

[Date]

Dear School Board Member,

The Michigan Legislature took action in 2013 to expand student access to digital learning options through Section 21f of the State School Aid Act. As a result, students enrolled in a public local district or public school academy in grades 6-12 are eligible to enroll in up to two online courses during an academic term – or more if parents, students, and school leadership agree that more than two are in the best interest of the child. Michigan is the seventh state in the U.S. to enable statewide choice at the course level through online learning options.

Online learning holds great promise as an instructional approach to expand and customize learning opportunities for students. However, it is substantially different from face-to-face instruction and usually works best when thoughtful planning supports individual enrollment decisions. We are in the process of developing policies to assist schools in accommodating these important changes.

Students may select online courses from local district catalogs or from the statewide catalog of online course titles available at <https://micourses.org/>. We are developing guidelines and procedures to accommodate student/parent requests to take online courses. I am excited about this opportunity, but equally cautious given the amount of media hype and misperceptions associated with online learning, especially from students.

We may deny student requests to take online courses for a number of reasons outlined in the legislation. If we deny a student's request for an online course, we must provide written documentation about why the request has been denied. Parents and students may appeal the decision to deny enrollment in a course by sending a letter to the ISD superintendent explaining why the student should be allowed to take the course. The superintendent's office must issue a response within 5 days of receiving the appeal letter.

Under Section 21f, school districts are required to use their foundation allowance or per pupil funds to "pay for expenses associated with the online course or courses" and to cover the "cost of the online course." Section 21f also identifies a payment schedule for online courses that reflects an 80% payment based on enrollment in the online course and 20% based on completion as determined by the enrolling district, not the district offering the online course.

I plan to recommend board approval of a new policy for online learning later this spring. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions about this new opportunity to expand online learning options for students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]