

By: Representative Bain

To: Education;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1571

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI UPSTART PROJECT TO SERVE AS
2 A HOME-BASED EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM TO DEVELOP SCHOOL
3 READINESS SKILLS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN; TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE
4 BOARD OF EDUCATION TO CONTRACT WITH A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
5 FOR PURPOSES OF DELIVERING THE PROGRAM TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN; TO
6 PRESCRIBE THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE PROVIDER FOR THE
7 ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE THAT THE CONTRACT
8 PROVIDE FOR ONE YEAR OF FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM WITH AN OPTION TO
9 EXTEND THE CONTRACT FOR ADDITIONAL YEARS OR EXPAND THE PROGRAM TO
10 A GREATER NUMBER OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN; TO AUTHORIZE A LOCAL
11 SCHOOL DISTRICT TO PARTICIPATE IN MISSISSIPPI UPSTART IF THE LOCAL
12 SCHOOL BOARD AGREES TO WORK IN COOPERATION WITH THE CONTRACTOR; TO
13 AUTHORIZE FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM AND TO PRESCRIBE THE
14 MANNER OF SOLICITING FAMILY PARTICIPATION; TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE
15 BOARD OF EDUCATION OR PARTICIPATING LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT TO
16 PURCHASE CERTAIN EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES TO BE USED IN THE PROGRAM;
17 TO REQUIRE AN ANNUAL AUDIT OF THE CONTRACTOR'S USE OF FUNDS FOR
18 MISSISSIPPI UPSTART; TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO
19 MAKE AN ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT BEFORE NOVEMBER 30 EACH YEAR; TO
20 PROVIDE THAT NO STATE GENERAL FUNDS MAY BE USED TO CARRY OUT THE
21 PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

23 **SECTION 1.** For purposes of this act, the following words and
24 phrases have the meanings ascribed in this section unless the
25 context clearly requires otherwise:



26 (a) "Contractor" means a not-for-profit, source
27 provider of educational technology services selected by the State
28 Board of Education under Section 2.

29 (b) "Low income" means an income below two hundred
30 percent (200%) of the federal poverty guideline.

31 (c) "Preschool children" means children who are age
32 four (4) or five (5) years and who have not entered kindergarten.

33 (d) "Mississippi UPSTART" means the project established
34 under Section 2 of this act which uses a home-based educational
35 technology program to develop school readiness skills of preschool
36 children.

37 **SECTION 2.** (1) Mississippi UPSTART is established within
38 the public education system of the state. Mississippi UPSTART is
39 created to:

40 (a) Evaluate the effectiveness of providing preschool
41 children with at-home access to interactive individualized
42 instruction delivered by computers and the Internet to prepare
43 them academically for success in school; and

44 (b) Test the feasibility of scaling a home-based
45 curriculum in reading, math and science delivered by computers and
46 the Internet to all preschool children in the State of
47 Mississippi.

48 (2) The State Board of Education, acting on behalf of the
49 Mississippi Virtual Public School Program, may contract with a
50 not-for-profit organization for the delivery of a home-based



51 educational technology program for preschool children which meets
52 the requirements of subsection (3).

53 (3) A home-based educational technology program for
54 preschool children must meet the following standards:

55 (a) The contractor must provide computer-assisted
56 instruction for preschool children on a home computer connected by
57 the Internet to a centralized file storage facility;

58 (b) The contractor must:

59 (i) Provide technical support to families for the
60 installation and operation of the instructional software; and

61 (ii) Provide for the installation of computer and
62 Internet access in homes of low income families that cannot afford
63 the equipment and service;

64 (c) The contractor must have the capability of
65 performing the following functions through the Internet:

66 (i) Communicating with parents;

67 (ii) Updating the instructional software;

68 (iii) Validating user access;

69 (iv) Collecting usage data;

70 (v) Storing research data; and

71 (vi) Producing reports for parents, schools and
72 the Legislature;

73 (d) The program must include the following components:

74 (i) Computer-assisted, individualized instruction
75 in reading, mathematics and science;



76 (ii) A multisensory reading tutoring program; and
77 (iii) A validated computer adaptive reading test
78 that does not require the presence of trained adults to administer
79 and is an accurate indicator of reading readiness of children who
80 cannot read;

81 (e) The contractor must have the capability to quickly
82 and efficiently modify, improve and support the product;

83 (f) The contractor must work in cooperation with school
84 district personnel who will provide administrative and technical
85 support of the program as provided in Section 3 of this act;

86 (g) The contractor must solicit families to participate
87 in the program, as required under Section 4 of this act; and

88 (h) In implementing the home-based educational
89 technology program, the contractor must seek the advice and
90 expertise of early childhood education professionals within
91 Mississippi's institutions of higher learning on issues such as:

92 (i) Soliciting families to participate in the
93 program;

94 (ii) Providing training to families; and

95 (iii) Motivating families to regularly use the
96 instructional software.

97 (4) The contractor shall provide funding for a home-based
98 educational technology program for preschool children for one (1)
99 year with an option to extend the contract for additional years or
100 to expand the program to a greater number of preschool children,



101 subject to the availability of funding from any public or private
102 sources.

103 (5) Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting or
104 prohibiting the State Board of Education or local school boards
105 from entering into agreements with a not-for-profit provider to
106 provide home-based educational technology; however, any provider
107 of such services must meet the standards established in subsection
108 (3) of this section.

109 **SECTION 3.** (1) A school district may participate in
110 Mississippi UPSTART or any program similar in design to
111 Mississippi UPSTART if the local school board agrees to work in
112 cooperation with the contractor to provide administrative and
113 technical support for the project.

114 (2) Family participants in Mississippi UPSTART must be
115 solicited from school districts that participate in Mississippi
116 UPSTART.

117 (3) A school district that participates in Mississippi
118 UPSTART or a program similar in design shall:

119 (a) Receive funding for paraprofessional and technical
120 support staff, travel, materials and meeting costs of the program;

121 (b) Participate in program training by the contractor;
122 and

123 (c) Agree to adopt standardized policies and procedures
124 in implementing the project.



125 SECTION 4. (1) The contractor must solicit families to
126 participate in Mississippi UPSTART through a public information
127 campaign and referrals from participating school districts.

128 (2) (a) Preschool children who participate in Mississippi
129 UPSTART must:

130 (i) Be selected from families with diverse
131 socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds; and

132 (ii) Reside in different regions of the state, in
133 both urban and rural areas.

134 (b) A minimum of at least thirty percent (30%) of the
135 preschool children selected to participate in Mississippi UPSTART
136 must be from low income families.

137 (3) A low income family that cannot afford a computer and
138 Internet service to operate the instructional software designed
139 for the project may obtain a computer and peripheral equipment on
140 loan from the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program or local
141 school district, if the district is a participant, and receive
142 free Internet service for the duration of the family's
143 participation in the project.

144 (4) The contractor shall make the home-based educational
145 technology program available to families at an agreed-upon cost,
146 which must be stipulated in the contract agreement with the State
147 Board of Education or participating local school district before
148 the program is implemented, if the number of families desiring to
149 participate in Mississippi UPSTART exceeds the number of



150 participants funded by any public or private funding source;
151 however, no state funds may be appropriated by the Legislature for
152 the purpose of funding participation in Mississippi UPSTART.

153 **SECTION 5.** The Mississippi Virtual Public School Program or
154 a participating local school district may purchase computers,
155 peripheral equipment and Internet service for low income families
156 that cannot afford them through cooperative purchasing contracts
157 administered by the State Department of Finance and
158 Administration.

159 **SECTION 6.** (1) The State Auditor shall conduct an annual
160 audit of the contractor's use of funds for Mississippi UPSTART or
161 contract with an independent certified public accountant to
162 conduct an annual audit.

163 (2) The State Board of Education shall require, by contract,
164 that the contractor must open its books and records relating to
165 its expenditure of funds under the contract to the State Auditor
166 or the State Auditor's designee. The contract also shall require
167 the contractor to reimburse the State Auditor for the actual and
168 necessary costs of the audit.

169 (3) No state general funds may be used to establish or
170 implement any provision of the Mississippi UPSTART program
171 established under this act.

172 **SECTION 7.** (1) The State Board of Education shall make a
173 report on Mississippi UPSTART to the House of Representatives and
174 State Senate Education Committees before November 30 of each year.



175 (2) The report must address the extent to which Mississippi
176 UPSTART is accomplishing the purposes for which it was established
177 as specified in Section 1 of this act, and must include the
178 following:

- 179 (a) Information on the number of families:
180 (i) Volunteering to participate in the program;
181 (ii) Selected to participate in the program;
182 (iii) Requesting computers; and
183 (iv) Furnished with computers;

184 (b) Information on the frequency of use of the
185 instructional software;

186 (c) Information on the obstacles encountered with
187 software usage, hardware or providing technical assistance to
188 families;

189 (d) Information on student performance on
190 pre-kindergarten and post-kindergarten assessments conducted by
191 school districts for students who participated in the home-based
192 educational technology program and those who did not participate
193 in the program; and

194 (e) Information, as made available, on the evaluation
195 of the program conducted under Section 2 of this act.

196 **SECTION 8.** No state general funds may be expended to carry
197 out the provisions of this act.

198 **SECTION 9.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
199 and after July 1, 2013.

