

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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127th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2015

Legislative Document

No. 391

H.P. 257

House of Representatives, February 12, 2015

Resolve, To Create a State-run Virtual Academy Providing Maine Students with Access to Online Learning through Their Existing School Districts

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative HUBBELL of Bar Harbor.

1 **Emergency preamble. Whereas,** acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** it is crucial that the Department of Education, education stakeholders and
4 school administrative units begin their work as soon as possible to ensure the stakeholder
5 group convened by the department pursuant to this resolve has sufficient time to obtain
6 information and develop plans to establish online and digital learning opportunities and to
7 develop a memorandum of understanding that provides Maine secondary school students
8 with the opportunity to access a virtual learning academy during the 2015-2016 school
9 year; and

10 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
11 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
12 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
13 therefore, be it

14 **Sec. 1. Stakeholder group to develop online and digital learning**
15 **opportunities. Resolved:** That the Department of Education shall convene a
16 stakeholder group to develop plans to establish online and digital learning opportunities,
17 which may include a state-administered virtual academy and a state-administered digital
18 learning exchange, that provide all public schools in the State access to online instruction,
19 online courses and digital learning resources for their students. The stakeholder group
20 must include a member of the Maine Charter School Commission, established in the
21 Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 12004-G, subsection 10-D, and representatives of
22 education associations in the State, including but not limited to representatives of the
23 Maine School Superintendents Association, the Maine School Boards Association, the
24 Maine Principals' Association and the Maine Education Association, and Maine educators
25 who are currently providing online and digital learning opportunities for their students
26 through the virtual high school program. In designing online and digital learning
27 opportunities the stakeholder group, in collaboration with the Department of Education,
28 shall:

29 1. Ensure that any virtual academy provides for a blended learning environment that
30 offers access to virtual classes along with traditional classroom-based instruction;

31 2. Ensure that any digital learning exchange provides expanded digital learning
32 opportunities to all Maine students and establishes a clearinghouse of open educational
33 resources available to all educators, parents and students;

34 3. Place particular emphasis on enhancing curriculum and addressing potential
35 scheduling obstacles, including scheduling obstacles that may be encountered by students
36 in career and technical education programs; and

37 4. Use as models the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative, the Virtual Learning
38 Academy Charter School in New Hampshire and digital learning exchanges in other
39 states and jurisdictions.

1 The stakeholder group, with the assistance of the Department of Education, shall
2 complete the design of online and digital learning opportunities by July 1, 2015; and be it
3 further

4 **Sec. 2. Access to a virtual learning academy during the 2015-2016 school**
5 **year. Resolved:** That, by July 1, 2015, the stakeholder group convened pursuant to
6 section 1, in collaboration with school administrative units in the State, shall make a good
7 faith effort to develop a memorandum of understanding with the Virtual Learning
8 Academy Charter School in New Hampshire to provide Maine secondary school students
9 with access to virtual learning programs during the 2015-2016 school year through the
10 Virtual Learning Academy Charter School in New Hampshire. The memorandum of
11 understanding must include the agreement of participating school administrative units and
12 the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School in New Hampshire to provide access to
13 virtual learning programs that serve the best interest of Maine secondary school students
14 and that reduce to the greatest extent possible the cost of admission to virtual learning
15 programs during the 2015-2016 school year. The Commissioner of Education shall
16 submit a copy of any memorandum of understanding developed in accordance with this
17 section to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by July 15,
18 2015; and be it further

19 **Sec. 3. Report. Resolved:** That, by December 1, 2015, the Commissioner of
20 Education or the commissioner's designee, on behalf of the stakeholder group pursuant to
21 section 1, shall submit a report, including findings and any recommended legislation
22 necessary to implement plans for the establishment of online and digital learning
23 opportunities, which may include a state-administered virtual academy and a state-
24 administered digital learning exchange, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education
25 and Cultural Affairs. The joint standing committee may submit a bill related to the report
26 to the Second Regular Session of the 127th Legislature.

27 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this
28 legislation takes effect when approved.

29 SUMMARY

30 This resolve does the following.

31 1. It directs the Department of Education to convene a stakeholder group to develop
32 plans to establish online and digital learning opportunities, which may include a state-
33 administered virtual academy and a state-administered digital learning exchange, that
34 provide all public schools in the State access to online instruction, online courses and
35 digital learning resources for their students.

36 2. It directs the stakeholder group, in collaboration with the Department of
37 Education, to complete the design of online and digital learning opportunities for Maine
38 students and submit a report, including findings and any necessary implementing
39 legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by
40 December 1, 2015.

1 3. It directs the stakeholder group, in collaboration with school administrative units
2 in the State, to develop a memorandum of understanding with the Virtual Learning
3 Academy Charter School in New Hampshire to provide Maine secondary school students
4 with access to virtual learning programs during the 2015-2016 school year.