

New law awards state board more authority over schools

By Tim Richard staff writer

The State Board of Education has new powers to oversee local school districts under a law signed by Gov. James J. Blanchard.

In an extreme case, the state may send in a special administrator to run a school that fails to meet the State Board's accreditation standards for three years — or even close it.

The State Board also is empowered to draw up a "model core curriculum" that must be used by a kindergarten-through-12th-grade district.

"Tough new standards are needed if our children are to receive the education they need to succeed in the work place of tomorrow," Blanchard said as he signed House Bill 4009 into law.

"It also requires schools to develop improvement plans and issue annual education report cards."

THE LAW, amending the state school code, stops short of requiring particular courses. But it does require schools to set knowledge goals or lose state aid.

The House voted 74-3 in favor on final passage. Voting no were Rep. Lyn Bankes, R-Livonia, and two out-state members.

High schools will be allowed to hire non-certified teachers for such specialized courses as computer science, a foreign language, biology, chemistry, engineering, physics and robotics where certified teachers are unavailable.

The non-certified teacher would need a college degree and work experience in the subject area.

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THE STATE board within 90 days is to provide model school improvement plans and core curriculum.

Each year local districts will be required to publish reports on:

- The accreditation status of each school.
- The status of three- to five-year improvement plans.
- The core curriculum and its variances from the state model.
- Reports, by school, on student competency tests, along with comparisons with the previous year.
- The number and percentage of parents or legal guardians who participate in parent-teacher conferences at all levels — elementary, middle and high school.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS could forfeit a portion of their state aid if they fail to make annual reports.

Districts receiving no state aid

(out of formula) would be eligible for incentive grants if they do well.

Where a school fails to earn state accreditation for three consecutive years, the state superintendent can appoint a special administrator at local district expense until state standards are met.

Meanwhile, a parent or guardian may move a child to an accredited school.

Or the state may close the offending school.

KEY INGREDIENTS are the annual reports and improvement plans, an entirely new element in Michigan.

"School board members, school building administrators, teachers and other school employees, pupils, parents of pupils attending that school, and other residents of the school district shall participate" in drawing up the improvement plan, the law says.

The new act combines features of many bills sponsored by Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature.

The final measure was sponsored by Rep. James O'Neill, D-Saginaw. Among co-sponsors were area Reps. Justice Barns, D-Westland; William Keith, D-Garden City; and James Kosteva, D-Canton.

Hispanic mayor talks at OU

Henry Cisneros, first Hispanic mayor of a major American city, will speak on "Education: The Competitive Edge" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 10, at Oakland University in Rochester.

of San Antonio, Texas, will speak in the Crockery of the Oakland Center.

Tickets are \$3 to the public in advance or at the door.

Call 370-2020 for more information.

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OCC invites youngsters to campus for 'fun day'

"Young Kids on Campus," a day of family fun, entertainment and community resources, will be 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 7, at Oakland Community College, Highland Lake Campus, 7350 Cootley Lake Road, Union Lake.

Oakland Community College and the North Oakland County Child Care Director's Coalition, an affiliate of the Oakland County Council, and Americare Systems Inc., are hosting this free special event for children and families in Oakland County. Special activities will take

place in celebration of "The Month of the Young Child."

"Young Kids on Campus" will offer parents the opportunity to find out important information regarding the numerous programs and agencies in Oakland County. The event will offer the children the opportunity to take part in the performing arts, clowning, crafts, special interest shows and many other exciting activities.

For more information, please contact Linda Herbert, 858-5146.

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