



Illinois State Board of Education

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April 25, 2016

TO: The Honorable Bruce Rauner, Governor
The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Republican Leader
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Republican Leader

FROM: Tony Smith, Ph.D. 
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: Report of the Virtual Education Review Committee

Pursuant to its obligations under Public Act 99-0442, the Virtual Education Review Committee submits this report to the Governor and General Assembly.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Dr. Jason Helfer, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, at (217) 782-4123.

cc: Tim Mapes, Clerk of the House
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center



Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee

Recommendations: Executive Summary

**Prepared by
The Members of the Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee**

Submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

Submitted pursuant to PA 099-0442

April 2016

Illinois State Board of Education

Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee

Executive Summary

During the past seven years, Illinois funded the Illinois Virtual School (IVS), a single provider of state-approved online courses. During this time, IVS has provided a high-quality online course option that guarantees children in public school districts, private schools, and home schools are taught by Illinois-licensed teachers and have access to research-based online student supports. In recognizing that IVS works in coordination with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and in an effort to ensure the best quality online courses and equity among students, the Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee (VERC) was established.

The purpose of the committee was (1) to review virtual education and course choice in Illinois; (2) to discuss virtual course access programs, including the ability of students to enroll in online coursework and access technology to complete courses; (3) to identify best practices for virtual education and course choice in Illinois; (4) to make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly focused on changes and improvements; and (5) to make funding recommendations and determine mechanisms and district cost projections to administer course access programs.

Recommendations from the Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee

The committee established the following set of fundamental principles that guided the development of recommendations on virtual education for Illinois:

1. Every student deserves access to rigorous courses that prepare them for success in college in whatever discipline they choose to pursue, but too many students do not have access in their home districts to certain courses.
2. Lack of access to courses has been and could be increasingly compounded by regional shortages in teachers in certain areas of licensure.
3. Although IVS has expanded course offerings and student enrollments have increased, the geographic areas of growth do not align with the regions of the state that have the most limited course offerings, teacher shortages, and poverty rates. Thus, more focus is needed in those areas to ensure equal access across the state.

Recommendation 1: Regulation of Virtual Course Quality

ISBE must oversee the quality of virtual courses and review relevant data to ensure rigor and excellence.

Quality should be at the forefront of any conversation about virtual learning. As the governing agency, ISBE should be tasked with ensuring that virtual courses offered through the state-approved education program be rigorous and high quality. At a minimum, all courses must align with the Illinois Learning Standards and course quality standards, such as iNACOL's National Standards for Quality Online Courses. The state-approved education program currently tracks

completion data, school utilization of the program, and survey responses from schools and students. ISBE should ensure that appropriate data are collected, reported, and reviewed regularly, which may include student growth data and AP test pass rates where applicable. The committee also determined that additional oversight by ISBE is needed to ensure the rigor of courses currently offered by IVS during the contract extension period.

Recommendation 2: Funding That Improves Access for Low-Income Students

No student should be denied access solely because he or she cannot pay for all or a portion of the course.

In addition to the fixed state appropriation, the current funding structure charges the same fee to students in every district, regardless of local wealth of the district or any special characteristics of the student. Each district decides whether to cover the cost of the course or to pass it on to families. The recommendation of the committee is for the state to adopt a funding structure that improves access for low-income students and high-poverty districts.

One option would be to index the fee assessed to districts to each district's poverty rate. The average cost per online course enrollment nationally is \$370. IVS course costs range from \$325–\$345 and all participating districts receive a subsidy that brings their total fee to \$190 per enrollment. Rather than subsidizing all districts, the state could adopt a sliding fee scale, charging districts with 0 percent poverty the full course cost (approximately \$335) and districts with 100 percent poverty \$0. The formula for the fee could be:

$$(1 - [\text{district poverty rate}]) \times \$335 = [\text{district fee}]$$

As an example, for a district with a poverty rate of 75 percent, each course enrollment would cost \$83.75, calculated as follows:

$$(1 - 0.75) \times \$335 = \$83.75$$

The exception to this formulaic approach is the recommendation to include a minimum, nominal fee per student to ensure that either the student or district has some financial investment in the enrollment and therefore more of a commitment to course completion. The committee recommends incorporating a maximum cap on the poverty rate used in the calculation (e.g., less than or equal to 90 percent or 95 percent) so that students or districts contribute something between \$16.75–\$33.50 for each course. Or, the cost per course could be set at a minimum flat fee—for example, \$20 or \$25. The committee determined that cost should not be prohibitive for any student who wants to take a course, regardless of family income.

The committee further recommends that districts retain the discretion to either pay the course fee or pass it along to families. The exception would be for students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. These students should be eligible for fee waivers to cover course costs, ensuring that no student is denied access because of financial needs. In this fee-waiver structure, where course fees would have to be covered by the district, it would be prohibited for a district to deny a student access to a virtual course solely because of the waiver (i.e., if a district routinely allows students to opt into a virtual course, it should not be allowed to single out the low-income

student and deny their enrollment solely because of the fee). For credit recovery courses, which are typically lower cost (IVS’s credit recovery fee is \$75 per course), the committee recommends that districts retain the ability to determine whether the fee should be passed on to families or covered by the district for all enrollments regardless of income.

As is a common practice in some state models, the committee recommends two payment installments made to the virtual provider: the first upon enrollment and the second upon successful completion of the course.

Recommendation 3: District Approval of Course Credit

Students taking courses for high school credit must usually have approval from their home districts. In instances where a student’s home district does not offer courses that are required for graduation, students may opt into a corresponding state-approved virtual course and have that credit recognized by their high school. We encourage districts to accept state-approved virtual education courses for credit, particularly when those courses further a student’s potential for college and career readiness.

IVS has a strong working relationship with districts in part because of its current structure to not “compete.” That partnership generally serves students well so that their online experience can be supplemented by on-the-ground support and advised by counselors who personally know the student and their readiness to enter into particular courses.

If a district does not offer one of these courses (or a course with a different name that includes this content) and a student wants to take the course through a state-mandated virtual provider, the district should recognize the credit the student earns. Also, because many colleges highly recommend the study of a foreign language for admission, any school that does not offer any foreign language courses should allow students to be able to take a foreign language course online and present it to the school for credit.

The committee recognizes that there needs to be some parameters to setting a requirement that the home districts recognize and assign credit for online courses in these limited subject areas. This credit requirement should apply only if the district does not offer the requisite course or if the student can demonstrate a genuine, compelling, and verifiable scheduling conflict. For example, a student cannot enroll in an online course to avoid the class of a particular teacher. A process will need to be developed whereby students notify their district before enrolling in an online credit course.

Finally, students should be able to opt into any virtual courses independent of their district. However, the committee does not recommend mandating that a district recognize those courses for credit on the student’s high school transcript. If students, for instance, want to independently take an AP class, pass the test, and earn college credit, they should have the opportunity to do so. If the district does not approve the enrollment, the student pays the fee and the course is not added to the high school transcript.

Recommendation 4: Multiple Providers

ISBE will have the ability to authorize multiple providers to offer virtual courses in addition to IVS.

The committee learned that most virtual learning in classrooms is happening through districts' own programs rather than through virtual schools. Some have partnered with neighboring districts to jointly contract with virtual learning providers. Others may lack the capacity or expertise to ensure the rigor and quality of a provider, but they may find value in an ISBE-approved list or clearinghouse of high-quality virtual course providers. ISBE should have the authority to approve multiple virtual providers; however, ensuring the quality of approved course providers must remain ISBE's priority. Oversight of approved providers should be rigorous, and ISBE should revoke the approval status of any provider that does not maintain the highest quality. iNACOL standards are broadly accepted indicators within the industry that many education agencies or providers use to develop, monitor, or measure virtual education programs (iNACOL, 2011). The committee recommends the adoption of a set of standardized criteria by which ISBE will measure virtual education. Quality Matters¹ is another set of quality standards that ISBE could consult in setting provider criteria.

Recommendation 5: Instructor Licensure Requirements

Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher license.

Requiring virtual course teachers to be licensed in the applicable subject area is an appropriate safeguard to provide an additional assurance of quality and rigor.

Recommendation 6: Communication with Families

School districts should communicate to students and families about the availability of virtual courses.

Students and families cannot take advantage of virtual courses if they are unaware that they are available. However, the committee is sensitive to any new mandates on districts during this era of budget instability and funding concerns. The committee supports low-cost communication methods, such as posting a link to the virtual school or provider website on the district's webpage where the district course catalog is outlined.

Recommendation 7: Supplemental Courses

State-approved virtual education programs provide supplemental courses only and will not be degree-granting institutions.

Two state virtual schools (Florida and New Hampshire) enroll students full time and grant high school diplomas. Most growth for online education is in the area of supplemental coursework. Although there may be instances where a full-time, degree-granting online program makes sense

¹ Quality Matters Rubrics are intended for use with courses delivered fully online or those with significant online components (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/>).

for an individual student, research about outcomes for students in full-time online programs has not been promising. In-school support for students enrolled in supplemental online courses is often key to that student's success in the course.

Recommendation 8: Online Course Graduation Requirements

Students should not be mandated to take an online course for graduation.

The 2015 report *Keeping the Pace With K–12 Digital Learning* by Evergreen Education Group indicates that five states require that students complete an online course before graduation. Because of the committee's guiding principle that virtual courses should be a mechanism for improving access rather than an outcome to strive for in and of itself, the committee does not support an online course requirement for Illinois.

References

Evergreen Education Group. (2015). *Keeping the pace with K–12: Digital learning*. Durango, CO: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Keeping-Pace-2015-Report.pdf>

International Standards for Quality Online Teaching. (2011). *National standards for quality online teaching*. Vienna, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/national-standards-for-quality-online-teaching-v2.pdf>



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Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee

Report

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Illinois State Board of Education Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee

Report Submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

April 2016

This report of the Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee is respectfully submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly.

Introduction

Creation and Activities of the Virtual Education Review Committee

The Virtual Education Review Committee (VERC) was established through Public Act (PA) 099-0442, enacted by Senate Bill (SB) 1679, which was primarily sponsored by Senator Kimberly A. Lightford and Representative Kenneth Dunkin. The act mandated that a committee of legislators and stakeholders convene to explore the needs of course access programs in order to make recommendations on how to address gaps in equity and access. The bill called for a program that would allow the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to manage and approve different virtual education providers in the state. The bill also directed that 19 stakeholders be appointed to meet at least four times and issue recommendations on or before May 31, 2016. The PA further charged VERC with the following tasks:

- (1) To review virtual education and course choice in Illinois
- (2) To discuss virtual course access programs, including the ability of students to enroll in online coursework and access technology to complete courses
- (3) To identify best practices for virtual education and course choice in Illinois
- (4) To make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly focused on changes and improvements
- (5) To make funding recommendations and determine mechanisms and district cost projections to administer course access programs

VERC included legislators as well as representatives of diverse stakeholder groups. Jessica Handy, government affairs director for Stand for Children, was named chairperson. The full VERC membership is given in Appendix A.

VERC held its meetings between November 2015 and April 2016. The committee met in person five times and held one meeting through online webinar. The final approved minutes from the six meetings are included in Appendix B. The committee consulted the available research and policies on virtual education to inform its work. A resource list of pertinent research and policies was compiled and organized around the three main foci of the committee charge: course access, student access, and funding. Citations within this report include references from this resource list.

The Midwest Comprehensive Center, a federally funded regional comprehensive center operated by American Institutes for Research, provided technical assistance to ISBE and to the chairperson in planning, facilitating, and documenting the work of the committee.

Overview of Virtual Education

VERC developed a shared understanding of the current condition of virtual education and the scope of the problem faced by the state in implementing equitable and quality online courses and investigated the research on some best practices and alternative approaches to virtual education. First, to understand the current condition, VERC explored a series of topical discussions based on presentations conducted by virtual education vendors and experts during the first two committee meetings. It was agreed that the prime outcome for proposed recommendations will have to result in better outcomes for students through the mechanism of virtual courses. It is not sufficient to offer online courses simply for the sake of having virtual education in Illinois.

The committee endeavored to identify elements of online programs that mimic or mirror what is offered in traditional schools but with more flexibility and variety to meet gaps in services. In preparing its findings, the committee considered mechanisms that would help schools, administrators, and families consider the expansive possibilities of online learning.

Defining Virtual Education

“Virtual education or online learning is revolutionizing American education. It has the potential to dramatically expand the educational opportunities of American students, largely overcoming the geographic and demographic restrictions” (Lips, 2010, p. 1).

About 56 percent of virtual courses taken by students nationwide are in core subjects (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies), according to the International Association for K–12 Online Learning (iNACOL), an international nonprofit organization that works to improve student-centered learning in the field of online learning. However, electives, which may be limited in some districts, made up the single largest category of virtual course enrollments (27 percent) across the country (Evergreen Education Group, 2015). The existing, yet limited, research base on the efficacy of these programs suggests that policymakers should be considering ways to expand existing virtual offerings (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009). Currently, 27 states offer online courses through state virtual schools. Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia provide students with the option to attend school full time virtually (Lips, 2010).

Students and districts are taking advantage of the available virtual offerings, using online courses to fill a variety of gaps in services. iNACOL reports that 60 percent of the districts using online learning use it for credit recovery, and 50 percent of the districts that use online learning use it to address scheduling conflicts. Online learning can provide personalized learning experiences for all types of students, including high-risk populations such as English learners, students with disabilities, or those lagging two or more years behind academically.

The Case for Virtual Education

Virtual education has evolved in the past 100 years from correspondence courses in the early years to almost limitless options for learners through the Internet and World Wide Web in multiple electronic formats. A key component for the expansion of online learning from corporate and higher education institutions to K–12 institutions is the ability of the technology to allow more instructors and content to reach a wider array of learners, often in real time. Many state education agencies (SEAs) and districts are increasingly offering online learning to benefit their students. These online courses are designed to offer students the flexibility and variety needed to acquire 21st-century skills and knowledge required for college and career entry. According to a 2009 U.S. Department of Education meta-analysis study conducted regarding online learning, the key benefits include the following:

- (a) “increasing the availability of learning experiences for learners who cannot or choose not to attend traditional face-to-face offerings,
- (b) assembling and disseminating instructional content more cost-efficiently, or
- (c) enabling instructors to handle more students while maintaining learning outcome quality that is equivalent to that of comparable face-to-face instruction” (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009, p. 1).

This study also produced data that showed that classes with online learning (whether taught completely online or blended) on average produce stronger student learning outcomes than did classes with solely face-to-face instruction.

To help broaden committee members’ understanding of the various mechanisms of successful virtual programs, a series of informational presentations were made to the committee by four state legislators; two online programs; three state virtual schools, including Illinois Virtual School (IVS); and one national virtual education organization.

At the November 19 meeting, guest presenters Judy Minor and Elizabeth Palatine with Oswego School District 308 gave a presentation on their virtual online program. Oswego’s primary course content vendor is Edgenuity. Initially, the program was used primarily to offer credit recovery, but it has been expanded to offer students more choice and flexibility. Dr. Minor emphasized the difference between how students taking credit recovery courses and those taking initial credit courses achieve success.

Also at the November 19 meeting, Amy Huang, chief of staff with LEAP Innovations, shared a presentation about her organization’s work in Chicago. LEAP helps educators develop and implement personalized virtual learning with instruction tailored to each student’s skills,

interests, and goals. Although LEAP does not offer online services itself, it works with vendors that do provide courses directly. Similar to what educators try to achieve in their brick-and-mortar classrooms, LEAP aims to help teachers find ways to accommodate all modes of learning through electronic formats. Huang noted that LEAP's research found that one-to-one small group instruction works best for students. However, this delivery mode cannot be feasibly mimicked online. Therefore, LEAP helps educators modify their learning environment so that they offer enough flexibility to meet the students' needs. LEAP's program is based on four pillars:

1. Learn anytime, anywhere (virtual learning and gaining life experience through internships, etc.)
2. Competence learning focus (designed for nonacademic and academic needs)
3. Students advance at their own pace
4. Learner led (student agency helps them direct their own learning)

At the January 12, 2016, meeting, Illinois Representative Joe Sosnowski and Senator Lightford, presented bills that they authored. Representative Sosnowski's House Bill 3307 proposes the creation of a separate Illinois Virtual School for K–12 students that will supplement or complement courses that a local district offers to provide greater access for students, especially those in rural areas. A key component of Representative Sosnowski's bill is the establishment of an entity that would have oversight of curriculum, finances, and so on for the state's virtual school. It also would operate as a degree-granting institution, with all coursework developed by Illinois teachers. One of the main distinctions between the proposed virtual school and Illinois's current structure is that districts would not have the option to opt out as long as a course fulfills the state requirement.

Senator Lightford's bill, SB 1679, provides greater course access for students and districts that have limited options. The bill will allow public and charter school students to enroll in online courses delivered by a provider authorized through ISBE. Per the requirements of the bill, the state will create criteria, monitor, and provide public catalogs of courses available to all students. The funding structure outlined in the senator's bill allocates half of the payment to be paid by the district when students enroll in a course and the second half upon their course completion. Another important feature to this approach is that providers could be placed in probationary status if they failed to adequately deliver instruction.

Committee members also heard from state providers from Louisiana and Georgia during the January meeting. David Lefkowitz of the Louisiana Department of Education described the state's pioneering of the nation's first state-level course access program, which authorized both in- and out-of-state providers from both for-profit and nonprofit agencies. Members inquired about issues of quality, to which Lefkowitz explained that the state has been aggressive in weeding out inadequate providers. The state claims it also has been successful in its integration of career and technical education (CTE) courses.

Jay Heap, representing Georgia's Virtual Learning Program, also shared a presentation at the January 12 meeting. Heap outlined Georgia's three core program pieces: (1) virtual learning, (2) credit recovery, and (3) professional development. Georgia's course access program started in 2003 to provide greater access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. It is now available to all

students across the state, including home school and private school students. In the past several years, Georgia experienced numerous funding model reconfigurations. The latest resulted in a tuition rate mandated by the state. In 2012, Georgia passed Bill 289, which required that school systems notify parents of available online learning opportunities for students. Regardless of what courses were offered in the local school building, schools were prohibited from denying students access to virtual courses.

Just as support for course access grew over time in Georgia, virtual education has strong proponents and has experienced a groundswell of support across the country. Key benefits of virtual education include expanded access to talented teachers, customized learning, more flexibility for families, and improved school productivity (Lips, 2010). Despite the advancements and more widespread use of online courses, including blended learning frameworks, virtual education providers, authorizers, instructors, and end users still experience a number of challenges in implementation. Challenges range from inadequate funding to technology infrastructure or insufficient quantity or quality of instructional staff that need rectifying in order for more students to equitably access and benefit from all that online learning offers. The committee explored these implementation and funding structures during its review meetings.

State of the Illinois Virtual School

During the past seven years, Illinois has funded a single provider of state-approved online courses, the Illinois Virtual School (IVS). IVS has provided a high-quality online course option that guarantees children in public school districts, private schools, and home schools are taught by Illinois-licensed teachers and have access to research-based online student supports.

IVS was created and authorized by ISBE in 2000. The Peoria County Regional Office of Education (ROE) has held the ISBE contract for managing IVS since 2009. The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy managed the IVS (then called the Illinois Virtual High School) from 2003–09. There is no guiding statute governing IVS. Although IVS’s contract with ISBE expires in June 2016, it will continue to provide virtual services through an intergovernmental agreement with the agency through June 2017. This extension was granted in part to allow VERC time to develop a set of recommendations to improve virtual education access, structure, and funding sustainability.

IVS offers 142 supplemental courses, including 22 AP classes, five foreign languages, and others in the subject areas of business and economics, information technology, fine arts, health, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The 22 AP courses offered by IVS are approved by the College Board. All courses are supplemental, and IVS cannot grant diplomas. IVS partners with public and private schools, including home schools, to register students for courses, assess fees, and send records back to the students’ home schools for inclusion on their transcripts. All courses are taught by teachers who have been licensed by Illinois. Students in Grades 5–12 are eligible for IVS courses.

According to iNACOL data, less than 1 percent of students in Illinois are enrolled in a virtual course through the IVS. Despite IVS’s recent growth, it has not been successful with equitable enrollment distribution across the state. Students in underserved regions where teacher recruitment is more challenging and smaller enrollments make it more difficult to sustain a wide

variety of learning environments could benefit from access to IVS. However, often these schools are slightly underrepresented in IVS’s current portfolio. IVS has had recent growth, but its reach has not been equitably distributed across the state. Students in underserved regions where teacher recruitment is more challenging and smaller enrollments make it more difficult to sustain a wide variety of curricular options could benefit from IVS, but those schools are slightly underrepresented in IVS’s current portfolio (see enrollment data in Exhibit 1).

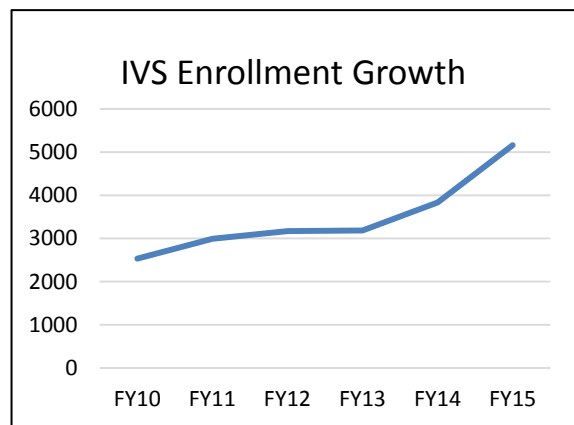
Compared with national enrollment figures, there is little virtual schooling taking place in Illinois. Only a small portion of the state’s eligible student population is benefiting from online courses, partly because of the existing funding mechanisms.

Before fiscal year 2014, the fee was \$250 per course. Most courses now have a fee of \$190, which IVS bills to the school. Next year, IVS will increase the fee back to \$250, with a small, graduated increase (to \$225) to be implemented this summer. A district’s local policy determines whether that fee is covered by the district or passed on to families. IVS also offers credit recovery courses at a fee of \$75 and professional development courses for teachers. IVS is funded through ISBE’s State and District Technology Support budgetary line item, with a level state appropriation of \$1.2 million in the General Revenue Fund and through course fees. In at least two years (FY 2011 and FY 2014), some federal funds were appropriated for specific professional development projects.

Exhibit 1 shows the number and growth of course enrollments, school partnerships, and state appropriations since the Peoria County ROE has managed IVS.

Exhibit 1. IVS Enrollment and Funding

	Enrollments	Schools	Appropriation (\$ Millions)
FY10	2,531	227	1.65
FY11	2,991	195	1.28
FY12	3,169	228	1.45
FY13	3,185	231	1.20
FY14	3,834	254	1.45
FY15	5,160	289	1.20



Note. Note. These numbers are at times inconsistent with ISBE budget books. IVS shared these numbers, which are believed to be accurate, with the committee.

Source. IVS internal data.

IVS tracks completion data and sends a survey to partner schools and enrolled students. The completion rate has been between 90 percent and 92 percent during the last four years (IVS, 2015, p. 3). Completion rate is the percentage of students earning 60 percent or higher. Nonstarters, students earning less than 10 percent, are not factored in the completion rate. The results of a recent partner school survey showed 94 schools reported being satisfied with the IVS program and services offered. Of the students who completed the survey, 76 percent said their

virtual course made them think and helped them learn. In addition, 73 percent said the amount of contact and feedback received from their online instructor was appropriate. However, although IVS received high satisfaction ratings, equitable access to online courses throughout the state is still lower than desired. Improving access to IVS for students, schools, and districts that might not be aware that virtual learning is an option or may not have the structural, resource, or human capacity to take advantage of the opportunity is an area of growth for IVS identified by the committee.

The Scope of the Problem

VERC members explored a number of challenges related to student and course access as well as funding and compliance that were considered in the development of their recommendations.

Course Access and Equity

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights has been tracking access rates to courses and gifted and talented programs for students nationally and across states since 1967. These data reveal gaps in core mathematics and science courses in Illinois’s high schools (Exhibit 2). The committee believes that the most critical driver for virtual education is ensuring course access and equity. The committee asserts three key findings related to access and equity that form the foundation for its recommendation.

Key finding 1: Every student deserves access to rigorous courses that prepare them for success in college in whatever discipline they choose to pursue, but too many students do not have access in their home districts to certain courses.

Exhibit 2. Illinois School-Level Course Access Data

Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry	Calculus	Biology	Chemistry	Physics
92%	78%	90%	53%	90%	78%	69%

Source. U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014.

In subjects such as Algebra II, which is widely considered the bar for college readiness in mathematics, 22 percent of Illinois schools lag behind (Achieve, 2008). Although demographic breakdowns are not available specific to Illinois, nationally, in schools with the highest percentage of African-American and Latino students, 74 percent offer Algebra II and 66 percent offer calculus, compared with 83 percent for Algebra II and 78 percent for chemistry in schools with the lowest rates of African-American and Latino students. Eighty-one percent of Asian students and 71 percent of White students attend schools that offer the full scope of mathematics and science courses, while just 57 percent of African-American students attend such schools (Achieve, 2008).

An advocacy group in Illinois recently undertook the process of collecting data from all high school and unit districts about the course offerings available in each district. The data were generated through Freedom of Information Act requests to districts. The full analysis is not completed as of the writing of this report, but a preliminary analysis of core courses shows that the following percentages of districts offer these courses (note that the U.S. Department of

Education analysis above represents *school-level* data and One Chance’s data are *district level*; Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Illinois District-Level Course Access Data

Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry	Calculus	Biology	Chemistry	Physics
96%	96%	95%	86%	100%	98%	96%
AP Biology	Precalculus	Statistics	Spanish	French	German	Chinese
30%	94%	59%	96%	32%	20%	7%
U.S. History	World History	European History	Non-European History	Civics/Gov’t	Economics	Computer Science
99%	89%	41%	15%	94%	39%	88%
Computer Programming						
25%						

Source. Preliminary information provided by J. Dwyer, policy director at One Chance Illinois, 2016. AP course access is another area of regional disparity. According to Dale Frost from iNACOL, 40 percent of districts report needing online learning because of a lack of certified teachers, often in rural areas. An ISBE-created map (Appendix C) shows the districts in the state in which 30 percent or more 12th-graders took an AP course (in green) and those in which less than 1 percent took an AP course (in red). IVS offers 22 AP courses approved by the College Board.

A 2013 report by the Illinois Education Research Council examined the 116,000 students in the 2003 graduating class and found that 13.6 percent had earned dual credit (Taylor & Lichtenberger, 2013). Rural districts and those in towns were more likely to offer dual-credit programs while districts in the southeastern and southwestern regions of the state were far more likely to have dual-credit programs. In addition, districts with higher minority populations were less likely to have high dual-credit participation (Taylor & Lichtenberger, 2013). Improving course access for rural districts and schools as well as those with high at-risk populations through more rigorous outreach and innovative funding mechanisms is needed.

Compounding the shortfalls in statewide dual-credit and AP course enrollment, staffing is a central barrier to students’ ability to access and participate in a dual-credit or AP class. A 2015 survey conducted by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools assessed

Key finding 2: Lack of access to courses has been and could be increasingly compounded by regional shortages of teachers in certain areas of licensure.

Key finding 3: IVS has expanded course offerings and student enrollments recently, but the regions of growth do not align with the regions of the states that have the most limited course offerings, teacher shortages, and poverty rates.

supply-and-demand trends in teaching positions in Illinois’s districts. Sixty percent of districts reported that they had trouble filling positions, and 76 percent indicated that they had

fewer applicants than needed for posted positions. Special education, mathematics, and science positions were the hardest to fill. In addition, high school and unit districts were more likely to have difficulty filling positions than elementary districts. Sixteen percent of districts indicated that they had to cancel courses because of an inability to staff teaching positions, and that figure rose to 20 percent for high school districts and 22 percent for unit districts (Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools & Goshen Education Consulting, 2015).

Funding

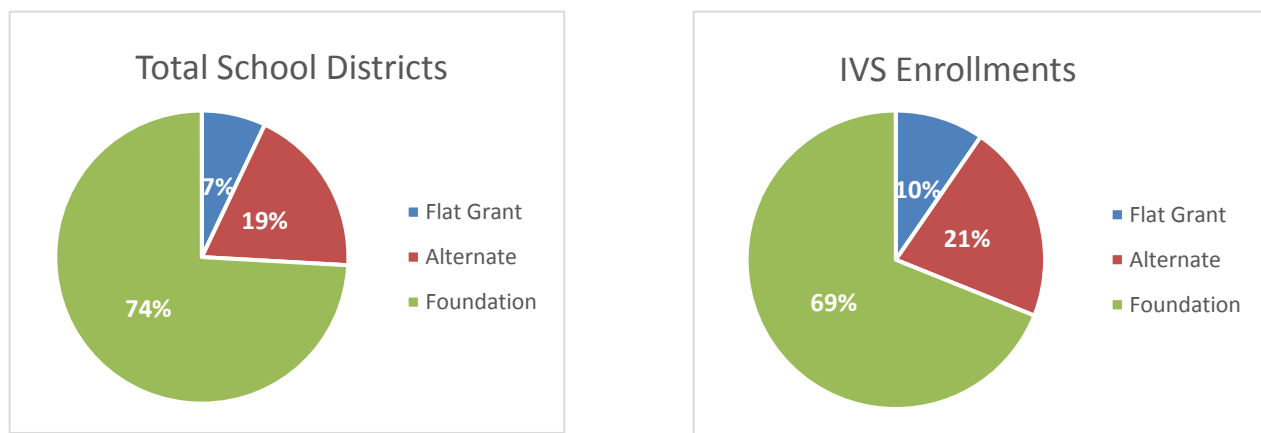
According to the committee chairperson’s analysis, based on publicly available data found on the ISBE website,¹ the fixed appropriation with fee model that is currently used in Illinois can present some equity barriers, prohibiting lower income districts and students from accessing online courses at the same rate as more affluent groups. For example, the average Available Local Resources (ALR) for all Illinois districts, weighted by student population, is \$5,913.55 per pupil. The average ALR for IVS partner districts, whose students are accessing online courses, weighted by number of IVS enrollments, is \$6,975.77. This figure is about 18 percent higher than the Illinois average. These data translate to more affluent districts benefiting most from the courses offered through IVS. The committee members strongly believe that providing equal access to online courses to underserved students and underresourced districts should be a priority for the state.

Using the categories of “Foundation,” “Alternate,” and “Flat Grant” districts² as a measure of local property wealth, wealthier districts are marginally more likely to participate in IVS courses. Of IVS’s 182 partner public school districts, 10 are Flat Grant (5.5 percent), 37 are Alternate (20.3 percent), and 135 (74.2 percent) are Foundation. This is similar to the split among districts overall, where 7.1 percent are Flat Grant, 18.8 percent are Alternate, and 74.1 percent are Foundation. However, of the number of enrollments (excluding Chicago Public Schools), 9.6 percent come from Flat Grant districts, 21.5 percent from Alternate districts, and 68.9 percent from Foundation districts (Exhibit 4).

¹ <http://www.isbe.net/funding/html/gsa.htm>.

² In Illinois, districts are categorized as “Foundation,” “Alternate Method,” and “Flat Grant” based on their available local resources for the purposes of calculating General State Aid. Foundation-level districts are those with the least local property wealth, bringing in less than 93 percent of the statutory Foundation level locally. Alternate method districts have more local wealth, generating between 93 percent and 175 percent of the Foundation level locally. Flat Grant districts have the most local resources, generating more than 175 percent of the Foundation level locally.

Exhibit 4. Course enrollments by category



In addition to access, equity, and funding challenges, the committee also identified two other tangentially related areas of concern that were deemed outside of the scope of its charge: the digital divide and compliance. The committee, however, recognized that addressing these two critical areas could indirectly improve access to virtual and blended learning and offered the following responses:

The Digital Divide. Members of the committee acknowledged that although technology offers myriad instructional benefits to students, there are serious constraints and challenges that make access to virtual courses challenging for underresourced districts. Members agreed that bridging the digital divide must happen in school buildings, with districts working to identify available resources to update their technological infrastructure, and in students' home environments, where a gap exists between families with access to devices and Internet access and families without this access. According to a recent Edutopia article, *Bridging the New Digital Divide* (Day, 2013), Internet and computer access are no longer the only components that can restrict some students from learning opportunities. According to Day,

There is a sharp socioeconomic division between those that have savvy technology professionals and the high-speed connections that can support WiFi-dependable tablets or computers, and those (schools) that lack these basic internal support structures for individual students, let alone the funds to purchase them for all students. Further, there is a divide between those students who have parents able to support their technology use and learning at home, and those who do not (2013, para. 5).

Although combating the digital divide in students' homes remained at the forefront of several discussions within the online learning industry, the committee focused its attention on the students (about 65 percent) enrolled in IVS who have their online courses integrated within the school day and who are provided a school-owned device to take the course. Many states, including Georgia, are combatting similar technology challenges in an effort to bring more online courses to a greater number of students. The committee decided that making recommendations to address the digital divide, although critical, was outside of the scope of this

report, but members supported a recommendation from iNACOL that districts' technology plans be guided by their instructional goals rather than the reverse. Further, the committee discovered that problems persist with the state's monitoring of ongoing barriers to technology access in schools, which warrants further exploration.

Compliance. VERC considered making recommendations about areas of flexibility that would enable more districts to use virtual and blended learning in innovative ways to improve outcomes for students in their districts. For example, Oswego SD 308 is piloting an innovative online learning program, contingent on receiving a waiver from the General Assembly, which allows high school students the ability to take up to 40 percent of their coursework online. The district has two types of students completing online courses: those wanting initial credit and then those who need credit recovery. Oswego's program emphasizes student choice and flexibility. The district would like to eventually see online learning integrated as part of its overall graduation requirements.

Although recognizing that district-level virtual programs are important avenues for increased virtual opportunities, the committee determined that other stakeholder groups currently exploring this approach were better suited to draw conclusions or make recommendations. (For example, ISBE's Districts of Innovation initiative would address concerns about district-specific flexibility. Also, the P-20 Council's College and Career Readiness Committee has released a report after years of work and stakeholder engagement that addresses improving postsecondary outcomes for students; one of the report's recommendations involves a pilot competency-based graduation program that moves away from "seat time" in classrooms toward proficiency in outcomes.) The committee decided not to issue any recommendations related to flexibility concerning compliance mandates, school-day schedules, and seat-time requirements out of deference to the groups that have already been engaged in those important conversations.

Other State Programs

About half of all states currently have some form of virtual school. However, quality and enrollment vary drastically. According to iNACOL's *Keeping the Pace with K-12: Digital Learning* (Evergreen Education Group, 2015), there are about 800,000 virtual course enrollments throughout the country and roughly 3.8 million courses offered throughout districts. The majority of these 3.8 million courses are in core subjects, 20 percent are electives, and less than 3 percent are in foreign languages. According to iNACOL, most online learning across the country takes place through district- and school-level programs. A 2015 survey estimated that although 432,000 students were enrolled in virtual school courses, 2.3 million additional students took an online course not affiliated with a virtual school (Evergreen Education Group, 2015).

Access Structures

States that support online learning programs do so primarily through two models: (1) virtual schools and (2) course access programs. Twenty-six states, including Illinois, have virtual schools and 13 have course access programs; six states have both (Evergreen Education Group, 2015). Virtual schools generally consist of a single provider operated by an SEA, independent governing boards, or education service provider that offer courses that districts can opt into to offer their students.

The course access program model generally consists of multiple providers that apply and receive approval from a board or agency, offering courses—many of which are blended programs—that students can take for credit either in or out of partnership with their home district, with public funding following the student to cover the costs (Evergreen Education Group, 2015). Course access programs are not identical to state virtual schools. Some differences include the following: (1) course access providers provide academic and CTE coursework (and many are out of state), and (2) course access offers all modalities, including blended learning, while virtual schools are typically online only. They also typically have a catalog or clearinghouse of courses where students go to find classes. iNACOL promotes course access because it creates a healthy, competitive atmosphere that results in better quality courses.

Another programmatic distinction in online programs across this country is that some states allow districts to decide whether they will accept credit from a virtual course, while others, like Florida, mandate that they do. According to iNACOL, those states with much higher enrollment rates prohibit districts from denying students credit. Further, they remove disincentives from districts to use a virtual school and mandated course credit. Proponents believe that course access alleviates disparities in access, creates opportunities for personalized learning, and allows states to only pay for courses that work. For example, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classes are in short supply, especially in rural areas; course access is a way to address that disparity.

Funding Structures

The committee reviewed models used by other states, as presented by Dale Frost from iNACOL at the February 16 meeting.

For most state virtual school models, there are two key funding appropriations for virtual schools:

1. **Fixed appropriation:** The dominant funding model utilized by states is a fixed appropriation, where no fees are charged to the district or families of students taking online courses, regardless of whether they are required for graduation credit. According to iNACOL, eight states are using this model. One drawback of this model is that it can result in long waiting lists of students wanting to enroll in courses.
 - Eight states have a fixed state appropriation and no fees at the student or school district level: Alabama, Hawaii, Iowa, Mississippi, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.
2. **Appropriation with fee:** The second most frequently used model is a fixed appropriation with a fee. With this mixed model, the state allocates a set rate for online courses with the added provision for partial course fees that are passed to the district, which may pass them to the family. Illinois currently uses this model.
 - Ten states, including Illinois, have fixed state appropriations plus a fee charged, usually to the district, which is often passed on to the student.
3. **Other structures:** While most states adhere to one of the more standard appropriation structures, there are a number that have developed alternative funding mechanisms.
 - Three states have funding based on the number of enrollments and completions (the dollars-follow-students model): Florida, New Hampshire, and Texas.

- Two states have a school district membership fee model: Alaska and Vermont.
- Wisconsin is entirely funded on course fees.

Following is a brief snapshot of some other key elements from state programs examined by the committee:

- Alabama: Utilizes a fixed appropriation funding structure for virtual schools.
- Florida: Florida operates the Florida Virtual School (FLVS). If a course is approved by the state, there are assurance mechanisms that ensure that districts have to accept the virtual course for high school credit. Florida uses a funding structure in which the money follows the student. FLVS has received numerous awards, including the Orlando Business Journal 2016 Technology IQ Award.
- Georgia: Georgia virtual school is a supplemental program that offers full-year enrollment for Grades 3–12. It is expected that during the next legislative session, the state will make taking an online course a requirement for students.
- Illinois: Illinois funds online courses through the fixed appropriation with fee funding structure. ISBE contracted IVS to serve as the state provider.
- Iowa: Last year, Iowa became the first state to adopt quality metrics for online schools in an effort to increase transparency. It is hoped that these data will provide insight on the impact of online learning on achievement gaps, which can further substantiate the value add of virtual education. Iowa is also a fixed appropriation state, although Iowa Learning Online was given legislative permission to charge districts some portion of the cost (but currently does not).
- New Hampshire: New Hampshire has fairly high utilization of virtual schooling. Its funding model is an enrollment-based formula that can grow with demand.
- Louisiana: Louisiana operates a course access program in which supplemental virtual courses are free to students and publicly funded by the state. The state has seen groundbreaking gains with AP and dual enrollment and completion rates are well over 80 percent.

VERC endeavored to investigate ways to ensure equal access to students across the state so that students from rural or remote areas or those with limited financial resources to pay for courses are not denied access to needed or desired virtual courses.

Additional Considerations

VERC reviewed policy research developed by respected national organizations and research on effective virtual education policies and practices. The following topics were discussed by the committee as additional considerations for their recommendations:

- **Monitoring to Ensure Quality and Rigor.** The committee agrees with the position of iNACOL in regard to monitoring to ensure quality and rigor. iNACOL recommends that states adhere to rigorous academic quality standards and that online programs follow state certification requirements. Further, the organization promotes the use of performance metrics to evaluate providers at the conclusion of courses. iNACOL also recommends collecting assessment data from core subjects as well as satisfaction surveys. These

measures are important to promote equitable access. When evaluating outcomes, iNACOL recommends looking at student proficiency and individualized student growth. This approach is especially important with multiple providers. A monitoring entity also should evaluate how a course is designed to determine quality and rigor.

- **Technology Utilization.** Technology allows instructors and learners to connect and interact in many innovative ways. Not only is technology the lynchpin for virtual education, but there are different applications used to support different models of online learning. There are generally two practices for online learning tools: (1) asynchronous communication and (2) synchronous communication. Asynchronous communication tools include media such as email and threaded discussion boards or other virtual posting. This format allows users to contribute at their own pace, on their own schedule. Synchronous technologies, such as live webcasting, chat rooms, and use of desktop webcams and built-in microphones, help create a virtual environment with real-time interaction. This modality is used to mimic the face-to-face teaching format to which most K–12 students are accustomed. Although earlier online programs tended to implement one model or the other, with more advanced technology tools, faster Internet speeds, and more savvy users, combination platforms have increased (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009).

Recommendations from the Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee

VERC discussed SB 1679 introduced by Senator Lightford and HB 3307 introduced by Representative Sosnowski and consulted with iNACOL subject matter expert Dale Frost. The committee acknowledged and referenced the bills and content expertise throughout the committee meetings.

The committee established the following set of fundamental principles that guided the development of recommendations on virtual education for Illinois:

1. Every student deserves access to rigorous courses that prepare them for success in college in whatever discipline they choose to pursue, but too many students do not have access in their home districts to certain courses.
2. Lack of access to courses has been and could be increasingly compounded by regional shortages in teachers in certain areas of licensure.
3. Although IVS has expanded course offerings and student enrollments have increased, the geographic areas of growth do not align with the regions of the state that have the most limited course offerings, teacher shortages, and poverty rates. Thus, more focus is needed in those areas to ensure equal access across the state.

As a result of presentations, discussions, questions, and a set of guiding principles, the committee reached consensus on eight recommendations. The committee recommends that ISBE (1) establish virtual course quality; (2) coordinate efficient and effective funding that improves access for low-income students; (3) establish appropriate district approval; (4) consider multiple providers; (5) provide requirements for instructor licensure; (6) expand supplemental courses through communication to students and families; (7) provide supplemental courses only, and (8)

make no graduation requirements related to online courses. The following recommendations are presented to the Governor and General Assembly.

Recommendation 1: Regulation of Virtual Course Quality

ISBE must oversee the quality of virtual courses and review relevant data to ensure rigor and excellence.

Quality should be at the forefront of any conversation about virtual learning. As the governing agency, ISBE should be tasked with ensuring that virtual courses offered through the state-approved education program be rigorous and of high quality. At a minimum, all courses must align with the Illinois Learning Standards and course quality standards, such as iNACOL's National Standards for Quality Online Courses. The state-approved education program currently tracks completion data, school utilization of the program, and survey responses from schools and students. ISBE should ensure that appropriate data are collected, reported, and reviewed regularly, which may include student growth data and AP test pass rates where applicable. The committee also determined that additional oversight by ISBE is needed to ensure the rigor of courses currently offered by IVS during the contract extension period.

Recommendation 2: Funding That Improves Access for Low-Income Students

No student should be denied access solely because he or she cannot pay for all or a portion of the course.

In addition to the fixed state appropriation, the current funding structure charges the same fee to students in every district, regardless of local wealth of the district or any special characteristics of the student. Each district decides whether to cover the cost of the course or to pass it on to families. The recommendation of the committee is for the state to adopt a funding structure that improves access for low-income students and high-poverty districts.

One option would be to index the fee assessed to districts to each district's poverty rate. The average cost per online course enrollment nationally is \$370. For example, IVS course costs range from \$325–\$345 and all participating districts receive a subsidy that brings their total fee to \$190 per enrollment. Rather than subsidizing all districts, the state could adopt a sliding fee scale, charging districts with 0 percent poverty the full course cost (approximately \$335) and districts with 100 percent poverty \$0. The formula for the fee could be:

$$(1 - [\text{district poverty rate}]) \times \$335 = [\text{district fee}]$$

As an example, for a district with a poverty rate of 75 percent, each course enrollment would cost \$83.75, calculated as follows:

$$(1 - 0.75) \times \$335 = \$83.75$$

The exception to this formulaic approach is the recommendation to include a minimum, nominal fee per student to ensure that either the student or district has some financial investment in the enrollment and therefore more of a commitment to course completion. The committee recommends incorporating a maximum cap on the poverty rate used in the calculation (e.g., less

than or equal to 90 percent or 95 percent) so that students or districts contribute between \$16.75–\$33.50 for each course. Or, the cost per course could be set at a minimum flat fee—for example, \$20 or \$25. The committee determined that cost should not be prohibitive for any student who wants to take a course, regardless of family income.

The committee further recommends that districts retain the discretion to either pay the course fee or pass it along to families. The exception would be for students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. These students should be eligible for fee waivers to cover course costs, ensuring that no student is denied access because of financial needs. In this fee-waiver structure, where course fees would have to be covered by the district, it would be prohibited for a district to deny a student access to a virtual course solely because of the waiver (i.e., if a district routinely allows students to opt into a virtual course, it should not be allowed to single out the low-income student and deny their enrollment solely because of the fee). For credit recovery courses, which are typically lower cost (IVS’s credit recovery fee is \$75 per course), the committee recommends that districts retain the ability to determine whether the fee should be passed on to families or covered by the district for all enrollments regardless of income.

As is a common practice in some state models, the committee recommends two payment installments made to the virtual provider: the first upon enrollment and the second upon successful completion of the course.

Recommendation 3: District Approval of Course Credit

Students taking courses for high school credit must usually have approval from their home districts. In instances where a student’s home district does not offer courses that are required for graduation, students may opt into a corresponding state-approved virtual course and have that credit recognized by their high school. We encourage districts to accept state-approved virtual education courses for credit, particularly when those courses further a student’s potential for college and career readiness.

IVS has a strong working relationship with districts in part because of its current structure to not “compete.” That partnership generally serves students well so that their online experience can be supplemented by on-the-ground support and advised by counselors who personally know the student and their readiness to enter into particular courses.

If a district does not offer one of these courses (or a course with a different name that includes this content) and a student wants to take the course through a state-mandated virtual provider, the district should recognize the credit the student earns. Also, because many colleges highly recommend the study of a foreign language for admission, any school that does not offer any foreign language courses should allow students to be able to take a foreign language course online and present it to the school for credit.

The committee recognizes that there needs to be some parameters to setting a requirement that the home districts recognize and assign credit for online courses in these limited subject areas. This credit requirement should apply only if the district does not offer the requisite course or if the student can demonstrate a genuine, compelling, and verifiable scheduling conflict. For example, a student cannot enroll in an online course to avoid the class of a particular teacher. A

process will need to be developed whereby students notify their district before enrolling in an online credit course.

Finally, students should be able to opt into any virtual courses independent of their district. However, the committee does not recommend mandating that a district recognize those courses for credit on the student's high school transcript. If students, for instance, want to independently take an AP class, pass the test, and earn college credit, they should have the opportunity to do so. If the district does not approve the enrollment, the student pays the fee and the course is not added to the high school transcript.

Recommendation 4: Multiple Providers

ISBE will have the ability to authorize multiple providers to offer virtual courses in addition to IVS.

The committee learned that most virtual learning in classrooms is happening through districts' own programs rather than through virtual schools. Some have partnered with neighboring districts to jointly contract with virtual learning providers. Others may lack the capacity or expertise to ensure the rigor and quality of a provider, but they may find value in an ISBE-approved list or clearinghouse of high-quality virtual course providers. ISBE should have the authority to approve multiple virtual providers; however, ensuring the quality of approved course providers must remain ISBE's priority. Oversight of approved providers should be rigorous, and ISBE should revoke the approval status of any provider that does not maintain the highest quality. iNACOL standards are broadly accepted indicators within the industry that many education agencies or providers use to develop, monitor, or measure virtual education programs (iNACOL, 2011). The committee recommends the adoption of a set of standardized criteria by which ISBE will measure virtual education. Quality Matters³ is another set of quality standards that ISBE could consult in setting provider criteria.

Recommendation 5: Instructor Licensure Requirements

Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher license.

Requiring virtual course teachers to be licensed in the applicable subject area is an appropriate safeguard to provide an additional assurance of quality and rigor.

Recommendation 6: Communication with Families

School districts should communicate to students and families about the availability of virtual courses.

Students and families cannot take advantage of virtual courses if they are unaware that they are available. However, the committee is sensitive to any new mandates on districts during this era of budget instability and funding concerns. The committee supports low-cost communication

³ Quality Matters Rubrics are intended for use with courses delivered fully online or those with significant online components (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/>).

methods, such as posting a link to the virtual school or provider website on the district's webpage where the district course catalog is outlined.

Recommendation 7: Supplemental Courses

State-approved virtual education programs provide supplemental courses only and will not be degree-granting institutions.

Two state virtual schools (Florida and New Hampshire) enroll students full time and grant high school diplomas. Most growth for online education is in the area of supplemental coursework. Although there may be instances where a full-time, degree-granting online program makes sense for an individual student, research about outcomes for students in full-time online programs has not been promising. In-school support for students enrolled in supplemental online courses is often key to that student's success in the course.

Recommendation 8: Online Course Graduation Requirements

Students should not be mandated to take an online course for graduation.

The 2015 report *Keeping the Pace With K–12 Digital Learning* by Evergreen Education Group indicates that five states require that students complete an online course before graduation. Because of the committee's guiding principle that virtual courses should be a mechanism for improving access rather than an outcome to strive for in and of itself, the committee does not support an online course requirement for Illinois.

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Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Appendix A

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Location 1

Illinois State Board of Education
100 N. First St.
Springfield, IL 62777
V-TEL Conference Room

Location 2

Illinois State Board of Education
100 W. Randolph St.
Chicago, IL 60601
V-TEL Conference Room

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Appendix B

Review Committee Meeting Minutes

- Minutes of Review Committee Meeting on November 19, 2015
- Minutes of Review Committee Meeting on January 12, 2016
- Minutes of Review Committee Meeting on February 16, 2016
- Minutes of Review Committee Meeting on March 7, 2016
- Minutes of Review Committee Meeting on March 28, 2016
- Minutes of Review Committee Meeting on April 7, 2016



Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary as Approved by Review Committee

Thursday, November 19, 2015

10:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Illinois State Board of Education, Conference Room 4 North B
100 North First St., Springfield, Illinois

Attendees

Task Force Members

Bryce Cann	Kimberly Lightford	Kate Shutter
Tim Dohrer	Scott Martensen	Sarah Slaughter
Cindy Hamblin	Joanne Osmond	Joe Sosnowski
Jessica Handy (Chair)	Dr. Nicholas Polyak	

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Staff

Jamey Baiter	Brian Houser
Lane Evans	Dora Welker

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff

Don Doggett	Jeremy Rasmussen	Rachel Trimble
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Presenters

Amy Huang	Dr. Judy Minor	Elizabeth Palatine
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Meeting Objectives

- Gain familiarity with the review committee members and charge.
- Establish norms and processes for working together and making decisions.
- Understand the concept of virtual online education in Illinois.

Opening

Our Charge

Ms. Jessica Handy, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Eleven members were in attendance and a quorum was present.

Ms. Handy provided an overview of an access bill that started with Senator Lightford earlier in the year. The bill pressed for a program that would allow the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to manage and approve different providers regarding virtual education.

Senator Lightford mentioned that there are core areas that do not offer some of the measures that were in the legislation. Because of this, a task force seemed like a good idea to discern what the needs are and how to address those needs.

Ms. Handy said that the charge in the legislation is for the task force to meet four times and review virtual education and course choice, which is going to include a discussion of virtual course access programs, including the ability for students to enroll in online coursework and complete courses. The task force is also going to look at funding mechanisms. The task force will eventually produce a report and talk more about what kind of outcome the task force should strive for. After the March meeting, the task force will produce a report for the general assembly.

Cindy Hamblin motioned for the by-laws to be approved, and Kate Shutter seconded. The task force members voted to approve these by-laws.

Ms. Handy said that virtual for the sake of virtual is irrelevant. She said the concept of *virtual* as an end goal for better outcomes for kids. The task force is looking at what is best for kids; that whatever the task force comes up with will have the result of a better outcome for kids through virtual and course change. She also mentioned the need to discuss roadblocks in state laws that make innovation difficult.

Presentations

The task force members then heard presentations from Ms. Hamblin on Illinois Virtual School Online Education (IVS)

Illinois Virtual School Online Education (Presentation by Cindy Hamblin)

Ms. Hamblin stated that IVS is a program of ISBE and has a contract with the state to deliver and manage virtual education programs throughout the state. The contract was awarded in 2009. The program does get an appropriation from the state board that covers about 50 percent of the operation as enrollment increases.

Ms. Hamblin stated that the mission of IVS is to provide quality online programs for students and educators to enhance opportunities for kids and educators. There are online course for grades 5–12. And the professional development arm provides online instruction to educators. The mission aligns with ISBE’s goal that every student will demonstrate academic achievement and be prepared for success after high school, even though the reality is that not all students fit that same mold. Some students need alternative options and alternative solutions; this might be access to courses to students in a remote education situation. The challenge is making sure that education is equitable for all kids.

Ms. Hamblin then asked how IVS be a solution for families, students, and schools. She went on to state that part of the solution is to provide courses that face-to-face schools don’t provide—world language and enrichment courses. Some districts can’t offer these courses because they are small and rural, so the goal here, she said, is trying to make it more equitable as far as access to courses. Schedules are flexible with virtual schools. Students failing can jump right back in any time of the year, any time of the month, instead of waiting. There are credit recovery options for students who failed to graduate on time; these students have 24-hour access to these courses.

Ms. Hamblin said IVS does have a number of courses—149. In those course options, IVS has 23 different Advanced Placement courses. Every course has a certified teacher teaching that course; IVS never assigns a teacher who is not qualified. The courses are NCAA approved and have board approval as well. The credit recovery courses are competency based; based on what students did not master, IVS has developed courses based on needs of the schools. Onset charge for tuition is \$190 for full service and \$70 for credit recovery. IVS does not award diplomas to students; IVS, instead, is supplemental. IVS has joined forces with public and private schools and also works with homeschool parents. The courses go on student transcripts as transferred credit.

Ms. Hamblin noted that IVS values their partnership with the schools and never try to compete; they serve as partners to expand those opportunities. Students make a course request, and the school has a registrar to help make the decision if it is a good option. Local mentors are identified, and staff can reach out to that mentor if needed.

Ms. Hamblin mentioned that their student information system is pretty robust. It shows if kids have pending requests; tracks the number of times they have logged in; and shows the registrar what's happening with students (they can log in). They can also see student pacing in terms of work completed. The student information system makes it easy to see where kids are at. There are different implementation models. Most students take the courses in conjunction with their face-to-face school as part of their school day.

Ms. Hamblin stated that Summer school is their biggest enrollment. There has been a huge increase over the last couple of years. She then provided some examples of schools: Gibault High School is using IVS to expand course opportunities. Indian Prairie in the DuPage area is a big user for summer school, with 520 enrollments over the summer. Southeastern High School has an enrollment of 211 kids. Southeastern High School could not secure a Spanish instructor, so they are using IVS for Spanish. Elmwood Middle School students use IVS to jump-start on world languages, Spanish, and world language survey.

Ms. Hamblin said that IVS is an original credit provider for Chicago Public Schools. Student enrollment has increased each year, ahead of the game. Social studies has the biggest enrollment for IVS with world languages following close behind. Completion rate is determined if students get 60 percent or higher, with the exception of a two-week grace period for students who drop out-- IVS takes those students out of the equation. IVS had a 92 percent completion rate. Credit recovery, at 70 percent, does not quite have that level of success. IVS's biggest partner is in Area 1, or Chicago. Farther down the state, there are fewer partnerships, IVS is trying to make its way farther south. Cindy Hamblin also stated that community awareness is where she sees the big difference; the community is pushing it—they want these opportunities.

Questions and Answers

Q: All the classes are taught by certified teachers? Is there a prescribed set for student-teacher ratio for all classes?

Ms. Hamblin: We have three kinds of teachers. We have teachers who teach face to face across the state. Those teachers have limited capability and manage around 25 kids. We have retired

teachers, and their limitations are based on hours [that] they are much more accessible during the day. We have stay-at-home parents, where enrollment is higher in French and they have more availability.

Q: How do you provide accessibilities for students who have disabilities?

Ms. Hamblin: The application process indicates if they have disability. We contact the school to get access to accommodations, which are then shared with the teacher.

Q: Is there any contact with the student's case manager?

Ms. Hamblin: Yes, if the school provides that.

Q: Do homeschool parents work with the program even if they are not registered in their district, and do schools have to approve them?

Ms. Hamblin: If it is a true homeschool, then, actually, the parent is requesting and approving that. Homeschool students are not going to get a diploma; we tell them that. They do not associate themselves with a school in the application process.

Q: So, how does it work when they are registered with a school district?

Ms. Hamblin: When a student completes an account, they see every partner school listed in the application. Students select what local school they are participating in, and we e-mail that school to confirm.

Q: When schools deny students, is any of it based on lack of funding?

Ms. Hamblin: That is up to the school—whether the school pays or the parent pays. [It is] about 50/50.

Q: What do you suggest on how to ensure that districts approve more students than not?

Ms. Hamblin: Communication and experiencing what an online course is like; we need to do a better job of making that experience more available.

Q: ELs—how do you accommodate them?

Ms. Hamblin: It's a little trickier with Hispanic students [and] kids taking Spanish courses, so we convert that a little bit, but actual content remains in English.

Q: What platform are you running on?

Ms. Hamblin: Brightspace by D2L (Desire to Learn).

Q: Does the multimedia play well with all platforms—Apple, Chrome, etc.?

Ms. Hamblin: Constant changes in technology can make it difficult, trying to stay on top of that as well as accommodations.

Q: What is the course-review process like?

Ms. Hamblin: We use Quality Matters, a national group that puts their stamp on course design [and] looks at objectives and accessibility. We use that as our design guidebook. We don't design all of the courses; some are designed in-house, and sometimes we license content providers.

Q: How do you market your product?

Ms. Hamblin: Ongoing communication with partner schools; we lack communication with schools we don't partner with. We also use fliers, press releases, and attend conferences.

Q: Have you explored strategies to market directly to students? And when you market to schools, is part of your strategy [to educate] them on who is the best fit for your program?

Ms. Hamblin: Let me answer your second question first. Our website has a student readiness rubric to make sure the guidance counselors or whoever understands if it is a good fit—time management, ability, homework—we look at those kinds of indicators. Access is another one—if they have it at home or not. In marketing to students, we have focused our marketing more directly to schools; we want it to come from a school partnership—to get them on board first, before the student.

Q: Is grading more traditional, standards based?

Ms. Hamblin: It varies by class. It is more traditional than competency based, standards are addressed, and we make sure there is good alignment between assessment and objectives and that they are aligned with the new IL learning standards.

Dr. Minor then gave a presentation on the Oswego School District 308 virtual Online Program

Oswego School District 308 virtual Online Program (Presentation by Judy Minor & Elizabeth Palatine)

Dr. Minor began by stating that their work with online learning is the result of a memorandum of understanding and was approved by a waiver from the general assembly. The Oswego School District is the seventh largest school district in the state serving roughly 18,000 students. Online learning was identified as a district priority. The Oswego online vendor was Edgenuity; they first used it primarily for credit recovery, but it has since then evolved.

Dr. Minor stated the Oswego program is cohesive and no longer just for credit recovery, though they still offer that. It's fundamentally educational restructuring. She emphasized that the program offers student choice and flexibility. Oswego would like to eventually see online learning as part of their overall graduation requirements. The language in their waiver looks like one statement, but that statement is actually part of two waivers granted. Judy Minor offered to show the taskforce what the waiver looks like to anyone interested. The waiver allows high school students the ability to take up to 40 percent of their coursework online. She then mentioned that there are two kinds of students completing online courses: those wanting initial credit and then those who need credit recovery. Currently, the Oswego program has 156 high

school students taking courses for initial credit, and have many more doing the credit recovery piece.

Dr. Minor said she wanted to be very clear that this is something on which we are working in partnership with our teachers association. Oswego teachers are evaluating; they are looking at standards. This is part of the Oswego curriculum review cycle. This is also something Oswego teachers are participating in. They are critical in the oversight and in the delivery. Oswego sees virtual education as a different mode of delivering education to students. The partnership is also composed of district administration and OEA leadership. It began as a pilot program in the summer. Oswego used structures from Edgenuity because they lacked the internal capacity. During the school year, Oswego established an online learning committee. Oswego teachers worked with Edgenuity; they received training and learned how online learning looked as a blended platform. After that, the Oswego board of education had the foresight to see the potential and approved four online courses. These courses were selected by the online learning committee, who focused on courses that weren't dependent upon prerequisites.

Oswego's first summer group was small, but it evolved to having 127 students engaged in online learning for additional credit. The pass/success rate was not too bad for the first go-around. The Oswego summer school was solely delivered online. This school year, those four online courses that had been previously approved by the board were taught by Oswego teachers and had 81 students. To grow this, Oswego received the waivers from the general assembly. The informal committee then became a formal committee and meets monthly to monitor the work.

Dr. Minor stated that there is a distinct difference between how credit recovery students and students taking initial credit achieve success through online learning, which they keep track of. Health and consumer science are some of the more popular courses. As the program went on, Oswego not only saw more students taking these courses but also more teachers getting involved as well. Judy Minor also mentioned they are looking at adding online PE as well as geometry and history as potential online courses.

Dr. Minor said that as far as statistics go, they separated it out from initial credit to credit recovery. Oswego has a system of support called AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). Oswego wanted to make sure high school AVID teachers had online learning experience. Oswego also has something called Course Zero, where students have the ability to add an additional course. They are now looking to deliver this into a night school delivery model in which students might be able to come in later (e.g., students come in at 10:30 and go to 5:30) as a way to add extra flexibility. This would make things more flexible for teachers as well.

Dr. Minor also stated that they have something called the Oswego Success Lab for credit recovery students, which gives students more time to complete coursework. Oswego has a teacher [who] acts as a quasi coordinator, who checks to see if the students are on track. For now, Oswego suggests that students who are participating in the recovery program do so on site, and as they show they have a comfort level, there is a gradual release. Oswego also recommends they take at least one summer school online course.

Dr. Minor said that one of the challenges was working around when the waiver was granted. The waiver received was granted that spring, and students had already enrolled in classes that

previous winter. Oswego had to do a lot to show students what a great opportunity this was. With the new registration cycle starting, Oswego expects more students. Judy Minor then suggested that it is key to do an analysis of infrastructure, supports, and interface. It is also critical about what courses make the best sense for dual credit. Oswego is having a new conversation about what courses make the best sense for night school. Finally, Oswego put forth another waiver: All students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 are now eligible for high school classes.

Ms. Palatine said one concern they had is that they wanted to make sure teachers would be the ones teaching the classes. The other concern she mentioned was in making sure they had the data to back up support as they moved forward. This was why the waiver allowed four classes for the first year and five classes for the second year.

Dr. Minor then added that they visited other districts engaged in online learning. They took a field trip to other districts with virtual schools to see their multi-tiered systems of support, product development, registration practices, logistics, and virtual PLC support. She said that advance planning is a must; they started small and grew strategically and systematically.

Questions and Answers

Q: Regarding middle school students earning high school credit: Do you see that progressing as a student potentially being done with high school requirements as a sophomore or junior?

Dr. Minor: We would need to restructure what the senior year looks like at the high school level. For students who want to choose this opportunity, you could take college credits and roll them down to the high school, and they could finish with an Associate of Arts. Students could use their senior year for mentoring opportunities, engaging in research, capstone, etc.

Q: Teachers' days are already full. How did you get them involved?

Ms. Palatine: I think a lot of the younger teachers with online experience took it upon themselves. If somebody wants to teach an online class, we make that part of their teacher load; however, if a teacher would want to teach an online course in addition to their teacher load, there would be some kind of stipend.

Q: Has this been cost neutral for you guys?

Dr. Minor: We utilized Edgenuity, not paying anything in addition.

Q: Did you hire more counselors or support?

Dr. Minor: We are looking into that; it is one of the areas that our board has looked at consistently.

Q: What sort of supports are in place?

Dr. Minor: Multi-tiered systems of support for online learning; Chapter Zero—tell students what they might not know about the program; as they engage in the coursework, if we find that they

are not meeting benchmarks and deadlines on the way, that's when the teacher becomes a little more hands on.

Q: If students are able to take 40 percent of classes off-site, do you give the flexibility to teachers?

Dr. Minor: That's what we are evolving [as] part of the conversation around the table. Teachers start at 10:30 and end at 7:30; that should be fine.

Q: Do teachers have a choice to do it on- or off-site?

Dr. Minor: That has not been part of the conversation, but it will be.

Q: Exclusively online, or is there a mix?

Dr. Minor: The teachers are the experts; they get to make that recommendation [because] they know best.

Q: What about completion data? Do you have anything on that—blended versus online?

Dr. Minor: Teachers have access to Edgenuity. Teachers can pull out some of that data.

Ms. Huang then gave a presentation on LEAP Innovations Learning Exponentially

A Personalized Learning Approach: LEAP (Presentation Amy Huang)

Ms. Huang said that LEAP's premise is that education today should not look like it did 100 years ago. Not all kids learn the same way. The challenge for teachers is that they need to find ways to accommodate all modes of student learning. The LEAP program launched in 2014 with the mission to support teachers and principals implementing personalized learning. They looked at research local and nationally, which revealed that tutoring one-to-one in small group works significantly. Amy Huang said they can't mimic this for every student, but the question is how can we best do this?

Ms. Huang stated that over the last few years, there has been a trend toward personalized learning. With personalized learning, they transfer learning models by providing individualized learning paths for every student. LEAP also looks at how they can change the learning environment so that it's flexible and dynamic to the student's needs. LEAP really believes in the concept of student agency. They think about how they can drive students to earn their learning. In a personalized learning environment, teachers have access to tools and a curriculum that allows them to have more time to work with students and to plan on their own and work collaboratively with other teachers. Providing immediate feedback is one of the most critical learning tools for students. Instead of the one-size-fits-all learning approach, LEAP believes that personalization will tailor learning to all students.

In the last few months, LEAP has really developed its personalized learning framework. It has four main pillars:

1. Learn anytime, anywhere (virtual learning and gaining life experience through internships, etc.)
2. Competence learning focus (designed for both nonacademic and academic needs)
3. Students advance at their own pace
4. Learner led (student agency helps them direct their own learning)

Ms. Huang said they see that some schools have been doing this for a while, and some are just starting to do this and are really excited by the outcomes. One school LEAP works with is in the west Sheldon Salnick neighborhood of Chicago. They worked with their principal and their teaching team to really change their entire teaching model. The teaching team came up with the concept of a multi-age classroom grouped by learning needs. Students are progressing through these multi-age classrooms using competency-based models.

Ms. Huang noted that a key piece to help districts and schools build their capacity is LEAP Collaboratory, which holds professional development opportunities for teachers and principals. LEAP offers events for peer-to-peer networking; they also bring together EdTech (education technology) companies to expose educators to what technology is out there. Lastly, with their collaboratory they have roundtable events where they connect with the learning science and tech companies and with thought leaders to help inform product development.

Ms. Huang said that their second program, called the LEAP Pilot Network, provides online coaching and network strategies and also identifies needs of schools and schools that might be interested in piloting. Once accepted into the program, there is a six-month training program in which they learn about personalized learning strategies. And then we teach them about setting up a project plan. Amy said they arrange a match day for EdTech companies and schools to meet. LEAP helps gather a lot of data to see how schools are progressing and how EdTech programs are having an impact on personalized learning. They then share this data publicly with the school district. Breakthrough schools is a next-generation learning challenges program in which we provide grants to schools to help them with the redesign process.

Questions and Answers

Q: Is this program only for elementary [schools]?

Ms. Huang: We started with elementary, but this spring we will be starting to pilot high school.

Q: Who is your provider?

Ms. Huang: We do not provide online services; we point to vendors who do have it. For pilot network schools, we have companies apply.

Closing Comments

The Task Force members were then asked to offer closing comments and questions for consideration.

Mr. Dohrer: We are looking at models that mimic or mirror what we see in traditional schools. One thing to think about is how we help provide schools, administrators, and parents to accept online learning and see the possibilities. The other hard part is to think about how schooling looks different now than it did for us. What does education look like in the future, and how do we navigate it across the state?

Ms. Handy: Are there any other panelists or programs or anything [else] you would recommend for us to hear about in the course of our work over the next few meetings? Any other suggestions for information we should have?

Mr. Dohrer: Piece together all the different ideas—that is, one to one, dual credit. I think it might be helpful to have a level of understanding about these other aspects that touch upon virtual learning so we can see the whole “lay of the land.”

Ms. Handy: There are a couple of other task forces doing parallel work: one on seat time and [one on] competency-based education. A lot of what we are talking about might fit in with what they’re doing.

Ms. Hamblin: It would be good to hear from other states that have gone down this path and what they’re doing. We could take a broad look and then deep dive.

Dr. Polyak: Who could advise this? Who could give us suggestions on school code tweaks to provide this flexibility?

Mr. Cann: My school is part of a consortium that provides virtual school opportunities. It is unique in the fact that it is a consortium.

Best Dates for Next Meetings

- January 12
- February 16
- March 7

Open for Public Comment

The meeting was opened for public comment. There were no public comments.

Closing

Jessica Handy motioned for the meeting to adjourn, and Nicholas Polyak seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.



Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary as Approved by Review Committee

Tuesday, January 12, 2016

1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), V-TEL Conference Rooms, Chicago and Springfield, Illinois

Attendees

Task Force Members

Bryce Cann
Tim Dohrer
Ken Dunkin
Cindy Hamblin
Jessica Handy (Chair)

Kimberly Lightford
Scott Martensen
Joanne Osmond
Dr. Nicholas Polyak
Monique Redeaux Smith

Mathew Rodriguez
Chaya Rubenstein
Kate Shutter
Sarah Slaughter

ISBE Staff

Jason Helfer
Brian Houser

Sarah Ogeto
Jamey Baiter

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff

Nicol Christie
Don Doggett

Jeremy Rasmussen
Rachel Trimble

Presenters

Dale Frost
Jay Heap

David Lefkowitz
Joe Sosnowski

Meeting Objectives

- To understand the concept of virtual online education (in Illinois and other jurisdictions).
- To understand course-access programs, including the ability of students to enroll in online coursework and access technology to complete courses.
- To establish norms and processes for working together, making decisions, and reaching consensus.

Opening

Our Charge

Ms. Jessica Handy, chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Fourteen members were in attendance and a quorum was present.

Ms. Handy stated that the task force's charge is to review virtual education, school choice, and virtual course access programs and the ability to enroll in them. She also said that the task force will be discussing best practices and potential hurdles that will be reported to the Illinois General Assembly. She then asked task force members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting on November 19, 2015.

The motion to approve the meeting minutes was approved by Senator Lightford and seconded by Cindy Hamblin.

House Bill 3307

(Presentation by Representative Sosnowski and Mr. Dabrowski)

Representative Sosnowski talked about the mechanics of House Bill 3307. In summary, this bill would create a separate Illinois virtual school for K–12 as a supplement or complement to a district and provide greater access to coursework that might not be available to more rural districts. Fundamentally, the idea was to address needs of quality, access, and affordability as well as equitable access. Also, it allows for more professional development to occur on a more comprehensive statewide basis. Essentially, this bill would call for another organization that would have a board of trustees responsible for oversight, curriculum, finances, and so on. In essence, the virtual school would be funded through ISBE, with most of it covered by charging fees to homeschool families and the resident school district. All coursework would be produced by teachers and the process by which virtual schools offer support to local districts would be outlined. The most important objective of the virtual school is to create an organization that could thrive independently and supplement districts with a lack of financial resources. Also, it would be a degree-granting institution; students could graduate from the virtual school with a high school degree.

Mr. Dabrowski then discussed the purpose and reasoning behind House Bill 3307.

Mr. Dabrowski has done a lot of research on achievement gaps and has discovered that students are two to four years behind academically in Illinois. He sees virtual schooling as a critical component to help close the achievement gap. It would be impossible under conventional teaching practices to get all students caught up. Virtual education could be the tool that helps close that gap. Virtual education also might prove useful in terms of college and career readiness. The challenge is that quite a few districts heavily rely on state government money, which will make funding tough. Half of the school districts would have to get 40 percent or more in support from state and federal sources, not only to enhance access but also to bring down the cost. Georgia Tech was one of the first institutions of higher education to offer a virtual, online master's degree in computer programming, completely online and at a quarter of the cost of attending a brick-and-mortar institution. At some point we are going to have to figure out how to make Illinois one of the innovators in virtual education.

Questions

Q: What are the differences between your proposal and the existing virtual school that Cindy Hamblin is a part of? It seems that your proposal would have an independent board of trustees whereas where the virtual school that Cindy is a part of is run by ISBE, correct?

Ms. Hamblin: We have a contract with the state.

Q: It also seems that this would be a degree-granting institution whereas the one that Cindy is a part of is purely supplemental, correct?

Rep. Sosnowski: Yes.

Q: Are those the only key differences?

Ms. Hamblin: Currently, schools have the ability to deny being a part of our virtual school; this bill would safeguard access and the school would not be able to vote yes or no.

Rep. Sosnowski: As long as the courses fulfill state requirements, a school could not object.

Ms. Hamblin: The funding mechanism is different too. With our program currently, the school can pay for it or pass it off to parents. In the virtual school that Representative Sosnowski is proposing, there would be a more structured funding mechanism coming from the school.

Senate Bill 1679

(Presentation by Senator Lightford and Mr. Dwyer)

Senator Lightford provided a background of Bill 1679. The purpose of the bill is to allow students and districts that have limited course options greater access to a broader variety of courses. It's modeled after a bill in Louisiana. There is a funding piece that is being requested at this point. The bill would allow students and charter schools to enroll in online course by a provider authorized through ISBE. The state board would authorize the course provider, create criteria, and maintain public catalogs of courses that would be available for students to access. The cost of these courses would be negotiated by the provider and state board, which transfers

payment to the provider on behalf of the responsible school district. Providers would receive half of the cost of tuition upon a student enrolling in the program and the second half of tuition upon the student's successful completion of the course. That idea was put forth to a committee, and a significant amount of discussion followed. For instance, at one of the committee meetings, it was suggested that the providers should be required to have certified teachers teach the online courses. At another meeting, the committee wanted clarity on a number of items. These items include the following: only want high school students to participate, required transportation should be provided by the course provider for students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and an appeal must be made to local school board when a student is denied enrollment in a course.

Mr. Dwyer then added to Senator Lightford's talking points. He said the idea is to give students access to courses via the marketplace. It isn't only geared toward online education. One of the big components is career and technical education (CTE). In terms of going through the committee, the amendment about teacher certification was offered. There was some pushback on that element, especially considering CTE teachers. It seems like a burden to make them get a license. The program could start with juniors and seniors. In the first year, districts could choose whether to participate; then, after a year, it would go statewide and districts could not opt out at that point. Students could take up to two classes. They could take a third class if they felt it made sense for them or if they paid out of pocket. Private school and homeschooled students also could have access to this marketplace, but they would have to pay out of pocket. One of the things that is unsettling about the bill is its performance funding component. Fifty percent of the money is received upfront; the other half is received for meeting certain benchmarks. Another important piece is that providers can be put on probationary status if they fail to deliver instruction effectively and would have to prove to the state board that they have changed their ways. This wasn't included in the bill, but Stanford University produced a study on different funding mechanisms. One was where a provider would have a base price (no matter how well a student does, you pay that price), which would then be followed by a performance-based price. ISBE would look at these bids from potential providers and take into account the highest performance-based price. This concept wasn't included in the bill, but it was something we considered.

Questions

Ms. Handy: It is interesting that you have more than just virtual school in your bill. That's something we might want to explore. The funding mechanism keeps coming up as well; performance based is interesting.

Q: You are high school only, correct?

Mr. Dwyer: Yes.

Dr. Helfer: Basically, the state approves providers and districts would then tell the family if they were going to accept credit from providers, which are from other states. The purpose of approaching it in that way would not be for a student to receive an education through virtual education alone, but rather the virtual school would offer course options that that school district couldn't offer or it could help bypass a scheduling conflict. So, the requirement of having an

Illinois-certified teacher becomes problematic, it's problematic in terms of if you want to increase the scope of access.

Ms. Handy: So, another policy lever to consider are the certification requirements.

Virtual Education in Other States

(Presentation by Mr. Frost)

Mr. Frost, from iNACOL, started by saying that in Florida Virtual School, if it's an approved course, there are assurance mechanisms that districts will have to accept the virtual course for high school credit. Other states do allow districts to decide whether they want to accept credit from virtual courses or not. The mission of iNACOL is to catalyze the transformation of K–12 policy and practice to advance personalized learning and experiences through competency-based blended and online learning. From a school district standpoint, three quarters of school districts use online learning to offer some Advanced Placement (AP) or college-level courses, which means it already is being widely used. Forty percent of school districts say they need online learning due to a lack of certified teachers; this need is often found in rural areas. Sixty percent of districts use online learning for credit recovery and 50 percent of districts use online learning for scheduling conflicts. There are lots of benefits and flexibility for school districts and also for students. Online learning can provide personalized learning experiences for all types of students—English language learners, special educators, and those who need credit recovery—or accelerate students. There is high-quality online learning and there is poor-quality online learning; there need to be high standards upfront that are upheld to a high level of accountability. About half of the states have some form of virtual schools, but enrollment varies dramatically. In Illinois, there is very little use of virtual schooling when taking into account the total population of students in the state. Funding mechanisms for virtual courses in Illinois might explain why the state doesn't have high enrollment in these types of courses. New Hampshire is a state with fairly high utilization of virtual schooling. It has a funding model that is enrollment based and is taken out of district budgets. There are about 800,000 virtual enrollments throughout the nation and about 3.8 million courses throughout the districts, a lot of which is happening locally and organically throughout districts. A vast majority of these 3.8 million courses are in core subjects, about 20 percent are electives, and 2.5 percent are in foreign languages. All students at all grade levels can benefit from virtual schools. But for supplemental courses, the vast majority of students are in high school.

The first funding model is fixed appropriation where there are no fees charged either to the district or the families of the students. There are about 10 states that use this funding model, Alabama included. The fixed appropriation can result in waiting lists. Another model is appropriation with a fee; Illinois is one of those states. Fees could go to the district or to families. A concern from an equity perspective is that this method might exclude low-income families. Florida and Texas have a funding model akin to Senator Lightford's bill where the funding follows the student. New Hampshire has a model based in the state; it doesn't come from district budgets and is a formula-based model that can grow with demand. Arkansas and Vermont have a member-fee arrangement, and Wisconsin is purely based on course fees. With Illinois' fiscal challenges, there is no easy answer here.

The Illinois Virtual School has grown significantly. It had about a 40 percent increase in the last year in enrollments. The state is still at a budget impasse, which makes any funding discussion really challenging. In regard to opportunity gaps, 53 percent of high schools offer calculus in Illinois. So, making courses such as calculus available is a large value added for the state. In terms of quality assurance, iNACOL recommends that there be rigorous academic quality standards. Online programs should follow state certification requirements and there should be performance metrics on the back end. Also, assessments across core subjects and data from surveys should be included. It's also important to allow for equitable access.

Questions

Q: Online courses always mean fewer full-time-equivalents (FTEs). And when I look at the list of the high-user states, a lot of them are “right to work” states. Can you speak to that and how that plays out in terms of playing nice with unions?

Mr. Frost: You need to figure out what works in your political context. That relationship between teacher and student is so fundamental. Virtual education can actually be very collaborative; it can help teachers take some of the brunt work away and allow them to further establish connections with their students. There is some fear from teachers that virtual education will replace their jobs. There is no easy answer here though. Alabama might be a good model to look at for this question.

Q: Do the higher enrollment states have assurances in place where districts have to accept credit from state-approved vendors?

Mr. Frost: Most of the states with much higher enrollment rates prohibit districts from denying students for various reasons. Some of the higher enrollment states take away any disincentives for districts to use.

Louisiana’s Course Access Program

(Presentation by Mr. Lefkowitz)

Mr. Lefkowitz described course access as a state-level program that was pioneered in Louisiana. Students have access to both in- and out-of-state providers and both for-profit and nonprofit providers. It offers both academic and CTE courses. One of the big areas of enrollment in course access has been ACT prep courses. In terms of quality control, if providers are not doing what they are supposed to, it is immediately transparent. Louisiana has been very aggressive in weeding out inadequate course providers. Courses are free to students and are publicly funded. Returning to a question earlier: Why is it that the teachers union shouldn't necessarily be concerned about course access? Students taking online courses they could otherwise take at school is a legitimate concern. However, course access is a supplemental program and offers students opportunities that are not currently available. Course access alleviates access disparities, personalizes learning, allows states to only pay for courses that work, and expands learning opportunities for students. For example, STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] classes are in short supply, especially in rural areas; course access is a way to address that. Louisiana also has made groundbreaking gains with course access in regard to AP

and dual-enrollment courses. CTE also has been a big part of course access. Course access is not a state virtual school; some differences are: (1) course access providers are academic and CTE, and many of them are out of state; and (2) course access offers all modalities, and virtual schools are typically online only.

Questions

Mr. Frost: Louisiana has grown to 20,000 enrollments very quickly with its course access model. It also really incentivizes this through its accountability system, so districts want to use these courses. If you have really rigorous quality, then sometimes educators feel a little more at ease.

Q: So, Louisiana does not have a virtual school, correct?

Mr. Lefkowitz: We had one that we terminated when we created course access. We couldn't have one of our own course providers be one of the competitors.

Q: Does any state have both?

Mr. Frost: I think Florida might.

Mr. Lefkowitz: I don't know; none that work have in-house competition.

Q: You talked about effective enrollment, but there seem to be very little to no data on successful completion. Do you have those data?

Mr. Frost: Michigan has been doing studies on completion rates. I can send you that report.

Mr. Lefkowitz: Our completion rate is high. The completion rate is well over 80 percent.

Georgia's Virtual Learning Program

(Presentation by Mr. Heap)

Mr. Heap began by stating that there are three core pieces to Georgia's virtual learning program: the virtual school, the credit recovery program, and the professional development program. The program started in 2005. It seemed like a good way to provide course access, such as AP courses, to students. It is available to all students across the state and also services homeschooled students and private schools. The program works with an FTE plus tuition model. For the first year, the program was funded for 1,500 segments. The program then received a midyear adjustment to about 2,000 segments. The program had a successful start. Since then, the program has moved to two different funding models. The original funding model was that the line item of the appropriations came directly to the department and it was on an FTE basis—the dollar figure was based on the number of enrollments. This model was used until 2011. In 2012, there was legislation that removed the FTE component from the public schools and changed it into a tuition model. The appropriation from the budget did not change, but school districts now receive full FTE and just return to the state a portion of the FTE. In 2012, Georgia passed Bill 289 that required school systems to notify parents of their online learning options; it allowed students to select virtual school courses regardless of what was available at the local school (in other words,

schools could not deny students access to virtual courses). The bill also created a clearinghouse, but it was unfunded, so it's a very basic model. The program has been able to bring on the teachers it needs along with good support staff. There are no limits; it is a supplemental program, so it does not grant diplomas, but there are students who take the majority of their classes online for various reasons. In the upcoming legislative session, the department will try to make some changes to the bill. For example, it will make an online course a requirement for students. The reason being college and career readiness, which more and more is requiring the ability to learn online. Right now, regarding the tuition rate mandated by the legislation, the Georgia State Board of Education would like to see that rate established by them instead so that it can be adjusted if needed. The original legislation also states that the virtual school would be a Grade 3–12 online provider. The board would like to change it so they could provide K–5 learning objects. The Georgia State Board of Education also would like to change the law in a way that would allow them to carry over tuition funding in order to grow the next year. The program works with schools to provide options and opportunities. Full-year enrollment is available; the program offers a large course selection and its supports facilitators at each school with a dedicated support staff. Some of the challenges experienced include the following: Some schools lack bandwidth and the department of education is the only group that teaches and provides the learning experience for students, which can create issues working with existing human resources policies. Teacher recruitment and evaluation are ongoing challenges. There is an 82 percent completion rate and an 80 percent pass rate.

Questions

Q: Are school districts allowed to pass tuition costs onto families?

Mr. Heap: If they are taking courses outside of school day, then they can.

Q: Are there any data on virtual online learning and narrowing/closing achievement gaps?

Mr. Heap: I don't have any data directly addressing achievement gaps.

Q: Can we get this information?

Mr. Frost: Iowa just this last year became the first state to adopt quality metrics for online schools to increase transparency so we can see things like online learning and achievement gaps.

Q: What's an object versus a course?

Mr. Heap: Learning objects are videos, teacher presentations, and small chunks of material (i.e., cell division)—all objects put together create a course.

Q: Do we have a source of those objects?

Mr. Frost: Some states provide some of the modules.

Ms. Hamblin: We develop at the course level rather than the object level.

Ms. Hamblin: The problem with achievement gap data is that students can take one course and then they are out. We don't have data over the long term.

Ms. Handy: There are a couple of different buckets of online learning: The kid who wants to take AP courses who doesn't have access; the kid who wants to take Mandarin Chinese. There also is the credit recovery option. To me, those are fundamentally different populations of people that we should be serving.

Ms. Handy then reminded the task force that there are two more meetings, one in February and one in March.

Mr. Doggett then asked the task force to reflect on today's presentations and to add thoughts to the reflection sheet. He said it also is time for the task force to start thinking about how to reach consensus going forward when it's time to start making recommendations.

Open for Public Comment

The meeting was opened for public comment. There were no public comments.

Closing

Senator Lightford motioned to adjourn; Cindy Hamlin seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.



Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary as Approved by Review Committee

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), V-TEL Conference Rooms, Chicago and Springfield, Illinois

Attendees

Task Force Members

Bryce Cann
Tim Dohrer
Cindy Hamblin
Jessica Handy (Chair)
Chris Janssen

Joanne Osmond
Nicholas Polyak
Mathew Rodriguez
Chaya Rubenstein
Kate Shutter

Sarah Slaughter
Scott Martensen

ISBE Staff

Brian Houser

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff

Rachel Trimble
Jeremy Rasmussen
Nicol Christi

Guests

Josh Dwyer, Once Chance Illinois
Dale Frost, International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
Matthew Wicks, International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
Derek Cantu, Dunn Fellow for Illinois Secretary of Education

Meeting Objectives

- To reach a common understanding about the problem we are trying to solve
- To develop consensus on the virtual education policy levers
- To develop a framework for capturing proposed recommendations for the final report
- To propose preliminary recommendations for improving access to virtual education in Illinois

Opening

Ms. Jessica Handy, chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Thirteen members were in attendance and a quorum was present.

Mr. Dohrer motioned to approve January 12, 2016 meeting minutes. Ms. Shutter seconded the motion.

Our Charge

Ms. Handy stated that the taskforce's charge today was to enter the discussion of what virtual education should look like in Illinois. She suggested that the task force first figure out the scope of the problem.

Discussion Topic 1

Supplemental Online Learning Versus Fulltime Online Learning

Mr. Frost said there are many problems in education that can be addressed with high-quality online learning. However, the taskforce will first need to determine exactly what the taskforce's charge is. Nationwide students are more likely to use online learning as a supplement to their brick and mortar school rather than enrolling in a full-study online school. Full-time online learning is important for many students, but a lot of the growth and demand is centered on supplemental online learning, about 10 times as many students. If Illinois wants to go down the full-time route, schools have to provide all the wraparound services. iNACOL recommends six metric categories for full-time online learning and two metric categories for supplemental online learning. It may be simpler to focus on the problems supplemental online learning solves, which is eliminating opportunity gaps for students who cannot take certain courses for scheduling reasons or availability.

Ms. Handy said it seems like supplemental is where the demand is. Supplemental is also what we have currently with the virtual school. Does the taskforce see the need for a virtual option that grants degrees and is that within the taskforce's scope?

Ms. Hamblin said she wonders whether the full-time, degree-granting option is outside the scope. The purpose seems to be focusing on supplemental and whether we are expanding that.

Mr. Cann said that the most important thing to him is ensuring that students can access the courses they need; it should be more about access than anything else.

Ms. Handy gave an example in which a student was going to a school with the bare minimum five clock hours. He was four credits short of the University of Illinois's admission credit requirements.

Mr. Polyak said that was a problem in a district real close to his, it is a reality some students face.

Ms. Slaughter asked whether there were any data showing how many students face that problem.

Mr. Dwyer said they are working on gathering from districts that lists of their course offerings at the high school level, in order to examine, for example, AP classes, CT courses, foreign language courses, but such lists will not show what schools have reduced their clock hours. ISBE put together a heat map that shows AP participation by district and something similar will be done with this data on course offerings. This will be the first look at course availability statewide.

Ms. Handy asked Ms. Hamblin whether a heat map is available of Illinois and where districts are using the virtual school.

Ms. Hamblin replied yes and that she would be happy to forward that to the group.

Ms. Handy said that it might be interesting to take the virtual school heat map and overlay it with the information Mr. Josh is collecting. She then asked Mr. Josh how many courses will be covered.

Mr. Dwyer replied that a list of 15 courses will be released publicly.

Ms. Slaughter asked when that data will be available.

Mr. Dwyer replied that it would be available in first week of April. But they could have it available for the committee by late March.

Ms. Handy asked Mr. Frost what other things they should be thinking about in terms of scope of the problem.

Mr. Frost said that staying focused on addressing opportunity gaps might be the way to go. It is a very clearly defined problem that be addressed effectively at the state level. He then asked Mr. Josh whether his data would be able to clarify how many districts do not offer enough high school courses so their graduates can get accepted into the public university system?

Mr. Dwyer said that the data will not show that.

Ms. Handy then asked the taskforce about the digital divide and broadband access, which led to the second discussion topic.

Discussion Topic 2

The Digital Divide and Broadband Access

Mr. Dohrer stated that although ensuring districts have broadband access to successfully utilize online courses is critically important, it may be beyond the scope of the taskforce.

Ms. Osmond said that she agrees, but that it is a topic that needs to be addressed. The schools and districts that could benefit from online learning the most are likely the same ones that do not have broadband access built into their infrastructure. It should be addressed somewhere in the taskforce's conclusion.

Ms. Slaughter felt that the taskforce needs to comment on the digital divide to the extent that it is an obstacle to achieving the goals of virtual education. In other words, districts that wish to provide students with access to online learning will need the requisite infrastructure to do so.

Mr. Cann agreed.

Ms. Handy asked Mr. Frost whether he has thoughts on how other states address the digital divide.

Mr. Frost replied that most people on the committee are aware of some examples in which the cart gets put before the horse. There are some one-to-one initiatives in which the instructional environment is not changing and students are not using time differently and that can cause laptops being unused; it is about reinventing how we learn with new technology. And when you look at the broadband issue, there are two things to consider: (1) equity and access at the school level and (2) at the home level. Both are important for the success of online learning. States have done many things, but starting with that sometimes results in building an infrastructure that does not really get used. Highlighting the digital divide is important because it is a problem that does exist. Infrastructure issues need to be addressed as they come up. When expanding virtual education, it will become apparent when those kinds of discussions need to occur.

Ms. Handy asked whether it was possible to quantify the digital divide.

Mr. Houser replied that ISBE did have districts complete a technology readiness survey. But the districts were told those results would be used only to determine the schools' readiness for the testing. That information cannot be shared. A better predictor might be the education superhighway, whose primary purpose is to get fiber to schools that need it and make broadband more affordable to schools. The education superhighway contacted the governors of all other states, and Illinois accepted their offer. The Illinois governor's office is now putting together a small working group to develop a long-term plan by the beginning of April. Eighty-eight percent of districts have some kind of broadband access (this not a concrete number).

Mr. Dohrer said that technology access is important for the taskforce to think about because they do want schools to have broadband access. Another thing to think about is other ways students are getting online: homes, libraries, personal devices, and so on. Individual access is very important as well and how is that data ascertained?

Mr. Frost concurred and said the digital divide at home is a real issue. Some districts and states have taken it upon themselves to address this. Senator King from Maine introduced a bill that provides funding streams for addressing the digital divide at home. Libraries in Maine are allowing students to check out portable hotspots. But many of these initiatives are happening at the district level and do not adequately address the digital divide at home.

Mr. Polyak said that his district received a grant that allowed them to purchase Wi-Fi hotspots to give students access who would not otherwise have it at home. This grant provides students up to four years of Internet access.

Ms. Osmond asked what percentage of students use those.

Mr. Polyak replied about a hundred students use it out of a district of about 3,500.

Ms. Handy said she thinks they should mention the digital divide in the taskforce's introduction and asked whether anyone wanted to provide a recommendation for the state of technology in Illinois.

Ms. Slaughter responded that she was envisioning that there could be a statement embedded in the introduction, but it could say that the taskforce is aware that some districts do not have this access and therefore, despite the availability, it an issue beyond the taskforce's scope to solve and that this might be better served by gathering more data and becoming more aware of grants and identifying other potential levers for the future.

Mr. Dohrer said the access issue is the main reason why the taskforce is here, it is about access to curriculum, access to content, and the access to get the curriculum and content is very important. It is linked to what the taskforce is trying to accomplish.

Ms. Handy said the next thing she would like the taskforce to focus on is the decision point document. First thing: Does the taskforce want to make recommendations about having one virtual school or multiple providers?

Discussion Topic 3

One Virtual School Versus Multiple Providers

There seemed to be universal agreement that the taskforce does not favor creating an online virtual school that grants diplomas to students for virtual education in Illinois.

Ms. Handy said if the taskforce decided on a supplemental program and there was a student who was medically fragile and could not attend school in a classroom setting, could that student theoretically get a degree through online courses?

Mr. Frost said that some states are grappling with that issue, but he thought it is certainly possible.

Ms. Hamblin said she believed there is a remote education act that allows students to set up a remote program in these circumstances.

Mr. Dohrer said he thought the supplemental model makes a lot more sense, schools making decisions on the basis of what they know about that student.

Mr. Frost said he totally agrees with that, the school is going to have to take the responsibility for special circumstances.

Ms. Handy then asked the taskforce who should decide whether a student takes a course. Should it be up to the student or the district? Also, the taskforce needs to address funding questions, technology and rural access, what organizations approve programs, the process for authorization and renewal, and mandates.

Mr. Dohrer said he believes the subject of who is teaching the course raises other issues, such as oversight and approval. Those questions will get answered by other points.

Ms. Shutter said a large question to consider is the attendance issue and how that will affect school districts and their funding from states.

Mr. Cann said the question of whether there is going to be one or multiple providers will change the nature of the mandate. Need to answer that first.

Ms. Shutter said multiple providers would lead to multiple options for schools and students alike. She then asked what the taskforce what obstacles would come from multiple providers.

Mr. Cann, a taskforce member, responded that there could still be the issue of access. An example he gave is if a district had access to only one provider but a student in that district needed to take a class offered only by different provider, then that student would not have access to that course—an issue of equity. He then asked what the difference is between what the taskforce is talking about and what IVS already does.

Mr. Frost said some states have done each of these options. A virtual school is a single provider that works with districts that either opt in or all districts have to provide. It could be run by a state education agency or education service provider. Wisconsin has multiple providers. New Hampshire uses a charter school but has a statewide provider for their virtual school. But the question still remains with any virtual school, can any student access it, does the student have to pay for it? A multiple-provider program could be both face-to-face and virtual or just completely virtual. They usually have a statewide entity or another entity on behalf of the state to provide both quality assurance on the front end and an approval process to hold providers accountable.

They usually have a set price across the state for a particular course. They usually have a clearinghouse so students know where to go to find classes.

Ms. Handy asked, when Louisiana made their switch from the virtual school to multiple providers, did students receive more access or less?

Mr. Frost said Louisiana was able to grow it, but most course access programs have not grown their programs to the extent that Louisiana has.

Ms. Slaughter said this seems to be about what safeguards are in place when considering one versus multiple providers. If you have those safeguards in place, does it matter whether it is one or multiple providers?

Ms. Handy replied that there is a lot more overhead with multiple providers.

Mr. Dohrer added that oversight would be much easier with one entity.

Mr. Frost said one reason that iNACOL advocates open course access is that, by having multiple providers, you create a competitive atmosphere among providers, who strive to make their classes better than their competitors. But there are more duties at the state level when you have a course access program.

Ms. Handy said it seems as though not all the content of the course is accessed in a virtual manner and asked what the split is.

Mr. Frost responded that the majority of course access programs are purely virtual.

Ms. Handy then asked Ms. Hamblin how many kids are served by Illinois's current virtual school and what the growth trajectory is.

Ms. Hamblin replied that they are well below their capacity, there is lots of room for growth.

Mr. Dohrer said he would like virtual education in Illinois to progress to a point at which a student can take a state-approved virtual course and receive credit from the student's school district for it. And to do that, there is going to have to be trust between the state and the districts. He said he does not see at the moment being able to create the safeguards for multiple providers, but that perhaps it could be done with one entity with really high standards.

Ms. Slaughter said that the taskforce needs to be mindful of the fact that the target population of virtual education in Illinois is to provide students with courses they would otherwise not have access to. The taskforce right now is really focused on the one versus multiple providers and the focus perhaps should be what the standards or bars should be set, regardless of whether it is one or multiple providers, to make sure it is excellent.

Ms. Handy said completion data is not a good metric, although students who take AP courses online might provide better data. But how is quality measured?

Ms. Hamblin replied that there are several standards that measure quality for online teachers. The current virtual school also uses Quality Matters, quality plus, and the like. There are standards to apply.

Mr. Frost said when looking at what outcomes should be measured, iNACOL recommends looking at student proficiency and individualized student growth. Individualized outcomes related to metrics per course. He said that that is really important, especially with multiple providers. Mr. Frost added that he believes one of the key levers should be guaranteed credit, especially in the case of universal access.

Someone asked whether these courses are offered as pass-fail or whether students receive a grade.

Ms. Hamblin said they provide a percentage, and then the local school looks at that percentage and decides whether to issue a grade or issue a pass-fail. She said that showing student outcomes is important, but it can be difficult to because since many students take one course and leave.

Mr. Cann said that looking at quality in pre-post testing is pretty narrow. Looking at how a course is put together might be helpful as well.

Mr. Frost agreed. He said both are important.

Ms. Handy asked whether it is good practice to have pre- and posttests on every course.

Ms. Hamblin said that is her way of determining individual student outcomes. That is the way they have been trying to document it.

Mr. Cann said that in terms of quality, completion rate needs to be considered. If you do not complete the course, there is no valid data to look at. A student might not complete a course for a variety of reasons. Noting those reasons, too, might be valuable.

Mr. Dohrer asked whether the taskforce can take quality assurance measures that already exist and apply those measures to whatever the taskforce decides.

Ms. Handy said that the inputs are meeting learning standards for virtual education, outcomes of pre- and posttests and completion data, and teachers complying with the licensure program. Ms. Handy then asked the taskforce for their thoughts on teacher licensure requirements for virtual courses.

Discussion Topic 4

Teacher Licensure Requirements for Virtual Courses and Other Inputs to Consider

Ms. Handy asked Mr. Frost whether other states require licenses for their virtual teachers.

Mr. Frost said he would have to look at the data. Although he knows many states do require them.

Mr. Dohrer then brought up a situation an instructor for a welding course did not have an Illinois teaching license, and asked whether the state would require him or her to have one.

Ms. Slaughter added their might need to be a narrow list of exceptions.

Mr. Cann said if you are going to create buy-in with schools and districts, there would be a lot more credibility if the taskforce ensures it is an Illinois provider.

Ms. Handy asked the taskforce what they wanted to discuss on the matter of inputs.

Ms. Hamblin said they should add course design standards to the inputs too. The Illinois virtual school uses Quality Matters for course design, it looks at different aspects of the course from testability to course objectives and the like.

Mr. Frost added making sure courses are acceptable and are 508 compliant. He will send out the iNACOL quality standards.

Ms. Handy asked whether, in a course access program, each provider would receive certification on complying with the standards or some kind of accreditation.

Mr. Frost said the application process ensures alignment.

Discussion Topic 5

Should Students Have the Choice to Opt In

Ms. Handy then asked about student access and whether students should be allowed to opt in or whether they are required to enroll through the school district.

Mr. Dohrer first wanted to know whether the taskforce agreed that an online course should not be a requirement for graduation.

There was unanimous agreement on this point.

Someone said determining how the taskforce decides what kind of courses will be available to students plays a major factor.

Ms. Hamblin said there are some conditions for a student receiving credit for an online course. If the course was not available at the student's school, if the course was a good fit according to the guidance counselor, and so on.

Mr. Frost said the language in the bill stated that a district can deny enrollment if the course is not appropriate, does not keep the student on track, or creates too heavy of a course load. The funding stream that was created and the requirements for allowing access was for courses that were not offered at the home school.

Mr. Martensen said it is important that this remains an opportunity and not an alternative. The taskforce should focus on courses that are not offered.

Mr. Rodriguez asked whether the taskforce is making recommendations on who is going to make decisions about accepting children into these virtual courses.

Ms. Handy said right now the district decides, but the question is whether the student should be able to do that.

Mr. Cann asked Ms. Hamblin whether there is currently a common reason for districts denying courses.

Ms. Hamblin replied that she did not have the specifics.

Mr. Frost said these are districts who have decided to work with IDS and asked whether is it a rare thing or fairly common for a district to deny a course.

Ms. Hamblin said the schools that utilize IDS approve the courses before the student even starts the course. If it is something the district does not want the student taking, they deny it upfront. The reasons for a school denying might be because they offer it locally, it could be a funding issue, for example.

Ms. Handy asked the taskforce whether they think students should be able to take an online course without their school's consent.

Ms. Shutter said if a student can choose without district input and that student does poorly, then that could reflect poorly on the school. If the school is putting a stamp on it and awarding the diploma, then the school should have a say whether to accept that course.

Superintendent Polyak said his preferred model would be that virtual courses be developed by teachers in the districts, which would help vertical alignment, though that is not possible everywhere.

Ms. Slaughter said there would have to be those quality elements built in and the state board of education will have to have very strong communication, the superintendents would need to hear about those quality guidelines from the state board of education.

Ms. Handy said she is leaning toward having some type of option for students to access online courses even if it is not through their districts. She wondered how much of a problem that would be.

Ms. Slaughter said she could imagine situations in which schools did not offer a particular class, but wondered whether there were other situations.

Ms. Handy said another situation might involve a scheduling conflict, or perhaps a student needs a few more credits to get into a university. There are various reasons for it.

Mr. Martensen said if schools are judged by how they perform, then districts will be judged by criteria they have no control over.

Ms. Shutter added that it would also be putting the educational decision making on people who are not the experts rather than the schools who have the expertise.

Ms. Hamlin said this does not really get to the problem of the opportunity gap and access if it is limited to just other kinds of courses a student has. She then brought up the calculus.

Mr. Dohrer said one difference between what Illinois has right now (in terms of virtual education) and what they could have in the future is there is no ISBE stamp of approval. The reason his districts use to reject these courses is the lack of quality assurance. An ISBE stamp of approval might change things.

Mr. Cann said there is also a problem of students overloading to accelerate. Would have to pay attention to that.

Ms. Handy asked the taskforce whether they wanted to put together a list of reasons for why it would be appropriate for students to opt into a class. Afterward, the taskforce can decide whether they are open to any of those options.

Ms. Slaughter said if a student has the ability to opt in, then the quality assurance better be in place and funding decisions made.

Ms. Hamblin said it would be valuable to hear from school administrators who are accepting credit and using other programs to grant credit and to hear about their experience.

Ms. Handy said it also might be valuable to hear from any superintendents who have denied students.

Mr. Dohrer asked whether they have the statistics on the number of districts that IDS is currently working with as an approved provider.

Ms. Hamblin said she would be happy to share that.

Ms. Handy clarified: by school or school districts?

Ms. Hamblin responded by districts.

Ms. Handy asked the taskforce whether they wanted to throw out other topics.

Mr. Cann said it might be useful to have a synopsis on what the taskforce agreed upon before starting.

Ms. Shutter said funding is a big issue coming up, one we need to get on the table.

A meeting has been added in April. Mr. Houser will conduct a poll and find out what week works best.

Ms. Handy asked whether members of the public wanted to give comment. Mr. Wick said thanks for the opportunity to listen.

Mr. Hansen motioned to adjourn; Mr. Cann seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary as Approved by Review Committee

10:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Monday, March 7, 2016

- Illinois State Board of Education, V-TEL Room (3rd Floor), 100 North First St., Springfield, Illinois
- Illinois State Board of Education, V-TEL Room (14th Floor), 100 West Randolph, Suite 14-300, Chicago, Illinois
- Conference call-in number: 1-888-494-4032; access code: 7236897539

Attendees

Task Force Members

Bryce Cann

Tim Dohrer

Cindy Hamblin

Jessica Handy (Chair)

Chris Janssen

Scott Martensen

Joanne Osmond

Nicholas Polyak

Chaya Rubenstein

Kate Shutter

ISBE Staff

Brian Houser

Dora Welker

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff

Don Doggett

Jayne Sowers

Corrin Pitluck

Public Attendee

Charissa Armon, eBrigade/Blue Foundation

Derek Cantu, Dunn Fellow for Illinois Secretary of Education

Meeting Objectives

- To reach consensus on the virtual education decision points (policy levers)
- To discuss funding mechanisms for course access
- To propose preliminary recommendations for improving access to virtual education in Illinois.

Welcome, Agenda Overview, and Recap Meeting

Ms. Jessica Handy, chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Ten members were in attendance and a quorum was present.

Mr. Doggett reviewed the agenda. Ms. Handy reviewed points resulting from the previous meeting.

Approval of February 16, 2016, Meeting Minutes

Mr. Cann noted an error in his statement on page 6, the fifth paragraph. The text should read “IVS,” not “IDS.” Ms. Handy agreed to make the correction.

Motion to approve: Moved by Mr. Dohrer, seconded by Ms. Rubenstein. Approval was unanimous.

Discussion on Funding, Access, and Recommendations

The committee discussion focused on three main topics regarding virtual school recommendations:

- Funding
- Equity
- Quality

Funding

Existing Funding Models

The committee reviewed models used by other states, as presented by Dale Frost from the International Association for K–12 Online Learning (iNACOL) in the previous meeting:

- Eight states have a fixed state appropriation and no fees at the student or school district level: Alabama, Hawaii, Iowa, Mississippi, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- Ten states, including Illinois, have fixed state appropriations plus a fee charged, usually to the district, which is often passed on to the student.
- Three states have funding based on the number of enrollments and completions (the dollars-follow-students model): Florida, New Hampshire, and Texas.
- Two states have a school district membership fee model: Alaska and Vermont.

- Wisconsin is entirely funded on course fees.

Ms. Hamblin provided details of Illinois Virtual School's (IVS) current costs and funding structure. IVS's costs are between \$325 and \$345 per course. National averages reported by iNACOL are also in the \$300–350 range. IVS charges \$190 to districts and the rest is covered by the appropriation. Districts choose to pay for all, some, or none of the cost, and families pay the remainder. If enrollment grew substantially, IVS would need to increase fees because the appropriation (\$1.2 million) is static. IVS provides accommodations for English learner (EL) students and those with individualized education programs. Costs associated with the accommodations, and with additional costs associated with Advanced Placement courses, are absorbed by IVS.

Who Should Pay for IVS Courses?

The committee discussed the question of how responsibility for IVS course fees should be distributed among the state, districts, and families.

State. Committee members discussed maintaining the current model of a state appropriation to fund a portion of IVS courses. Members noted that the appropriation could be used to increase equity and access through various mechanisms, including a weighted fee structure and fee waivers.

The committee drafted a fee structure for a district's responsibility to fund IVS courses weighted by the district's percentage of students in poverty. If the district has 10 percent of its students in poverty, the state would expect the district (or families) to pay 90 percent of the costs of courses. In a 100-percent-poverty district, all courses would be free to the district and families. The state appropriation would cover remaining costs. The drafted weighting formula is:

$$(1 - x) \times \$325 = \text{district fee}$$

With x representing the percentage of a district's students in poverty, as determined by Department of Human Services (DHS) figures, and \$325 serving as the total cost of providing an online course. For example, a district with a DHS poverty rate of 10 percent, the formula would show:

$$(1 - .10) \times \$325 = \$292.50$$

Thus the formula would suggest charging a district with ten percent of its students in poverty \$292.50 for each IVS course enrollment. Additional local conditions, such as high proportions of ELs or students with disabilities could be incorporated into a weighting formula to meet district needs. Ms. Hamblin noted that reviewing IVS's costs and enrollment using this formula could result in a revised appropriation recommendation.

Committee members suggested that a state appropriation could be used to offset fee waivers for IVS courses, which are granted to low-income students for other school fees, including free and reduced-price lunch and sports fees.

Concerns about state funding. As described earlier, appropriations are static, and growth in IVS enrollments is not addressed by an appropriation. Also, committee members noted that appropriations can be cut, raising concerns about the stability of the funding source.

District. Committee members repeatedly observed the importance of local control in determining how to handle the costs of IVS courses that are not covered by a state appropriation, and Dr. Polyak discounted a “dollars follow students” model within districts. Some committee members said they are not comfortable with mandating that districts pay for any course. Some committee members said that district control over paying IVS fees or passing the costs on to families, without further recommendations, does not protect low-income students from losing equitable access to courses if they cannot afford them.

Family. Committee members repeatedly expressed concern to ensure that low-income students have equitable access to courses. Weighted fee structures and fee waivers, described earlier in connection with state funding through an appropriation, were considered as approaches to ensure that low-income students can access courses. Committee members further noted that families not qualifying for a waiver would be charged if their district passes on the cost. Finally, several committee members said that students should pay for courses they take for their own purposes, beyond typical requirements, regardless of income status.

Funding Mandates

The committee discussed mandates mainly in terms of potentially requiring districts to grant credit for IVS courses, although the discussion occasionally included the question of mandating district responsibility to pay IVS course fees. Points raised about mandates, described in more detail later in the meeting, included discussions about which courses can be considered core courses and which are supplementary. In addition, some committee members said they do not support expecting districts to pay for credit recovery courses. Mr. Hauser noted that parent-paid online credit recovery courses offered by his district were well subscribed.

Additional Funding Considerations

Committee members raised the following additional considerations about the amount that should be paid for courses, and by whom:

- Should funding decisions be influenced by whether the student takes the course as part of school day or after school? IVS data indicate that most online course-taking activity occurs during school hours.
- Should funding decisions be influenced by whether the student takes the course in the school building, with district supervision present?
- Should funding decisions be influenced by whether the course can be considered a core course, such as algebra or precalculus, rather than a supplemental course?
- Should funding decisions be influenced by provider performance? Should student scores on an assessment be used to determine payment to providers, or should bonuses be considered if students excel?

- Relatedly, should funding decisions be influenced by course completion? A member noted that a high level of state responsibility to pay for most or all of a course could result in a low commitment on the part of families and districts, potentially resulting in higher levels of noncompletion. Currently, IVS has a two-week grace period to ensure students start the course and that it is a good fit. After the two weeks, charges are applied. IVS has a 90 percent completion rate. In response to this concern, a minimum fee of \$25 was suggested.

Draft Recommendation Passed Related to Funding

1. No student should be denied access solely because he or she cannot pay for all or a portion of the course.

Moved by Mr. Cann, seconded by Ms. Rubenstein. The motion passed unanimously.

Access and Equity

Committee members stated several times that the purpose of the committee’s work is to address issues related to equity of access to coursework through IVS. Two motions, developed partially in the previous meeting, were made in connection with this commitment.

Draft Recommendations Passed Related to Equity of Access

2. Students are not mandated to take at least one virtual class, as some states have done.

Moved by Mr. Dohrer, seconded by Ms. Handy. The motion passed unanimously.

3. The virtual courses are supplemental courses only, not a degree-granting institution.

Moved by Ms. Handy, seconded by Ms. Rubenstein. The motion passed unanimously.

Equity Problem

The committee noted that limits to student access to courses often stem from teacher shortages in areas such as foreign languages, advanced mathematics courses, and Advanced Placement courses in mathematics and science. Ms. Handy noted that IVS courses could offer a cost-effective solution to districts unable to offer such courses. Ms. Hamblin pointed out the unavailability of a course in the district and a conflict in a student’s schedule are the two conditions that created the original bill for online course availability.

The equity of access problem was illustrated by a review of points made by Dale Frost during the previous meeting. Ms. Handy reported that he stated that only 53 percent of schools in Illinois offer mathematics up to calculus, and only 78 percent of schools have Algebra II. Committee members said the numbers indicate that access to college-track coursework is inequitably distributed around the state. Ensuring that all students can access any needed college-track coursework, without shifting the financial burden to low-income families, was described by committee members as their main concern.

Course Credit Mandates

As with issues related to funding IVS courses, the committee discussed whether or when it might be appropriate to recommend mandating that districts grant credit to students who complete IVS courses. Points raised regarding mandating credit:

- Some committee members prefer to keep the decision about what is on enrolled students' transcripts as a local decision in all cases.
- Some committee members would consider mandating that districts grant credit for the following limited range of courses when they are not offered by the district and are typically expected by universities for students to be considered for admission:
 - Algebra I
 - Algebra II
 - Geometry
 - Calculus
 - Chemistry
 - Physics
 - Biology
 - Foreign languages when no foreign languages are offered
- Ms. Hamblin noted that IVS has a partner relationship with participating districts so that when they approve a student's enrollment in an IVS course, they also approve granting the credit. Nonmember districts are not approving online coursework and are not granting credit. As described in the earlier discussion on funding, districts can opt in or opt out of offering individual courses, which provides local control over credit decisions. Ms. Hamblin also noted that there are cases of students who take courses that will not receive credit from the district, but they will have a transcript from IVS indicating they completed it. Universities may consider the coursework in admission decisions. In the case of AP courses, students may not need credit from the high school when their test results are sent to colleges.
- Some committee members said that specialized higher mathematics and science courses and a wide variety of foreign languages could be seen as supplemental courses instead of core courses, suggesting that the committee would be less likely to recommend that the state mandate that districts grant credit. Committee members suggested letting districts decide on the availability of such courses.
- Some committee members noted that they would not approve of mandating that credit be granted for credit-recovery programs.
- Ms. Handy noted that the virtual school bill discussed previously may have incorporated a governing board to make determinations on expectations for districts to grant credit for IVS courses.

Concerns about growth in enrollments. The committee agreed that students are usually expected to take courses offered by the school. Use of online courses for reasons such as a personality conflict between a teacher and student or a student’s social conflicts were described by committee members as problematic. Mr. Cann observed that districts are already identifying solutions for issues like these. In addition, committee members raised two concerns about greater access to IVS courses:

- When students take online courses in the building during the day, how is supervision managed? Ms. Hamblin stated that an analysis of student log-in data indicated that most IVS coursework is completed during the school day.
- If districts are required to accept online courses, will there be a negative impact on districts from reductions in section enrollments as a large number of students take online courses? Committee members asked whether the group should consider ways to protect districts from staffing shifts resulting from expanded IVS enrollment.

Quality

Issues related to quality discussed by the committee included district-level trust, quality measures, and tracking growth and completion rates.

Committee members noted that trust among district leadership and families about the quality of courses will increase the likelihood that districts will provide credit for them and that parents will push for credit.

Regarding quality measures, the committee was informed that the College Board has approved IVS’s AP courses, implying external vetting has been completed for those online courses. The committee further discussed quality measures present in the field. IVS uses Quality Matters standards in course design to guide alignment to academic standards and accessibility. According to Ms. Hamblin, IVS has not engaged the peer review process to receive official recognition for meeting the standards (\$1,000 per course). Also, Advanced Ed is starting to offer accreditation for virtual courses. Committee members noted the need for an entity to oversee IVS course quality, though members wanted to avoid stipulating specifics. Ensuring that student growth and completion rates also are tracked was noted as an outstanding issue. Finally, the committee considered paying course providers bonuses for strong student results, but the suggestion was not discussed.

Draft Recommendations Passed Related to Quality

4. ISBE must oversee the quality of virtual courses and review relevant data in order to ensure rigor and excellence.

Moved by Mr. Dohrer, seconded by Ms. Shutter. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Armon, from eBrigade/Blue Foundation, a family foundation dedicated to supporting student access to online courses, asked to confirm that the committee was not requiring online

courses. Mr. Dohrer confirmed that requiring online courses was felt by the committee to be outside their guiding principle, in that they are focused on increasing equitable access to courses. Ms. Armon asked whether there is there an assumption that there is adult supervision when students take a virtual course while at school, and who would be responsible to pay for the supervision. Ms. Handy noted the committee assumed that schools would have an adult supervising the class.

Next Steps

A webinar is scheduled for March 28, 1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.

- The committee will review the recommendations and capture additional recommendations.

A meeting of the committee is scheduled for April 7, 1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

- The committee will review draft report.

Ms. Handy moved to adjourn. Ms. Rubenstein seconded. Motion passed at 12:33 p.m.



Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary

March 28, 2016, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

- Webinar: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/33996173110559492>
- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Webinar Room (4th Floor), 100 North First St., Springfield, IL

Meeting Objectives

- To finalize recommendations for improving access and funding mechanisms to change and improve virtual education in Illinois.
- To provide feedback on the introduction section of the committee report.

Task Force Members

Tim Dohrer	Mathew Rodriguez
Cindy Hamblin	Kate Shutter
Chris Janssen	Sara Slaughter
Scott Martensen	Jessica Handy (Chair)
Joanne Osmond	

ISBE Staff

Jamey Baiter	Sarah Hartwick
Brian Houser	Dora Welker

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff

Nicol Christie	Jeremy Rasmussen
Don Doggett	Rachel Trimble

Public Attendees

Charissa Armon, Blue Foundation
Joshua Dwyer, One Chance Illinois
Pam Witter, Network of Charter Schools

Welcome & Agenda Overview

Ms. Jessica Handy, chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Nine members were in attendance and a quorum was present.

Ms. Handy reviewed the agenda.

Approval of March 7, 2016, Meeting Minutes

Ms. Handy first asked the task force to look through the minutes from the March 7 meeting before approving.

A motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Ms. Osmond and seconded by Mr. Dohrer.

Ms. Handy then asked the task force to look at the draft recommendations report to review the recommendations.

Recommendation 1

ISBE must oversee the quality of virtual courses and review relevant data in order to ensure rigor and excellence.

Ms. Handy asked if any of the task force members wanted to make a comment regarding Recommendation 1.

(There were no comments.)

Recommendation 2

No student should be denied access solely because he or she cannot pay for all or a portion of the course.

Ms. Handy said at the last task force meeting there was a lot of discussion on how to improve access and make sure courses were available, and that funding was not a barrier for any student. There was a suggested formula that would take the poverty rate into account, where districts would pay the entire fee for students if there was no poverty and would pay 50% of the fee if they had 50% poverty, and so on. Right now, this is not a recommendation itself but an example of a way to make these courses affordable. Another idea discussed by the task force was if students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, they also should be eligible for a waiver regarding online courses. There also had been discussion about whether there should be additional fees when comes to English language learners (ELLs), students with individualized education programs, and other students with particular needs.

Ms. Hamblin said that perhaps there should be some minimal fee. Sometimes, students don't always follow through with their online course. A minimal contribution may help with student engagement.

Mr. Martensen said he agrees that there should be some sort of minimal contribution to hold students accountable.

Ms. Osmond said she also agrees with that.

Mr. Janssen agreed as well.

Ms. Handy then asked Ms. Hamblin what her idea of a nominal fee would be.

Ms. Hamblin said she hadn't really thought of what that might be and suggested perhaps \$20–\$25 per course.

Ms. Handy then asked Ms. Armon to talk about the pass rates of Chicago Public Schools students she works with who have taken free online courses.

Ms. Armon said she has been working in schools with very high poverty and that she does not necessarily disagree with the idea of a nominal fee to schools, but that students should not be required pay any fees personally.

Ms. Handy then stated that a nominal fee appears to be something they should add to the recommendations. She then asked if the pay structure should be any different for credit-recovery courses. Another item discussed was completion fees in terms of receiving half upon enrollment and half upon completion. There was agreement that the half-and-half- pay structure was something the task force would like to include in the recommendations.

Ms. Handy then asked the task force to address the question of whether there should be higher fees for ELLs and special-needs students.

Ms. Osmond said her recommendation would be not to have higher fees for these groups. She said there is a lot of support for these groups at the local level. She said she does not feel that is their (the task force's) role to provide additional assistance at a higher fee.

Mr. Janssen said you could get into a legally tough situation if you make fees higher for these populations.

Ms. Handy concluded that the task force seems to agree that fees should not be higher for ELL and special-needs students.

Mr. Martensen said the task force should discuss if there should be differentiation between a student taking a course and credit recovery in terms of the fee being paid.

Ms. Osmond asked if there also should be differentiation between prerequisite courses versus nonelective courses (need versus want).

Ms. Handy said the question on who gets to approve the class is an important one and that there was a balance struck on this topic the last time it was brought up. If a school district does not offer a certain core class, then students would be allowed to take a virtual course with or without the district's permission. Other than that instance, the district would have the final say on whether it would pay for the student to take the class.

Ms. Handy then asked the task force if it should be specified that credit-recovery courses would have a lower cost passed on to families.

Ms. Osmond said she thinks they should leave that up to the districts.

Mr. Janssen suggested that the task force specify when it talks about eligibility for fee waivers; that if a student receives a waiver that cost is then absorbed by the district or some other entity.

Mr. Martensen said the school he works at has over 50% poverty, and students pay 100% of their credit recovery.

Ms. Hamblin asked if the core math and science courses would be covered by the state or determined by districts' ability to pay. She said she thought the math and science core courses would be funded by the state if the district is unable to offer them, which would be a different funding stream than the elective courses.

Ms. Handy replied that it would be a disincentive for a district to bring on a calculus teacher if it could just write off the whole cost to the state and enroll students in virtual classes.

Mr. Dohrer said the last time task force members talked about the math and science core courses, they were not talking about the funding issue as much as they were about schools being required to accept credit for core courses. He said he liked the idea of core courses being thought of differently than other online courses, but that the task force should revisit the fee structure that would reduce the burden for students in poverty. He said he would like this to be as simple as possible. When it comes to the funding issues, he said he could use some guidance on what is going to be a simple way of doing this, a way that will allow students to afford the course.

Ms. Handy asked that if the proposed funding structure that Mr. Polyak (not present) proposed is sufficient to achieve this.

Mr. Dohrer replied that he does like Mr. Polyak's suggestion. He said it's a nice way of at least offering some kind of discounting of rates to students or districts that have a legitimate poverty situation.

Ms. Handy asked how the task force felt about districts not being the ultimate gatekeeper in terms of core classes. If the school district doesn't offer a core class in a certain subject, then students should be able to take that class virtually, with or without the school's permission, and receive credit for it.

Ms. Osmond said she has a difficult time imagining why a district would prohibit a student from taking a core course virtually if it didn't offer that course. She added that the education of the student is the responsibility of the district.

Mr. Dohrer said that there are some districts that do not offer basic courses for college and career readiness and that there are particular courses that Illinois has identified as being important to that goal. If a school district does not offer one of these courses and students were to take that class through the Illinois Virtual School (IVS), they should be guaranteed that that course will be placed on their transcript.

Ms. Handy shared part of the recommendations report (draft) with the task force stating that only 78% of schools offer Algebra II and only 53% of high schools offer calculus. If a student is in the 22% of schools that do not offer Algebra II, how is it fair for that student not to have access to that course at all?

Ms. Osmond reiterated that she does not conceive of a situation where a school would deny a core course if it does not offer it.

Ms. Handy looked at the language in the recommendation stating that students taking a virtual course must have approval from their home district, except for home districts that do not offer specific core math, science, or foreign language courses (and possibly coding). She then asked to get a sense of where the task force stands on this.

Ms. Osmond said she believes schools need to be 100% involved virtual online courses for students.

Mr. Martensen stated that if the district doesn't offer the core course, then the student should be able to take the course regardless.

Mr. Janssen said speaking of foreign language in general, if a school offers Spanish for example, could a student still opt into a Latin online course if he or she wanted to.

Ms. Handy said she was thinking "no"; if the school doesn't offer any foreign language, then the student would be able to opt into a foreign language.

Mr. Dohrer said he is a little worried about the oversight and how it will be handled, especially in terms of options that students and schools will have available to appeal.

Ms. Shutter asked: What would be the reason for a district to say "no" to a class it does not offer?

Ms. Osmond added that she does not want schools to be surprised that students are all of a sudden taking these classes.

Ms. Handy said that is a good point and that some kind of notification system would have to be worked out.

Ms. Hamblin asked: If the school does not offer that course, will the state or district be paying for the class?

Ms. Handy said it would follow same funding structure as everything else, If it's a poor district, then there is some nominal fee that the district would pay or pass on to the student. If there is a fee waiver for a student, then the district would have to absorb it.

Ms. Handy then stated that she believes the task force has established a good sense of the things they need to tweak for this recommendation for the April 7 meeting, There is still some concern regarding the language of the foreign language piece, the appeals and oversight process, how students taking a virtual class will communicate with districts, and clarifying how the funding works.

Ms. Handy then asked for thoughts regarding whether it makes sense for the funding structure to apply to these courses, or whether someone wants to advocate for an additional line item in the state budget to cover them.

Mr. Rodriguez asked: What happens if a student takes a virtual class (core class) and the school does not approve it?

Ms. Handy replied that the school would have to recognize and pass the fees on to the student if the student is not eligible for a waiver. If the school district wants to refuse a student from taking a core subject that it did not offer, then it would have to find another way to offer that class.

Ms. Handy then turned to the next recommendations.

Recommendations 3 and 4

The Illinois Virtual School should provide supplemental courses only and should not be a degree-granting institution.

Students should not be mandated to take an online course for graduation.

Ms. Handy asked the task force if there were any questions or concerns on either Recommendation 3 or 4.

Ms. Osmond stated that she likes both of them.

Ms. Handy then moved on to other potential recommendations. One potential recommendation for discussion was if the task force wanted to allow ISBE to authorize multiple providers in addition to IVS.

Other Potential Recommendations

Mr. Polyak responded in an e-mail that he likes the idea of multiple providers and vendors.

Ms. Osmond also liked the idea of multiple providers.

Mr. Rodriguez agreed as well.

Ms. Slaughter agreed, but said they need to phrase it (in the report) in a way that states ISBE is *allowed* to authorize, but not that it *must*. This way ISBE won't feel compelled to authorize providers that do not meet quality standards.

Ms. Osmond wholeheartedly agreed with Ms. Slaughter's statement.

Ms. Hamblin also agreed, but with a caveat that the data points collected around quality be required for all vendors if there is going to be an approved list of providers.

Ms. Handy then moved on to teacher licensure requirements. If a provider is out of state and its teachers are not licensed in Illinois, can it still be a provider?

Ms. Osmond said that's a tough one. She said she would think that anyone teaching in Illinois would have the proper credentials, She wasn't sure if a teaching license from another state would be equivalent to proper credentials.

Ms. Hamblin said this is an issue that needs to be brought up with other departments at ISBE.

Ms. Osmond wondered if the language (of the report) could reflect that all instructors have had some kind of vetting by some department in ISBE.

Mr. Dohrer said that if you want districts to accept the idea of a virtual course, then one of the first things they are going to ask is who will be teaching it and what are their qualifications? He said IVS is easy because they are all Illinois-certified teachers. It's going to be difficult for schools to be interested if their students are going to be taught by nonlicensed teachers.

Mr. Martensen said there must be some kind of licensure, not open door to corporate schools.

Ms. Handy said it seems like there is near-universal agreement that teachers teaching virtual courses should have an Illinois license. She then asked if the task force wanted to shut the door on giving ISBE some flexibility.

Mr. Martensen said he would like to leave the door open a little; if a teacher is from a university, that should be acceptable.

Ms. Osmond said she teaches at a community college and does not have a license. She agrees there should be some flexibility for university and nonprofit providers.

Ms. Handy said she thinks she can draft this into a recommendation that essentially requires teachers to have an Illinois teaching license but also allows some flexibility for university providers.

A task force member asked: Would that allow university instructors from out of state, or only university instructors from Illinois?

Mr. Dohrer said there is a teacher shortage in Illinois. So far, Illinois has not gone down the path to reduce the minimum requirements needed to teach. He said it seems that Illinois feels strongly that there need to be minimal requirements reached before someone can teach in the state, And that should be the same standard the task force holds any other program to.

Ms. Osmond agreed.

Ms. Hamblin returned to the multiple-provider question and asked: How does that work with the funding mechanism?

Ms. Handy said it would follow the same funding mechanism, but that it also might make sense to put a cap on how much providers can charge.

Ms. Handy then brought up the question of explicitly stating in the recommendations that virtual courses should be grades 5–12, or if they should be silent on a grade range.

Ms. Osmond said she likes the 5–12 range and is not sure if elementary levels would need it.

Mr. Dohrer said he thinks they should not mention a grade range at all and that there is no reason to box anything in.

Ms. Handy said the task force talked some about technology access and the digital divide as secondary to the charge of the task force. However, the task force said it would mention the digital divide in the report where it makes sense to. Ms. Handy then asked the task force for their thoughts on this.

Mr. Dohrer said he thinks the section on the digital divide looks good where it is and the issue does not need to be mentioned anywhere else. He said since many of these online courses are taught during the school day at the school, he is a little concerned about the school not being equipped with the proper technology to teach the class. He suggested changing the wording (in the report) recommending that all districts need to meet the minimum requirements for online testing. If they meet those requirements (which involves a certain degree of online access), then they should be able to teach an online course.

Ms. Osmond said that although she agrees with Mr. Dohrer, the task force should still mention in the report that the digital divide is something students experience at home as well.

Ms. Handy replied that she believes that the language in the report can be amended to cover both those avenues (online access at school and at home) of the digital divide. She said they could even pull some stats on the percentage of students who take online courses at school and at home. That might be helpful background information.

Mr. Dohrer said that sounds like a great idea.

Ms. Hamblin also agreed.

Mr. Dohrer asked: What's the plan going forward with IVS, how is there going to be oversight, and how is the contract going to continue? It is a cornerstone of what we have been discussing.

Ms. Handy replied she believes ISBE extended the contract so they could get the recommendations from the task force's report.

Mr. Dohrer asked if they wanted to make a statement about IVS going forward when talking about best practices and virtual education, course choice, and funding mechanisms. Perhaps this is something to think about for April 7.

Ms. Hamblin said ISBE approved an intergovernmental agreement that takes the contract through June 2017.

Ms. Handy then opened up the floor for public comment.

A motion to adjourn was moved by Mr. Dohrer and seconded by Ms. Osmond.



Illinois State Board of Education

James T. Meeks, Chairman
Tony Smith, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary

Thursday, April 7, 2016, 1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), V-TEL Room (3rd Floor), 100 North First St., Springfield, Illinois
- ISBE, V-TEL Room (14th Floor), 100 West Randolph, Suite 14-300, Chicago, Illinois
- Conference call-in number: 1-888-494-4032; access code: 723689

Meeting Objective

- To reach consensus on recommendations and final report

Task Force Members

Bryce Cann

Scott Martensen

Tim Dohrer

Joanne Osmond

Cindy Hamblin

Matthew Rodriguez

Jessica Handy (Chair)

Kate Shutter

Chris Janssen

Joe Sonowski

ISBE Staff

Jamey Baiter

Brian Houser

Dora Welker

Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) Staff

Nicol Christie

Don Doggett

Jeremy Rasmussen

Rachel Trimble

Public Attendees

Charissa Armon, eBrigade/Blue Foundation

Derek Cantu, Dunn Fellow for Illinois Secretary of Education

Joshua Dwyer, Once Chance Illinois

Opening

Ms. Jessica Handy, chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Nine members were in attendance and a quorum was present.

Approval of March 28, 2016, Meeting Minutes

Ms. Handy first asked the task force to look through the minutes from the March 28 meeting before approving.

A motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Ms. Osmond and seconded by Ms. Shutter.

The task force then reviewed the Illinois Virtual Education Review Committee draft recommendations report.

Amendments to the Introduction of the Report

Ms. Handy began by stating her title was wrong in the introduction and that her title should read Government Affairs Director. She then asked the task force if they would like to flag anything from the introduction.

Ms. Handy then asked the task force to turn to page 7 of the report to look at the language that reads: “The committee is in agreement with Glenn McGee’s statement that the achievement gap is the single most critical issue in Illinois education.”

There was widespread agreement that although the task force believed that the achievement gap was a critical issue, the word “most” seemed too strong.

Ms. Handy suggested cutting this sentence about the achievement gap from the report.

Mr. Cann said the language about the PARCC [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers] data is debatable in regard to accurately representing anything, especially as it was the first year of testing. He said the PARCC language is a red herring that leads to another topic not directly related to their charge.

Ms. Handy agreed with Mr. Cann.

Mr. Dohrer also agreed.

Ms. Handy said that they will be reducing the scope of the problem to course access and equity.

Ms. Handy then asked Mr. Dwyer, from Once Chance Illinois, to give a summary of the data he received from the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Dwyer stated that they had about an 85 percent response rate. He said that their research was done at the district level. They hope to do a follow-up shortly that looks at the school level. He said most districts offer what he would call core classes; there are some districts not offering chemistry or physics. He said when it comes to AP [Advanced Placement] course offerings, they are fairly low. He said they also are tracking poverty rates and the amount of state funding throughout districts. There is a strong correlation between high-minority and low-income districts and lack of availability of AP courses. Spanish is the predominant language offered in schools, followed by French, German, and Chinese. When it comes to mathematics, the higher level you go, the less availability. Fifty-nine percent of districts across the state offer statistics. Ninety-six percent of districts offer Algebra I and Algebra II. All integrated mathematics courses were counted as Algebra I or II. This means that there are 4 percent of districts that are not offering those courses. Thus, some districts are in violation of state law.

Mr. Cann asked if Exhibit 3 (in the report) is the school-based access information and Exhibit 4 is the district information.

Ms. Handy then said where it says Exhibit 3, could that be labeled Illinois school-level course-access data? And could Exhibit 4 be labeled Illinois district-level course-access data?

Mr. Cann asked: Is there a way to line up these exhibits to make the comparison easier?

Ms. Handy thinks that is a good idea.

Ms. Handy then said the task force amended the digital divide section of the introduction to talk about how the digital divide exists both in homes and schools. The other change was made to give more context on how other states run their virtual education programs.

Ms. Hamblin then pointed out a correction on page 12. In the first sentence under Access Structures, Illinois has a “virtual school,” not a “course-access” program. This needs to be changed.

Mr. Cann then asked to return to page 3 where Ms. Palatine’s name is misspelled.

The task force then moved on to the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: *ISBE must oversee the quality of virtual courses and review relevant data to ensure rigor and excellence.*

Ms. Handy said Mr. Frost suggested a change to Recommendation 1 where instead of saying “course design,” the report would say “course quality.” She then said Ms. Osmond had a change where it says “any virtual education programs will be held to quality standards” instead of “just IVS” (except for the last sentence where IVS [Illinois Virtual School] is mentioned).

MS. Handy said that in the funding section, a minimum course fee was added. There would still be the fee waiver for low-income students. The language drafted on page 16 states: “The

committee recommends incorporating a maximum cap on the poverty rate used in the calculation (e.g., less than or equal to 90 percent or 95 percent) so that students or districts contribute between \$16.75–\$33.50 for each course. Or, the cost per course could be set at a minimum flat fee—for example, \$20 or \$25. The committee determined that cost should not be prohibitive for any student who wants to take a course, regardless of family income.” She then asked the task force if they feel they should be more specific regarding the language here.

Ms. Osmond said she feels comfortable with the language as stated.

Ms. Handy then asked the task force to move to Recommendation 3 where a vote was needed.

Recommendation 3: *Students taking courses for high school credit usually must have approval from their home districts. In instances where students’ home districts do not offer specific core mathematics or science subjects or foreign language courses, students may opt into a corresponding IVS class and have the credit recognized by their high school.*

Ms. Hamblin said the language where it mentions IVS needs to be changed.

Ms. Handy suggested the language say: “into a corresponding state-approved virtual education class.” She then said the subtext of this recommendation mentions mathematics, science, and foreign language classes, so there needs to be a discussion on whether the task force wants to amend this language. She said that Ms. Shutter, after a discussion with the guidance counselor at her school, provided a list of the bare minimum of courses students need to be college ready (Algebra I and II, biology, chemistry, physics, U.S. history, civics or economics, Western civilization or global studies, calculus, and coding) and that perhaps these courses should be added to the language.

Mr. Dohrer said he is worried about basing a requirement like this based on the opinions of guidance counselors or the task force. He said he would feel more comfortable if they were talking about a list of courses that are explicitly required for graduation by the state of Illinois. He would be comfortable with a mandate that required this. He said college admittance requirements vary widely.

Ms. Osmond stated that she feels a course such as calculus is very important and that there are students who absolutely need a class such as calculus that might be a requirement for an engineering school.

Ms. Hamblin added that it’s more about students being able to take classes that they feel would make them best ready for college versus courses required by all students.

Mr. Dohrer reiterated that he believes this recommendation should only include classes required to graduate.

Ms. Handy then asked him if he could list what those classes are.

Mr. Dohrer stated 4 years of language arts; 3 years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra 1 and one of which must include geometry content; 2 years of science, and 2 years of social studies.

Ms. Handy pointed out that Algebra II is not in the Illinois high school requirements. She then asked: If a student does not have access to Algebra II, shouldn't that student be able to opt in?

There was then a discussion about middle school students taking high school-level mathematics courses and whether those classes would count for high school credit.

Ms. Hamblin stated that she believes there was legislation passed last summer where students taking high school-level classes in middle school would receive high school credit for those classes.

Ms. Handy, however, said that even if a student takes Algebra I in middle school, that student will still need three mathematics courses in something else.

Ms. Handy said that the task force should take a vote and offered two suggestions for doing so: (1) The task force could take a vote on whether to include a specific list at all, and add language that states students can opt into classes required to graduate when not offered by the home district, or (2) the task force could take a series of votes on what kinds of college-ready classes students should be able to opt into.

Ms. Shutter said her only other comment about this list is that the classes on it are not specific recommendations from her school's guidance counselor, but from the College Board. She then said this is a recommendation and that she is comfortable with the College Board's recommendations, but also is fine with just recommending high school graduation requirements.

Mr. Dohrer made a motion to vote on the third recommendation: "Students taking courses for high school credit must usually have approval from their home districts; in instances where a student's home district does not offer courses that are required for graduation, students may opt into a corresponding state-approved virtual education course and have that credit recognized by their high school."

Mr. Rodriguez seconded this motion.

Ms. Shutter asked Mr. Dohrer if he would change "required for graduation" to "required by the state of Illinois."

Ms. Handy said she is going to propose an amendment, but thinks the task force should first vote on it.

Roll-call vote on Mr. Dohrer's amendment to Recommendation 3:

Students taking courses for high school credit must usually have approval from their home districts; in instances where a student's home district does not offer courses that are required for graduation, students may opt into a corresponding state-approved virtual education course and have that credit recognized by their high school.

Yea	Nay
Mr. Cann	
Mr. Dohrer	
Ms. Handy	
Mr. Janssen	
Mr. Martensen	
Ms. Osmond	
Mr. Rodriguez	
Ms. Shutter	
Rep. Sosnowski	
Ms. Hamblin	
Total: 10	Total: 0

The motion carried.

Ms. Handy then made a motion to amend Mr. Dohrer’s recommendation in a manner that states: ‘...in instances where home districts do not offer courses that are required for graduation or minimum courses required for admission to college as determined by a third-party validator, students may...’

The motion was seconded by Ms. Hamblin.

Mr. Cann asked if that would only include courses not offered by the district.

Ms. Handy replied yes. She added that the language she included in her recommendation would not include a list.

Ms. Shutter said she struggles with the open-endedness of the courses required for admission to college.

Mr. Cann said this creates too much of a gray area to have this required by districts.

Roll-call vote on Ms. Handy’s amendment to Recommendation 3:

In instances where home districts do not offer courses that are required for graduation or minimum courses required for admission to college as determined by a third-party validator such as the College Board, students may....

Yea	Nay
Ms. Hamblin	Mr. Cann
Ms. Handy	Mr. Dohrer
Mr. Rodriguez	Mr. Janssen
Rep. Sosnowski	Mr. Martensen
	Ms. Osmond
	Ms. Shutter

Total: 4	Total: 6
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The motion failed.

Mr. Dohrer suggested that perhaps the task force should add another recommendation that states: “We strongly recommend that schools try to accept course credit from virtual schools that have been approved by the state, especially those that would help students get to college.”

Ms. Osmond said that instead of making this a separate recommendation, perhaps it would be enough to add this language to the end of Recommendation 3.

The task force then had a discussion on how this language at the end of Recommendation 3 would read. They came up with: “We encourage districts to accept for credit state-approved virtual education courses, particularly when those courses further a student’s potential for college and career readiness.”

Ms. Handy made the motion to add this language as a third sentence to Recommendation 3. Mr. Dohrer seconded.

Roll-call vote on adding language of encouragement at the end of Recommendation 3:

We encourage districts to accept for credit state-approved virtual education courses, particularly when those courses further a student’s potential for college and career readiness.

Yea	Nay
Ms. Hamblin	
Mr. Cann	
Mr. Dohrer	
Ms. Handy	
Mr. Janssen	
Mr. Martensen	
Ms. Osmond	
Mr. Rodriguez	
Ms. Shutter	
Rep. Sosnowski	
Total: 10	Total: 0

The motion carried.

Ms. Handy then made a motion to vote on Recommendation 3 as a final bill. Mr. Cann seconded.

Roll-call vote on Recommendation 3 as final:

Students taking courses for high school credit must usually have approval from their home districts; in instances where a student’s home district does not offer courses that are required for graduation, students may opt into a corresponding state-approved virtual course and have that

credit recognized by their high school. We encourage districts to accept for credit state-approved virtual education courses, particularly when those courses further a student’s potential for college and career readiness.

Mr. Cann suggested that the task force needs to make it clear that this is not a replacement or a reason for districts to stop offering a course and passing it on to the virtual offerings.

Ms. Handy replied yes, and that they could add that to the text.

Yea	Nay
Ms. Hamblin	
Mr. Cann	
Mr. Dohrer	
Ms. Handy	
Mr. Janssen	
Mr. Martensen	
Ms. Osmond	
Mr. Rodriguez	
Ms. Shutter	
Rep. Sosnowski	
Total: 10	Total: 0

The motion carried.

The task force then moved on to Recommendation 4.

Recommendation 4: *ISBE should have the ability to authorize multiple providers to offer virtual courses in addition to IVS*

Ms. Handy motioned to take a vote on Recommendation 4 as stands. Ms. Osmond seconded.

Ms. Shutter suggested using the word “will” rather than “should” in the recommendation.

Ms. Handy said she was fine with that change.

Mr. Cann wanted to know what the benefit was of having two different providers offer the same class.

Ms. Handy said it helps find quality providers.

Ms. Shutter motioned to amend, and Ms. Handy seconded.

The recommendation will now read: “ISBE *will* rather than *should*.”

The amendment was put to a voice vote. Everyone agreed.

The task force then voted on Recommendation 4 as final.

Roll-call vote on Recommendation 4 as final:

Yea	Nay
Ms. Hamblin	
Mr. Cann	
Mr. Dohrer	
Ms. Handy	
Mr. Janssen	
Mr. Martensen	
Ms. Osmond	
Mr. Rodriguez	
Ms. Shutter	
Rep. Sosnowski	
Total: 10	Total: 0

The motion carried.

The task force then moved on to Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 5: *Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher license unless ISBE has specifically approved an exception to the licensure requirement for a high-quality program.*

Ms. Handy said there are two questions about Recommendation 5. (A) Should anyone teaching a virtual online course in Illinois need an Illinois teaching license, no exceptions? or (B) Should there be some exceptions to this rule, such as college professors teaching at institutions of higher education who have been vetted by ISBE?

Ms. Handy liked Option B and made a motion to amend the language to read: “Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher’s license unless ISBE specifically approves an exception to the licensure requirement for a high-quality program provided by an institution of higher education.”

Ms. Osmond seconded.

Ms. Hamblin asked if they should say “high-quality state-approved program.”

Ms. Hamblin then made a motion for this amendment. Ms. Osmond seconded.

The voice vote for this amendment passed.

Ms. Handy then motioned to vote for Recommendation 5, Option B: “Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher’s license unless ISBE specifically approves an exception to the licensure requirement for a high-quality state-approved program provided by an institution of higher education.”

Ms. Osmond seconded.

Mr. Cann asked: What would the exception be?

Ms. Handy used the University of Michigan as an example and said if such an institution had a great virtual education program, it would be to the state’s benefit to utilize it.

Mr. Dohrer felt uncomfortable opening up that door. He said there are ways for people with those qualifications (professors with doctorates) to get an Illinois teaching license, even provisionally. He said he is just not comfortable with Option B at this point.

Ms. Hamblin asked if Option B would only be given an exception to online courses and if the task force wanted to send that message.

Ms. Handy said yes, but an Illinois high school student can’t practically go to the campus of a university such as Michigan to receive those courses; online makes sense and opens up these opportunities.

Mr. Dohrer said he doesn’t believe it would happen very often that institutions such as the University of Michigan would seek the approval of ISBE to teach virtual courses. He reiterated that there are ways for educators without an Illinois teaching license to get one.

Roll-call vote on Recommendation 5, Option B:

Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher’s license unless ISBE specifically approves an exception to the licensure requirement for a high-quality state-approved program provided by an institution of higher education.

Yea	Nay
Ms. Handy	Mr. Cann
Ms. Osmond	Mr. Dohrer
Mr. Rodriguez	Ms. Hamblin
Rep. Sosnowski	Mr. Janssen
	Mr. Martensen
	Ms. Shutter
Total: 4	Total: 6

The motion failed.

Mr. Cann motioned to vote for Recommendation 5, Option A. Ms. Shutter seconded.

Roll-call vote on Recommendation 5, Option A:

Virtual school teachers must hold a valid Illinois teacher’s license.

Yea	Nay
Mr. Cann	Ms. Handy
Mr. Dohrer	Mr. Rodriguez
Ms. Hamblin	
Mr. Janssen	
Mr. Martensen	
Ms. Shutter	
Total: 6	Total: 2

The motion carried.

In the language describing Recommendation 5, the word “most” will be omitted from the first sentence and the following sentences (other than the first) will be deleted.

The task force then moved on to Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 6: *School districts should communicate to students and families about the availability of virtual courses.*

Ms. Handy asked for the task force’s thoughts about this recommendation.

Ms. Handy asked if there will be a master approved list of providers that is publicly available.

Ms. Hamblin’s suggestion will be added to the subtext under Recommendation 4.

Ms. Handy made a motion to vote for Recommendation 6. Mr. Rodriguez seconded.

Roll-call vote on Recommendation 6:

Yea	Nay
Mr. Cann	
Mr. Dohrer	
Ms. Hamblin	
Ms. Handy	
Mr. Janssen	
Mr. Martensen	
Mr. Rodriguez	
Ms. Shutter	
Total: 8	Total: 0

The motion carried.

Ms. Hamblin said that Recommendation 7 still has the IVS language and that it needs to be changed to say “state-approved virtual education programs.” Also, both uses of the word “should” should be changed to “will.”

Ms. Hamblin’s amendment to Recommendation 7 passed by voice vote.

Ms. Hamblin then motioned to vote on Recommendation 7. Ms. Osmond seconded.

Roll-call vote on Recommendation 7 as amended:

Yea	Nay
Mr. Cann Mr. Dohrer Ms. Hamblin Ms. Handy Mr. Janssen Mr. Martensen Mr. Rodriguez Ms. Shutter	
Total: 8	Total:

The motion carried.

The task force then voted on whether to give Ms. Handy authority to approve the final meeting minutes provided that she allows the task force members 48 hours to review and respond with concerns.

The voice vote carried.

Mr. Rodriguez then motioned to vote on approving the full document. The motion was seconded by Mr. Janssen.

Roll-call vote to approve full report:

Yea	Nay
Mr. Cann Mr. Dohrer Ms. Hamblin Ms. Handy Mr. Janssen Mr. Martensen Mr. Rodriguez Ms. Shutter	
Total: 8	Total:

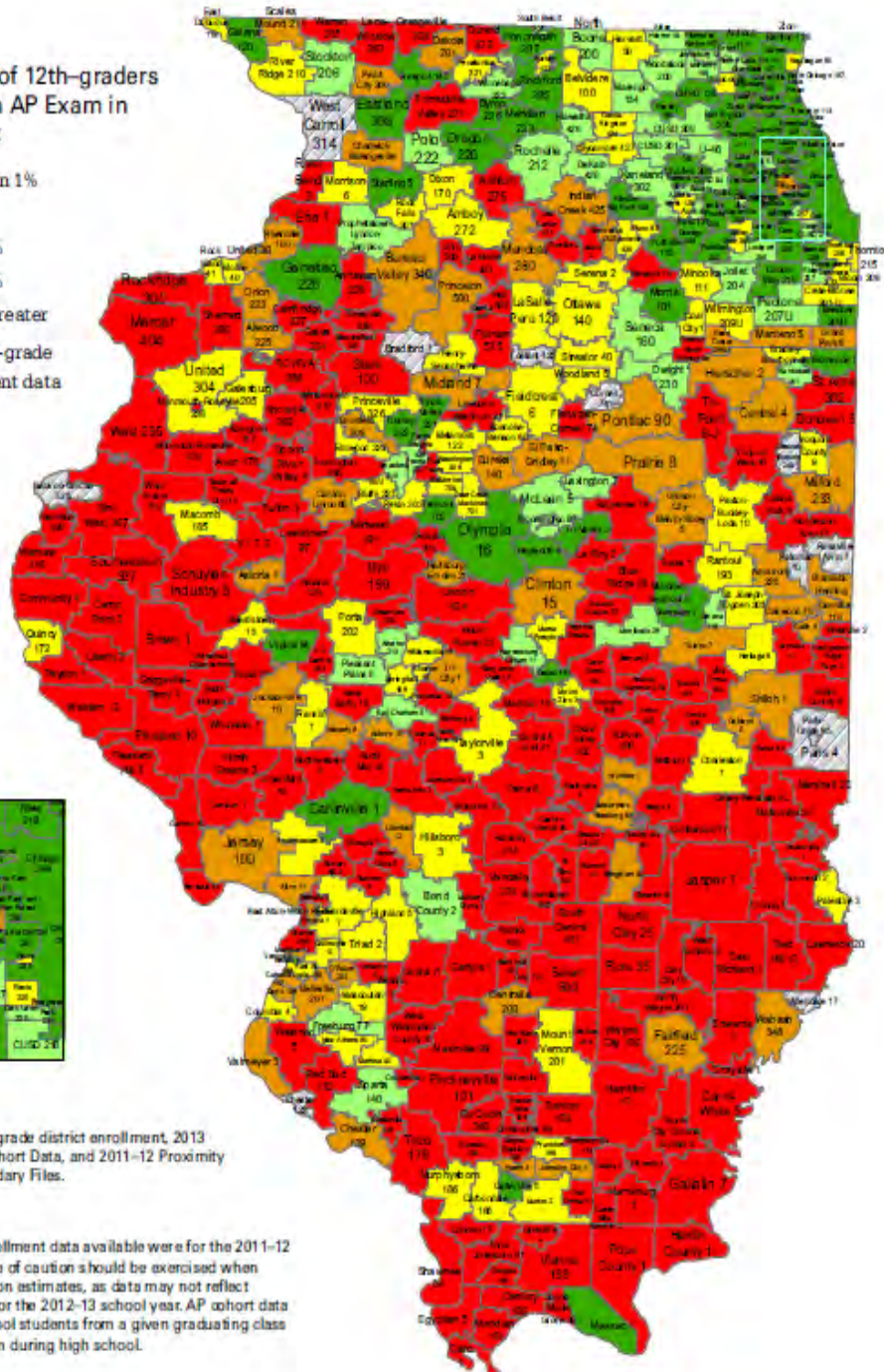
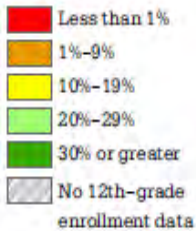
A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Cann and seconded by Ms. Shutter.

Appendix C

Illinois Public Schools

AP[®] Participation by District: Class of 2013

Percentage of 12th-graders who took an AP Exam in high school:



Sources:
 2011–12 NCES 12th-grade district enrollment, 2013
 College Board AP Cohort Data, and 2011–12 Proximity
 School District Boundary Files.

Notes:
 The most recent enrollment data available were for the 2011–12
 school year. A degree of caution should be exercised when
 reviewing participation estimates, as data may not reflect
 district enrollments for the 2012–13 school year. AP cohort data
 represent public school students from a given graduating class
 who took an AP Exam during high school.