



Illinois State Board of Education

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

Illinois Review Committee on Virtual Education

Meeting Summary

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
-------------	------------------	----------------

Presenters

Amy Huang	Dr. Judy Minor	Elizabeth Palatine
-----------	----------------	--------------------

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.