

This information was prepared by Ohio Home Education Coalition, an open and inclusive coalition of interested homeschoolers who come together to raise awareness of issues facing homeschoolers in Ohio. This is not an interactive email address. As we are all busy with our families, individual responses would be impossible. However if someone wants to be added to this list, they can send an email to the OHEC address with: "Add my name" in the subject. Provide full name and an email address in the text. If you do not want to receive future emails from OHEC, please send an email to OHEC's email address with "Remove my name" in the subject. Thanks.

May 3, 2003

Representative Diana Fessler
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-6111

Dear Representative Fessler:

You will recall that in the deliberations on HB 364 last year, you and former Representative Twyla Roman amended the bill with a provision that required as follows: Sec. 3314.041. The governing authority of each community school and any operator of such school shall place in a conspicuous manner in all documents that are distributed to parents of students of the school or to the general public the following statement: "The (here fill in name of the school) school is a community school established under Chapter 3314. of the Revised Code. The school is a public school and students enrolled in and attending the school are required to take proficiency tests and other examinations prescribed by law. In addition, there may be other requirements for students at the school that are prescribed by law. Students who have been excused from the compulsory attendance law for the purpose of home education as defined by the Administrative Code shall no longer be excused for that purpose upon their enrollment in a community school. For more information about this matter contact the school administration or the Ohio Department of Education."

It is our understanding that the provisions of this law became effective on April 8.

We recently reviewed the websites of for profit cyber charter schools and find that by far, this provision seems to be ignored. In fact, we can find this language at only one website.

The results are as follows:

Cyber Charter Schools which appear non-compliant with Sec. 3314.041 at their websites:

- Alternative Education Academy (OHDELA)

<http://www.ohdela.com>

- Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT)

<http://www.ecotohio.org/home.htm>

- TRECA Digital Academy

<http://tda.treca.org/index.shtml>

- Virtual Community School of Ohio (VCS)

<http://www.vcslearn.org/about/index.html>

Additionally, it is our understanding that seven local school district sponsored cyber charter schools were funded as of May 1, 2003. (See table below.) If these schools are

producing material for circulation to the public, including material which is on websites, as we understand the requirements of ORC 3313.041, they too would be required to publish this enrollment statement. Additionally, please see the enclosed for the list of 52 other “digital” schools which we believe are school district sponsored cyber charters. These have already been identified by ODE in the “Community Schools Directory.” How will these schools be monitored for compliance?

To their credit, the Ohio Virtual Academy/K12 at has a link called “Legal Notice” at their home page. The text of the enrollment statute is included at that link. This is especially important in the case of this publicly-funded cyber charter school as they have relentlessly targeted the homeschooling community with their multiple mailings (one of our households received 14 separate mailings from K12 last year, some in duplicate). We will hope that they are just as forthcoming on any future print material or media they unload on the homeschooling community.

Of the above list, we hold greatest concerns right now about the Alternative Education Academy. More than any other of the cyber charter schools, they bandy about the nomenclature of homeschooling, including the very word itself. Any disclaimer, buried somewhere at a website, will in no way mitigate their clear pretentious and misleading intents with the public. They have television and radio spots playing around the state—how will the notice you sponsored in HB 364’s amendment be handled for these media? As we are on the subject of cyber charter schools, we ask your attention to the table below:(NOTE TO READER: TABLE INSERTED HERE. CANNOT REPRODUCE IN AN EMAIL. TO ACCESS THE TABLE, OPEN THE ATTACHMENT BELOW ENTITLED "WORKBOOK 1.DOC, WHICH IS THE CONTENT OF THE TABLE IN AN EXCEL SPREADSHEET.)

First, we must point out that four of the school district based cyber charter schools are not in compliance with 3314.03(A)(11)(a) in meeting a minimum enrollment of 25 students. Several of these schools have been open multiple months and have never met the enrollment requirement. We must also point that that there have been other instances in this school year where other charter schools, including profit making bricks and mortar schools, have neglected compliance with the minimum enrollment law, and the Ohio Department of Education has funded them regardless. How can that happen?

When seeing the percentage of funding that is being lavished on these schools, it is imperative that at every opportunity, those who understand the difference between cyber charter school enrollment and homeschooling consistently and firmly make that distinction. As a homeschooler and a legislator, we are sure you can appreciate the potential loss to homeschooling should the legislature or the public become confused by two definitions of “homeschooling.”

We encourage you to work actively, both in the legislature and in both parties, as well as in the wide world to remind individuals of the distinct differences between enrollment and homeschooling, beginning with funding (or lack thereof). Seldom have we in the homeschooling community ever needed to point out the obvious. Sadly, now we must. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mary Nix
Peggy Daly-Masternak

Enclosure

Cc: Representative Edna Brown

State Senator Teresa Fedor

Representative Dale Miller

Representative Tom Patton

State Senator Bob Spada