Illinois Computer Science Education Task Force Meeting Minutes

Meeting Summary, by Task Force Members

Friday, May 5, 2017
1:00–3:30 p.m.

Webinar: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/2138625265346043650

Attendees

Task Force Members

Ali Karbassi, CoderDojoChi

Steve Svetlik (Chair), Computer Science Association

Jerry Weinberg, Southern Illinois University

Katie Hendrickson, Code.org
Randy Swinkle, Illinois Press Association
Mike Fortner, Representative 49th District

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Staff

Brian Houser, Principal Consultant, College and Career Readiness

Midwest Comprehensive Center Staff

Nicol Christie
Jeremy Rasmussen

Meeting Objective

To review draft recommendations

Computer Science (CS) Task Force Meeting

Mr. Svetlik said the focus of this meeting is to try to reach consensus on as many of the draft recommendations as possible. Mr. Svetlik started the conversation with part 5, recommendations to the general assembly. He said he would like each person on the task force available to take one of the seven recommendations and add applicable resources and wordsmith the language.

Ms. Hendrickson suggested having a quick outline of part 5 prior to other parts just so that the recommendations are front and center.

Dr. Weinberg asked if there will be an executive summary.

Mr. Svetlik said there would be an overview or summary that would describe the need, build the case, and also give a high-level synopsis of the recommendations. Mr. Svetlik said he also was thinking about a background on the formation of the task force and providing a view on the current state of CS in Illinois.

Mr. Swinkle said it would help him to take a look at some prototypes of what a final product of the report would possibly look like. He said he has been working on gathering information on CS ethics. A prototype report would help him see how the ethics part fits.

Mr. Svetlik gave Mr. Swinkle directions on how to access the Arkansas CS task force report.

Mr. Svetlik said he talked to a few task force members, and there was mention that, instead of having a definition of CS, the task force should define what CS education should look like in Illinois.

Mr. Karbassi and Dr. Weinberg agree.

Mr. Svetlik asked Representative Fortner if bullet 2 of part 2 (current accuracy of data sets) could translate into a recommendation in part 5.

Representative Fortner said bullet 2 of part 2 lacks direction in its current form. He said he likes Mr. Svetlik's sense that these are findings, but they need to have the feel of findings.

For bullet 2 of part 2, Representative Fortner suggested adding the word *incomplete* to give it a sense that it is a finding.

Mr. Svetlik then asked the task force if bullet 3 of part 2 (current teacher licensure and endorsement procedures) needs to be included in the findings.

Mr. Karbassi said yes.

Representative Fortner said he would just add at the beginning of the sentence (bullet 3 of part 2) *the need for* and omit the word *current'* and replace it with *revised*.

Dr. Weinberg asked if this covers both preservice and in-service.

Mr. Svetlik said yes.

Ms. Hendrickson suggested that, instead of the words *revised* or *updated*, they could use *clear* and *obtainable*, although she said words like *revised* or *updated* are fine if they want to keep it a little more vague.

Mr. Svetlik asked Ms. Hendrickson if she is aware of any states where there is a four-year CS program with a license.

Ms. Hendrickson said those types of programs are rare. According to data, there are 51 individuals who graduated in 2015 prepared to teach CS education.

Mr. Svetlik said he would like to see a primary licensure in Illinois in CS education. He asked the task force for their opinions on this matter.

Ms. Hendrickson completely agreed.

The task force then moved on to bullet 4 of part 2 (CS accessibility for underrepresented groups), which Mr. Svetlik said needs to be improved.

Dr. Weinberg said there was brief discussion about defining how CS courses count toward graduation. He said a clear requirement toward graduation not only might impact whether a student has access to it, but whether a student will take advantage of the availability.

The task force then moved on to bullet 5 of part 2 (rigorous and engaging CS education access across all K–12 schools). He asked if this bullet was redundant with any of previously discussed bullets.

Dr. Weinberg suggested adding something to the effect of curriculum that is aligned with current research in underrepresented populations in CS.

Mr. Svetlik said research is a big component to the recommendation for the office of CS education. He said he sees rationale for adding it in either the office of CS education bullet or this one (bullet 5 of part 2).

The task force then moved on to bullet 6 of part 2 (impact of the above [bullets] on CS accessibility for historically underrepresented groups). Mr. Svetlik said he thinks this bullet is redundant and omitted it.

Mr. Svetlik said Ms. Wilkerson had mentioned that one of the major contributors leading to the success of Chicago Public Schools' CS for all was through involving a variety of stakeholder groups and being purposeful of why CS is important. He also said there is a lack of understanding among principles on what CS is. Mr. Svetlik then offered the following as a finding: "The lack of engagement of all stakeholder groups and the need for CS to be offered in every K–12 school."

Mr. Swinkle said there may be some stakeholder groups that primarily focus on that need. He said the word *all* might need some type of a qualifier. He suggested, "The need exists to enhance the engagement of all stakeholder groups to realize the need and importance of CS K–12 education."

Ms. Hendrickson really liked the wording *need to enhance*.

The task force then moved on to part 3: task force charge 2 (State of CS Education in Other Jurisdictions).

Mr. Svetlik said, for part 3, a comparative analysis between what we have already identified in each of the paragraphs represented by the prior bullet points as well as success stories from Arkansas, Iowa, and Texas. He asked the task force if there was a desire to keep part 3 or strike it from the report.

Mr. Swinkle said he does not think it should be stricken, but that it would give some additional context to the work the state is doing.

Representative Fortner said it seems that part 3 should include both charge 2 and charge 3. Both charges deal with work in other jurisdictions. One charge is to analyze current CS education laws and the other charge is to identify CS best practices. He said those two charges could be put together in one section. He recommended, to the extent possible, the analysis of other jurisdictions parallel the bullet points of the findings that are found in part 2.

The task force then moved on to part 4: Task force belief statement. Mr. Svetlik added a comment referencing Arkansas's state report and he encouraged judicious borrowing of some of their belief statements. He said he would send via email a google form where task force members can add their belief statements.

The task force then moved on to part 5 (recommendations to the general assembly). Mr. Svetlik asked if the task force thought they should keep the establishment of an operationalizable definition of CS.

The task force said yes.

Mr. Svetlik then moved on to the second bullet (revision of state data-collection process) and asked for thoughts from the task force.

Dr. Weinberg said bullet 3 (the creation by the general assembly of an office of CS education) would necessitate the need for bullet 2. He said the task force might want to think through reordering or coupling some of these recommendations.

Mr. Svetlik then moved on to bullet 4 (revision of licensure process). The task force was comfortable with this recommendation.

Mr. Svetlik then moved on to bullet 5 (access to CS education). Mr. Svetlik noted feasibility of online CS courses in areas where there is not currently a CS teacher.

Ms. Hendrickson said she was not sure if that was a best practice that they should be recommending here. She said she would rather focus on things that provide more high-quality access.

Dr. Weinberg agreed.

Representative Fortner then discussed some points related to bullet 6 (funding). He said there was specific conversation regarding funding for the office of CS education, and the task force will have to be very specific about anything else that requires funding (i.e., funding to ISBE, funding to schools, funding through grants, and so forth).

Dr. Weinberg said there have been discussions in past meetings about specific funding (i.e., funding teacher licensure). He said he understands the need for specificity regarding funding.

Dr. Weinberg asked if making CS a component of graduation requirements should be added to this part.

Mr. Svetlik said Code.org's framing of this is that it is part of their mission for there to be K–12 CS education opportunities in every school around the United States.

Ms. Hendrickson added that, at the moment, Code.org does not recommend CS being a graduation requirement because there is not the capacity.

Dr. Weinberg said it should not be specifically a graduation requirement but should somehow count toward graduation.

Mr. Svetlik said he would include that recommendation.

Mr. Svetlik then asked for volunteers from the task force to take on certain bullet points to help flesh out the content by the middle of next week.

Mr. Swinkle said he would like to do a little report related to including ethics in CS education that he will send to Mr. Svetlik.

Mr. Svetlik said he would send out an e-mail to the entire task force, asking for members to take on the content portion of these recommendations.

Adjourn at 3:32