-half (1/2) high school Carnegie unit. A full Carnegie unit may be awarded for a three-hour university or college course upon approval of the State Department of Education. Partial credit agreements for postsecondary courses that are less than three (3) hours may be developed between a local school district and the participating postsecondary institution.

(13) **Course alignment.** Once alignment is achieved between university courses, community and junior college courses and the State Board of Education approved high school courses, the universities, community and junior colleges and high schools shall review their respective policies and assess the place of dual credit courses within the context of their traditional offerings.

(14) **Maximum dual credits allowed.** It is the intent of the dual enrollment program to make it possible for every student who desires to earn a semester's worth of college credit in high school to do so. A qualified dually enrolled high school student must be allowed to earn an unlimited number of college or university credits for dual credit as long as a B average is earned on the first two (2) approved dual credit courses. If a B average is not maintained after the completion of the student's first two (2) dual credit courses, the student may not continue in the dual credit program.

(15) **Dual credit program allowances.** A student may be granted credit delivered through the following means:

(a) Examination preparation taught at a high school by qualified teacher. A student may receive credit at the secondary level after completion of an approved course and passing the standard examination, such as an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate course through which a high school student is allowed CLEP credit by making a three (3) or higher on the end-of-course examination.

(b) School-based courses taught at a high school or designated postsecondary site by a qualified teacher who is an

employee of the school district and approved as an instructor by the collaborating college or university.

(c) College or university-based courses taught at a college, university or high school by an instructor employed by the college or university and approved by the collaborating school district.

(d) Online courses, including eligible courses offered by the Mississippi Virtual Public School or any postsecondary institution.

(16) **Qualifications of dual credit instructors.** A dual credit academic instructor must have, at a minimum, a master's degree with at least eighteen (18) graduate semester hours in the instructor's field of expertise. University and community and junior college personnel have the sole authority in the selection of dual credit instructors.

A dual credit career and technical education instructor must meet the requirements set forth by the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges in the qualifications manual for postsecondary career and technical personnel. University and community and junior college personnel have the sole authority in the selection of dual credit instructors.

(17) **Guidance on local agreements.** The Chief Academic Officer of the State Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and the Chief Academic Officer of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, working collaboratively, shall develop a template to be used by the individual community and junior colleges and institutions of higher learning for consistent implementation of the dual enrollment program throughout the State of Mississippi.

SECTION 3. Section 37-29-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-29-1. (1) The creation, establishment, maintenance and operation of community and junior colleges is authorized.

274 Community and junior colleges may admit students if they have
275 earned one (1) unit less than the number of units required for
276 high school graduation established by State Board of Education
277 policy or have earned a General Education Diploma (GED) in courses
278 correlated to those of senior colleges or professional schools.
279 They shall offer education and training preparatory for
280 occupations such as agriculture, industry, business, homemaking
281 and for other occupations on the semi-professional and
282 vocational-technical level. They may offer courses and services
283 to students regardless of their previous educational attainment or
284 further academic plans.

285 * * *

286 (2) The boards of trustees of the community and junior
287 college districts are authorized to establish an early admission
288 program under which applicants meeting all requirements prescribed
289 in subsection (2)(a) through (c) and having a minimum ACT
290 composite score of twenty-six (26) or the equivalent SAT score may
291 be admitted as full-time college students if the principal or
292 guidance counselor of the student recommends in writing that it is
293 in the best educational interest of the student. Such
294 recommendation shall also state that the student's age will not
295 keep him from being a successful full-time college student.
296 Students admitted in the early admission program shall not be
297 counted for adequate education program funding purposes in the
298 average daily attendance of the school district in which they
299 reside, and transportation required by a student to participate in
300 the early admission program shall be the responsibility of the
301 parents or legal guardians of the student. Grades and college
302 credits earned by students admitted to the early admission program
303 shall be recorded on the college transcript at the community or
304 junior college where the student attends classes, and may be
305 released to another institution or used for college graduation

requirements only after the student has successfully completed one
(1) full semester of course work.

(3) The community and junior colleges shall provide, through
courses or other acceptable educational measures, the general
education necessary to individuals and groups which will tend to
make them capable of living satisfactory lives consistent with the
ideals of a democratic society.

SECTION 4. The following shall be codified as Section
37-15-39, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-15-39. (1) The purpose of this section is to ensure that
each student has a sufficient education for success after high
school and that all students have equal access to a substantive
and rigorous curriculum that is designed to challenge their minds
and enhance their knowledge skill.

(2) The following words and phrases have the meanings
ascribed in this section unless the context clearly requires
otherwise:

(a) "Advanced placement course" means any high school
level preparatory course for a college advanced placement test
that incorporates all topics specified by recognized advanced
placement authorities on standards for a given subject area and
is approved by recognized advanced placement authorities.

(b) "Dual enrollment course" means a postsecondary
level course offered by a state institution of higher learning or
community or junior colleges, which, upon successful completion,
qualifies for academic credit in both the postsecondary
institution and public high school.

(c) "Pre-advanced placement course" means a middle,
junior high or high school level course that specifically prepares
students to enroll and participate in an advanced placement
course.

(d) "Vertical team" means a group of educators from
different grade levels in a given discipline working cooperatively

339 to develop and implement a vertically aligned program aimed at
340 helping students from diverse backgrounds acquire the academic
341 skills necessary for success in the advanced placement program and
342 other challenging course work.

343 (e) "High concentration of low-income students" means,
344 when used with respect to a public school or school district, a
345 public school or school district that serves a student population
346 with fifty percent (50%) or more being low-income individuals ages
347 five (5) through seventeen (17) years from a low-income family on
348 the basis of: data on children eligible for the free or
349 reduced-price lunches under the National School Lunch Act; data on
350 children in families receiving assistance under Part A of Title IV
351 of the Social Security Act; data on children eligible to receive
352 medical assistance under the Medicaid program under Title XIX of
353 the Social Security Act; or an alternate method of identifying
354 such children which combines or extrapolates that data.

355 (3) The State Board of Education shall establish clear,
356 specific and challenging training guidelines that require teachers
357 of advanced placement courses and teachers of pre-advanced
358 placement courses to obtain a recognized advanced placement
359 authority endorsed training. A teacher of an advanced placement
360 or pre-advanced placement course, or both, must obtain the
361 appropriate training.

362 (4) (a) In order to ensure that each student has a
363 sufficient education for success after high school and that all
364 students have equal access to a substantive and rigorous
365 curriculum that is designed to challenge their minds and enhance
366 their knowledge skill, school districts shall offer pre-advanced
367 placement courses to prepare students for advanced placement
368 course work.

369 (b) Funding shall be made available for the 2007-2008
370 school year so that all sophomores in Mississippi's public schools
371 may take an examination that measures the students' ability to

372 succeed in an advanced placement course. The State Department of
373 Education shall seek federal funding through the Advanced
374 Placement Incentive Grant Program and other available funding for
375 this purpose. Funding efforts must be focused with an intent to
376 carry out advanced placement and pre-advanced placement activities
377 in school districts targeted as serving a high concentration of
378 low-income students.

379 (c) The State Department of Education must approve all
380 classes designated as pre-advanced placement courses. The
381 department shall develop rules necessary for the implementation of
382 advanced placement courses.

383 (5) Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, all school
384 districts must offer at least one (1) advanced placement course in
385 each of the four (4) core areas of math, English, science and
386 social studies, for a total offering of no less than four (4)
387 advanced placement courses. The use of the state's on-line
388 Advanced Placement Instructional Program is an appropriate
389 alternative for the delivery of advanced placement courses.

390 Any public high school offering the International
391 Baccalaureate Diploma Program is exempt from the requirements of
392 this subsection. However, the school may participate in teacher
393 training and program funding on the same basis as any high school
394 offering advanced placement courses.

395 **SECTION 5.** Section 37-16-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
396 amended as follows:

397 37-16-7. (1) Each district school board shall establish
398 standards for graduation from its schools which shall include as a
399 minimum:

400 (a) Mastery of minimum academic skills as measured by
401 assessments developed and administered by the State Board of
402 Education.

(b) Completion of a minimum number of academic credits, and all other applicable requirements prescribed by the district school board.

(2) A student who meets all requirements prescribed in subsection (1) of this section shall be awarded a standard diploma in a form prescribed by the state board.

(3) The State Board of Education may establish student proficiency standards for promotion to grade levels leading to graduation.

(4) In developing an industry-recognized certification program pursuant to Sections 37-31-61, 37-31-69, 37-31-205 and 37-31-207, the State Board of Education, working through the Division of Vocational and Technical Education, and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, must approve, for the purposes of awarding credit for graduation, the use of additional or substitute tests, such as academic achievement tests, industry certifications or state licensure examinations, for the correlated Mississippi Curriculum Framework assessment. The Division of Vocational and Technical Education and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges shall permit students participating in vocational and technical education programs that are designed to enable such students to pass such industry certification examinations or state licensure examinations to be awarded, upon obtaining satisfactory scores on such industry certification or licensure examinations, the appropriate verified units of credit for one or more vocational and technical education classes that have been integrated into the Mississippi Curriculum Framework. The industry certification and state licensure examinations may cover relevant classes related to the Mississippi Curriculum Framework and, in the discretion of the State Board of Education, may address some Mississippi Curriculum Framework for required classes.

435 **SECTION 6.** Section 37-31-61, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
436 amended as follows:

437 37-31-61. (1) In order to develop industry-recognized
438 certifications, the State Board of Education shall incorporate
439 into the vocational education program a comparable curriculum
440 framework for mathematics, science, English and social studies,
441 including history, and other subject areas determined by the board
442 to be appropriate. The board also may authorize, in its
443 regulations for accrediting public schools in Mississippi, the
444 substitution of industry certification and state licensure
445 examinations for the curriculum framework assessments for the
446 purpose of awarding verified units of credit for vocational
447 education courses, where appropriate.

448 (2) In coordination with the Mississippi Department of
449 Employment Security, there is established, within the State
450 Department of Education, a unit of specialists in vocational
451 education. The unit shall assist in developing and revising local
452 vocational education programs to integrate those programs into the
453 Mississippi Department of Education's curriculum framework and
454 shall provide professional development for vocational education
455 personnel to improve the quality of vocational education
456 throughout the state. In performing its duties, the unit shall
457 seek the input of business and industry representatives regarding
458 the content and direction of vocational education programs in the
459 public schools of Mississippi.

460 (3) The trustees of such school district, as classified and
461 defined by law, including those already having this authority, and
462 the trustees of agricultural high schools and community or junior
463 colleges may, with the consent in writing of the State Board of
464 Education, establish and conduct such schools, classes or courses,
465 under the provisions herein stated and under the general
466 supervision of the board.

467 **SECTION 7.** Section 37-31-69, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
468 amended as follows:

469 37-31-69. (1) The school board of a local school district,
470 in its discretion, may establish and implement a vocational
471 apprenticeship program in the high schools in that district
472 through which students may earn high school units for vocational
473 experience or an industry-recognized certification, as defined in
474 Section 37-31-61, as an alternative to those high school units
475 required by the school district in addition to the core curriculum
476 defined by the State Board of Education. The purpose of a
477 vocational apprenticeship program established pursuant to this
478 section shall be to provide those students with skills and
479 training that will lead to gainful employment in a trade or other
480 specialized vocation.

481 (2) Students who participate in the vocational
482 apprenticeship or an industry-recognized certification program
483 shall be required to complete all high school units comprising the
484 core curriculum, as defined by the State Board of Education under
485 Section 37-31-61. In addition, a student in the vocational
486 apprenticeship program may be awarded credit for an additional
487 eight (8) high school units earned through the vocational
488 apprenticeship or an industry-recognized certification program,
489 which units shall apply toward, and must be recognized by the
490 State Board of Education in fulfillment of, the local school
491 district's graduation requirements. Units may be awarded in the
492 vocational apprenticeship program, whereby a student gains actual
493 work experience through employment in a job approved by the local
494 school district. The local school district shall adopt policies
495 governing the participation of students in the vocational
496 apprenticeship or an industry-recognized certification program.

497 (3) Students successfully completing a vocational
498 apprenticeship or an industry-recognized certification program

established pursuant to this section are entitled to a diploma evidencing graduation from a high school in Mississippi.

SECTION 8. Section 37-31-205, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-31-205. (1) The State Board of Education shall have the authority to:

(a) Expend funds received either by appropriation or directly from federal or private sources;

(b) Channel funds to secondary schools, community and junior colleges and regional vocational-technical facilities according to priorities set by the board;

(c) Allocate funds on an annual budgetary basis;

(d) Set standards for and approve all vocational and technical education programs or industry-recognized certification programs in the public school system and community and junior colleges or other agencies or institutions which receive state funds and federal funds for such purposes, including, but not limited to, the following vocational and technical education programs: agriculture, trade and industry, occupational home economics, consumer and homemaking education, distributive education, business and office, health, industrial arts, guidance services, technical education, cooperative education, and all other specialized training not requiring a bachelor's degree, with the exception of programs of nursing education regulated under the provisions of Section 37-129-1. The State Board of Education shall authorize local school boards, within such school board's discretion, to offer distributive education as a one-hour or two-hour block course. There shall be no reduction of payments from state funding for distributive education due to the selection of either the one-hour or two-hour course offering;

(e) Set and publish licensure standards for vocational and technical education personnel. The State Board of Education shall recognize a vocational and technical education teacher's

532 work when school is not in session which is in the teacher's
533 particular field of instruction as a means for the teacher to
534 fulfill the requirements for renewal of the teacher's license.
535 The board shall establish, by rules and regulations, the
536 documentation of such work which must be submitted to the board
537 and the number of actual working hours required to fulfill renewal
538 requirements. If a vocational and technical education teacher who
539 does not have a bachelor's degree takes classes in fulfillment of
540 licensure renewal requirements, such classes must be in
541 furtherance of a bachelor's degree;

542 (f) Require data and information on program performance
543 from those programs receiving state funds;

544 (g) Expend funds to expand career information;

545 (h) Supervise and maintain the Division of Vocational
546 and Technical Education and to utilize, to the greatest extent
547 possible, the division as the administrative unit of the board
548 responsible for coordinating programs and services with local
549 institutions;

550 (i) Utilize appropriate staff of the State Department
551 of Education to perform services for the vocational student
552 organizations, including, but not limited to, procurement,
553 accounting services, tax services and banking services. The
554 department may also procure and pay for annual audits of the
555 vocational student organizations using vocational funds or other
556 available funds of the State Department of Education. It is the
557 intent of this provision that any related costs be paid with
558 vocational funds appropriated by the Legislature;

559 (j) Promulgate such rules and regulations necessary to
560 carry out the provisions of this chapter in accordance with
561 Section 25-43-1 et seq.;

562 (k) Set standards and approve all vocational and
563 technical education equipment and facilities purchased and/or
564 leased with state and federal vocational funds;

565 (1) Encourage provisions for lifelong learning and
566 changing personal career preferences and advancement of vocational
567 and technical education students through articulated programs
568 between high schools and community and junior colleges;

569 (m) Encourage the establishment of new linkages with
570 business and industry which will provide for a better
571 understanding of essential labor market concepts;

572 (n) Periodically review the funding and reporting
573 processes required of local school districts by the board or
574 division with the aim of simplifying or eliminating inefficient
575 practices and procedures;

576 (o) Assist in the development of high technology
577 programs and resource centers to support current and projected
578 industrial needs;

579 (p) Assist in the development of a technical assistance
580 program for business and industry which will provide for
581 industrial training and services, including the transfer of
582 information relative to new applications and advancements in
583 technology; and

584 (q) Enter into contracts and agreements with the State
585 Board for Community and Junior Colleges for conditions under which
586 vocational and technical education programs in community and
587 junior colleges shall receive state and federal funds which flow
588 through the State Board of Education for such purposes.

589 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that no vocational
590 and technical education course or program existing on June 30,
591 1982, shall be eliminated by the State Board of Education under
592 the authority vested in paragraph (d) of subsection (1) of this
593 section prior to June 30, 1985. It is further the intent of the
594 Legislature that no vocational and technical education teacher or
595 other personnel employed on June 30, 1983, shall be discharged due
596 to licensure standards promulgated by the board under paragraph
597 (e) of subsection (1) of this section, if any such teacher or

598 personnel shall have complied with any newly published licensure
599 standards by June 30, 1985. Nothing contained in this section
600 shall be construed to abrogate or affect in any manner the
601 authority of local public school districts or community and junior
602 colleges to eliminate vocational and technical education courses
603 or programs or to discharge any vocational and technical education
604 teacher or other personnel.

605 (3) The State Board of Education and the State Board for
606 Community and Junior Colleges may provide that every vocational
607 and technical education course or program in Mississippi may
608 integrate academic and vocational-technical education through
609 coherent sequences of courses, so that students in such programs
610 achieve both academic and occupational competencies. The boards
611 may expend federal funds available from the 1990 Perkins Act, or
612 other available federal funds, for the alignment of
613 vocational-technical programs and industry-recognized
614 certification programs with academic programs through the
615 accreditation process and the teacher licensure process.

616 **SECTION 9.** Section 37-31-207, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
617 amended as follows:

618 37-31-207. (1) The State Board of Education shall have the
619 following duties:

620 (a) To seek the best available projections of
621 employment and occupations for Mississippians;

622 (b) To utilize these projections and other
623 considerations to set vocational and technical education
624 priorities;

625 (c) To utilize the services of all state agencies
626 having information regarding the purposes of this chapter;

627 (d) To cooperate with the Governor's Office of Job
628 Development and Training and the Board of Economic Development to
629 prevent duplication and provide continuity of employment and
630 training services;

631 (e) To conduct evaluations of the success or failure of
632 vocational-technical programs, including the extent to which
633 training actually leads to jobs in the field in which the student
634 was trained;

635 (f) Obtain and publish data and information on program
636 performance from those vocational-technical programs receiving
637 state funds; and

638 (g) To notify local school districts and public
639 community/junior colleges prior to March 1 annually of any
640 discontinuation of ongoing vocational programs which would affect
641 the renewing of contracts with vocational personnel.

642 (2) The State Board of Education shall partner with the
643 State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, the Mississippi
644 Department of Employment Security, Office of the Governor, and
645 representatives of the business community appointed by the
646 Governor to create the "Industry Certification Partnership"
647 program. The purpose of the program is to develop and implement a
648 program designed to encourage businesses in Mississippi to offer a
649 potential high school dropout student a semester scholarship at a
650 community or junior college for industry specific training after
651 the student's graduation in return for the student's promise or
652 compact to stay in school.

653 **SECTION 10.** (1) There is established a commission to be
654 known as the "Lifelong Learning Commission."

655 (2) The commission shall consist of four (4) members, who
656 shall serve ex officio, as follows:

657 (a) The Governor of the State of Mississippi, who shall
658 serve as chairman;

659 (b) The State Superintendent of Public Education;

660 (c) The Commissioner of the State Board for Community
661 and Junior Colleges; and

662 (d) The Commissioner of Higher Education.

(3) The duties of the Lifelong Learning Commission shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

(a) To assess the dropout crisis in Mississippi and recommend action steps to address it;

(b) To create a set of common definitions for graduation and dropout rates which can be used to compare the commission's progress relative to other states;

(c) To facilitate agreements that will make the Mississippi high school experience more meaningful;

(d) To encourage more rigor and relevance in the high school experience;

(e) To facilitate the transferability of education from secondary to postsecondary institutions;

(f) To raise state awareness on the need for improving Mississippi's high schools;

(g) To develop a series of best practices policy actions that state policymakers and legislators can implement to achieve system-wide high school reform; and

(h) To convene town hall meetings around the state, when the commission determines necessary, where students, teachers, administrators and parents can discuss high school, the senior year and impediments to greater success.

(4) The commission may prepare an annual report for the consideration of the Chairmen of the House and Senate Education and Universities and Colleges Committees pertaining to the information gathered in the performance of its duties.

(5) The commission members shall meet at those times and places deemed necessary by the commission. The commission may use any available resources to fulfill its mission.

SECTION 11. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-3-95, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-3-95. The State Department of Education and the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall prepare

696 jointly an annual report for the Legislature and Governor to be
697 submitted before December 1 of each year beginning in 2006. The
698 report shall be a compilation of existing data that may be used to
699 create a rating system that measures the performance of the
700 state's schools of education.

701 **SECTION 12.** The following provision shall be codified as
702 Section 37-7-346, Mississippi Code of 1972:

703 37-7-346. The State Department of Education and the Regional
704 Education Service Agencies (RESAs) shall prepare jointly a report,
705 to be submitted before December 15, 2006, for consideration of the
706 Legislature and Governor, detailing the plans that shall be
707 enacted by State Board of Education policy of how RESAs will work
708 in partnership with the State Department of Education to increase
709 their function as a local provider of educational services and
710 purchasing consortia as provided in Section 37-7-345(6). These
711 services must include, but not necessarily be limited to,
712 professional development, instructional materials, educational
713 technology, curriculum development, alternative educational
714 programs, purchasing cooperatives, insurance cooperatives,
715 business manager services, auditing and accounting services,
716 school safety/risk prevention, data processing and student
717 records, communications/public information, employee background
718 checks, grants management, printing/publications and internships.

719 **SECTION 13.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
720 and after July 1, 2006.