



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

Jeremy Rasmussen

Don Doggett

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 1 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 asked whether Exhibit 3 could be labeled Illinois school-level course-access data and Exhibit 4 could be labeled Illinois district-level course-access data.

Mr. Cann asked whether there was a way to line up these exhibits to make the comparison easier.

Ms. Handy stated that thinks that is aligning the exhibits 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. She explained that the other substantive change was 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 that the requirements are as follows: 4 years of language arts; 3 years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I 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 Rep. 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 Ms. Handy Mr. Rodriguez Rep. Sosnowski	Mr. Cann Mr. Dohrer Mr. Janssen 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 Mr. Dohrer Ms. Hamblin Mr. Janssen Mr. Martensen Ms. Shutter	Ms. Handy Mr. Rodriguez
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.