

HB 994 -- School Accreditation

Sponsor: McNary

This bill changes the laws regarding school accreditation. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Requires the State Board of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt a system that accredits districts and individual schools separately and to submit a report periodically to the Joint Committee on Education beginning December 1, 2011, on its progress;

(2) Allows an accredited district or a cooperative association of accredited districts to sponsor or operate a charter school in an unaccredited district. The unaccredited district with unused facilities must give a charter school the opportunity of first refusal for the lease or purchase of the building. If the school district regains accreditation and the district or cooperative wishes to discontinue the school, it must solicit continuation proposals which will be presented to a vote of the parents and guardians of the district's students in the year during which the district undergoes its next accreditation review;

(3) Allows the transfer corporation, upon an affirmative vote of its board, to coordinate transfers undertaken by students in unaccredited districts and requires it to act as a central repository for student transfer applications, establish an open-enrollment period and publicize the procedure for transfer applications in advance of the period, and make student assignments based on availability of seats in accredited districts. A district must annually inform the corporation of its anticipated open seats at each attendance center. Officers of a district who do not report may be prosecuted for a violation of school law under Section 162.091, RSMo; and

(4) Allows a student in an unaccredited district to accept a voucher for educational expenses, not to exceed the amount of the state adequacy target, in lieu of transferring to a charter school and specifies the conditions under which a school accepting vouchers must operate.