



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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**MSDE Digital Learning Advisory  
Stakeholders Committee Meeting**

**May 5, 2020  
Virtual Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

Council Members in Attendance: Dr. Carol A. Williamson (Chairperson), Ms. Donna Baker, Mr. Brian Beaubien, Ms. Nancy Cahlink-Seidler, Mr. Brad Engel, Dr. Julie Evans, Ms. Anna Gannon, Ms. Yasmine Juhar, Ms. Marsye Kaplan, Ms. Rebecca Pensero, Mr. Marshall Pike, Dr. Peggy Pugh, Ms. Nina Riggs, Ms. Kelly Ruby, Ms. Leann Schubert, Ms. Amy Shepler, Dr. Gina Solano, Ms. Tonya Sweat, Mr. John Tompkins, and Dr. Christine Welch

MSDE Staff in Attendance: Ms. Val Emrich, Mr. Shane J. McCormick, and Ms. Erin Senior

Members Not in Attendance: Dr. Colleen Eisenbeiser, Dr. Joey Jones

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and a quorum was established.

**Welcome, Introductions & Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Carol Williamson, chairperson, welcomed the members and reviewed the topics discussed during the April meeting. The members reviewed the meeting agenda and the expectations for the meeting. The members reviewed the minutes from the April 22, 2020, meeting. A roll call vote of the members was conducted to approve the minutes.

Roll Call Vote: 20 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstained. The motion carried.

Dr. Williamson discussed with the members recent conversations with members of the Maryland State Board of Education regarding online learning; more information would be shared towards the conclusion of the meeting. Dr. Williamson shared with the members that the meeting would be primarily a working session focused on reviewing the committee's overall objectives, with specific focus on Objective 1. The members would review potential short-term and mid-term activities and discuss potential roadblocks towards achieving Objective 1.

**Review of Committee Objectives**

Ms. Val Emrich, MSDE staff, reviewed the objectives of the Digital Learning Advisory Committee as established by the State Board of Education. The four objectives that were established:

- Objective 1: Increase awareness of Maryland’s digital opportunities
- Objective 2: Enhancement of equitable access to and utilizations of digital learning
- Objective 3: Enhancement of college and career readiness opportunities
- Objective 4: Enhancement of educational delivery options

Each objective includes short-term, mid-term, and long-term activities to help reach each objective.

### **Objective 1: Suggested Activities**

The members reviewed suggested short-term activities to achieve Objective 1, increasing awareness of Maryland’s digital opportunities, and were asked to provide feedback. Ms. Leeann Schubert recommended integrating greater support from pupil personnel workers (PPW). Ms. Tonya Sweat recommended distributing resources to parents through the Maryland PTA.

Ms. Anna Gannon recommended utilizing partnerships with stakeholders such as local school systems and the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) to offer professional development opportunities to increase digital learning capacity state-wide. The members discussed issues regarding information dissemination to local school systems. The members agreed that obtaining the approval of local school system leadership was imperative to ensuring that information is made available.

Ms. Erin Senior, MSDE staff, summarized that one of the goals of the committee was to provide information to the local school systems and disseminate opportunities for students so that local school systems could independently decide how to incorporate. This was due in part to the State of Maryland’s status as a locally controlled state, whereby management and decision-making of education matters are made at the local levels. The members agreed in principle that communications to and disseminated through local school systems need to be customizable to avoid a one-sized fits all approach.

The members discussed potential hurdles to increasing awareness of digital opportunities. Dr. Peggy Pugh stated that the committee needs to recognize the discrepancies in the capacity of local school systems to receive and disseminate information and to offer digital learning opportunities. Ms. Gannon discussed addressing the needs of underserved and disadvantaged communities to ensure equitable distribution and access to digital opportunities. The members discussed additional opportunities to disseminate information, including partnerships with local chambers of commerce and local management boards, and advertising opportunities at local libraries, specifically for students with limited or no at-home connectivity.

Dr. Pugh discussed ensuring local staff buy-in as a hurdle to accomplishing the short-term goal of disseminating information. The members discussed further issues regarding equitable information dissemination; the members reaffirmed that information dissemination cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution. Mr. Brian Beaubien recommended that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) develop directions to local school systems’ points of contact, and provide

a basic outline of digital course options that can be disseminated and tailored by local school systems to meet specific needs.

The members discussed as a mid-term activity the maintaining of a web page database with links to local school systems and resources and policies. The members agreed that information needs to be communicated clearly and needs to reflect that all online course offerings must be approved by MSDE. The members agreed that one of the hurdles to accomplishing such a goal is potential parent frustrations if courses are offered in one local school system but not another.

The members were asked to provide additional feedback on potential hurdles to mid-term activities; no additional feedback was received. The members discussed how information is disseminated to parents at the State and local levels. Ms. Sweat commented that the Maryland PTA maintains a parent email database and can be used as a resource to disseminate information to parents state-wide. Several members shared that their local school systems utilize digital resources such as SchoolMessenger to communicate with parents.

### **Discussion of Roadblocks**

The members reviewed the roadblocks document that had been developed based on feedback by the members of perceived roadblocks to digital learning opportunities during its February 2020 meeting. The members were asked for their preference on how they would like to update the roadblock document during future meetings. The members expressed their preference to work in small groups during future meetings.

### **Board of Education, Updates, and Text Steps**

Dr. Williamson shared several updates from the State Board of Education with the members. A presentation to update the State Board of the committee's activities and initial recommendations would be prepared to submit during the June State Board meeting. The State Board has also expressed an interest in expanding the focus of the committee to review items such as existing state-wide connectivity capabilities. The members were informed that additional stakeholders will be invited to serve on the committee as the scope of the committee has expanded.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.