
Course Access Program Provider Approval

The Background:

Pursuant to Chapter 784 of the Public Acts of 2018, codified in T.C.A. Title 49, Chapter 18, the State Board of Education (State Board) developed rules governing the course access program, contained in chapter 0520-01-14, which became effective on December 29, 2019.

To implement the program, the Tennessee Department of Education developed a provider application (see attachment A) and process for review (described below). The Department received provider applications from January 15, 2020 through March 15, 2020, and three (3) applications were received (see Attachment B) from the following providers:

1. Florida Virtual School (FLVS)
2. Polk Innovative Learning Academy
3. Memphis Virtual School, Shelby County Schools

The provider application review process involved multiple content-area division across the Department. The following division participated in the review process: Academics; College, Career, and Technical Education; Data Governance; Educator Licensure; and Finance. The requirements set forth in the course access rule were used to direct the focus of each division. Each division was provided an electronic review form that included the SBE rule provision that was most applicable to that division's area of expertise to help them determine whether the applicant met the expectations outlined in the relevant section of rule.

Each division reviewed the application and submitted documents for alignment to SBE rule and Department programs and initiatives. Using the electronic form, evaluators determined if the application "met expectations," "did not meet expectations," or "conditionally met expectations." Additional comments or areas of concern from other participating divisions were also available for evaluators.

Evaluators unanimously selected "met expectations" for two of the applicants: Polk Innovative Learning Academy and Memphis Virtual School. Both of these applicants are programs governed and operated by Tennessee school districts and currently offer virtual programming to Tennessee students in their areas.

The Florida Virtual School application received a "met expectations" review by all but one of the reviewers, who marked "conditional" with a request for more information regarding teacher licensure as outlined in the course access rule. The Department contacted FLVS and received additional assurances that courses offered and taught through the FLVS would be taught by an appropriately licensed teacher in Tennessee. According the model provided by the FLVS, the provider would offer the content while the host school district would provide the teacher. In rare cases in which the host district did not provide the

teacher of record, the FLVS teacher would be fully licensed and meet all licensing requirements as outlined by State Board rules and policies. FLVS also currently offers courses to Tennessee students.

Based on the Department evaluations and information submitted by the providers, the Department recommends that three applicants be approved. Approved providers may then seek approval to offer specific courses, which will also be reviewed by the Department and submitted to the State Board for approval.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends approval of this item on first and final reading. The State Board staff concurs with this recommendation.