Educational options continue to be scarce in Missouri. The Missouri Course Access Program (MOCAP) could increase opportunities for students by giving them the option to take online courses in place of traditional schooling. However, school districts are not committing to the program as they should.

According to the law that was passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor in 2018, every school district is required to inform families about their right to participate in MOCAP. It should be made clear in the “parent handbook, registration documents, and featured on the home page” of the district website. However, a majority of the districts are not complying with the law.

Only 57 out of the 556 school districts and charter schools in Missouri provided information about MOCAP on their websites. Of the 57 districts that do have this information posted online, only a handful made it easily accessible. Dallas County R-I is one of these outliers; it announced the program on the front page and link to a particularly informative explanation. But most websites bury the information. For example, Plato R-V only has a one-sentence message at the very bottom of the page in a hard-to-read gray font and provides no link to further information.
Ninety percent of Missouri districts are not complying with the requirement at all. MOCAP passed into law 18 months ago, and that should have been plenty of time to update websites and inform parents. Show-Me Institute analysts have written about instances of districts attempting to block students from using MOCAP, and the problem persists.

Online options can be a haven for students who face complicated medical situations, bullying, or have specific academic needs. MOCAP can also provide the opportunity for students to take classes that their local district doesn't offer.

However, families can only reap the benefits of educational opportunities if they are aware of their options. MOCAP should be celebrated, but implementation is key. Every district should have this information on its homepage so that families who can benefit from course access are aware of the opportunity.

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