

No. 1993-45

## AN ACT

SB 801

Providing for the integration of educational resources of schools, colleges and businesses in this Commonwealth.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Educational Resource Sharing Through Distance Learning Act.

Section 2. Declaration of policy.

The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) America's chief economic competitors are making financial commitments to the infrastructure necessary for the instantaneous movement of voice video and data among organizations and agencies.

(2) Other states are using full audio, full video teleconferencing technology for instructional and other educational purposes.

(3) A number of school districts in this Commonwealth currently have distance learning programs in place. Their success serves as a model and a statement that greater resources and priority need to be given to the development of a more comprehensive distance learning system.

(4) Ongoing cooperation and resource sharing involving elementary, secondary and postsecondary educational facilities and the business community must be part of this Commonwealth's response to international and domestic developments.

(5) Full audio, full video teleconferencing technology can provide more equitable access to excellent teachers, enhanced curricula and other educational resources.

(6) Teleconferencing technology can provide special benefits for rural areas, inner cities and other areas where educational opportunities and resource sharing are limited by geography, distances or financial resources.

(7) The promotion of distance learning technology is necessary to provide for equity in educational opportunities for all students through education resource sharing and business-education partnerships.

Section 3. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Distance learning programs." Those programs of instruction using technology to transmit video, audio or data by one-way or two-way telecommunications or computer technology while the instructors and learners

are in one or more geographically separate locations.

**Section 4. Distance learning program agreements.**

(a) Board of school directors.—The board of school directors of any school district may enter into an agreement relating to a distance learning program with any of the following:

- (1) School districts.
- (2) Intermediate units.
- (3) Educational institutions, including institutions of higher education.
- (4) Businesses and other appropriate agencies.

(b) Department of Education.—Whenever funds become available from any source whatever for the purpose of establishing a distance learning program, the Department of Education may enter into an agreement with any of the following:

- (1) School districts.
- (2) Intermediate units.
- (3) Educational institutions, including institutions of higher education.
- (4) Other appropriate agencies.

(c) Purpose.—The purpose of a distance learning program shall be to share and augment instruction and education resources to provide for curriculum enhancement and other educational opportunities that are not otherwise available or affordable to students in elementary and secondary schools.

(d) Priorities.—Department of Education priority and funding shall be afforded those distance learning program proposals that demonstrate effective and innovative partnerships with business and industry.

**Section 5. Rules and regulations.**

The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations relating to academic credit that may be granted to students enrolled in courses offered through distance learning programs under the provisions of this act.

**Section 6. Effective date.**

This act shall take effect July 1, 1993, or immediately, whichever is later.

APPROVED—The 2nd day of July, A.D. 1993.

MARK S. SINGEL  
ACTING GOVERNOR