



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

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**MSDE Digital Learning Advisory  
Stakeholders Committee Meeting**

**June 9, 2020  
WebEx Virtual Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

Council Members in Attendance: Dr. Carol A. Williamson (Chairperson), Ms. Donna Baker, Mr. Brian Beaubien, Dr. Colleen Eisenbeiser, Mr. Brad Engel, Dr. Julie Evans, Ms. Anna Gannon, Dr. Joey Jones, Ms. Yasmine Juhar, Ms. Marsye Kaplan, Ms. Rebecca Pensero, Mr. Marshall Pike, Dr. Peggy Pugh, Ms. Nina Riggs, Ms. Kelly Ruby, 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: Ms. Nancy Cahlink-Seidler, and Ms. Leann Schubert

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. when a quorum was established.

**Welcome & Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Carol Williamson, chairperson, welcomed the members and reviewed the activities of the committee during the meeting on May 19, 2020. The members reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting. Dr. Williamson clarified for the members, after consultation with MSDE Legal Counsel, that comments made during virtual meetings in the chat feature were not essential to be recorded in the meeting minutes. The members had inquired whether such comments needed to be recorded.

A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Dr. Gina Solano and seconded by Dr. Peggy Pugh. A roll call of the members was conducted to approve the minutes:

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

Dr. Williamson reviewed the topics and expected activities that would be discussed during the meeting. A presentation on blended instruction was included in the meeting agenda based on feedback from the members during the previous meeting.

**Presentation on Remote Learning**

Ms. Erin Senior, MSDE staff, facilitated a presentation on remote learning. The members were shown a video example of a remote learning classroom, including examples of teacher

facilitation and student participation. Ms. Senior discussed the two core components of blended learning: synchronous learning and asynchronous learning. Asynchronous learning focuses on the content modules for specific topics and subjects. Ms. Senior provided examples of asynchronous learning models, which includes step-by-step instructions for independent assignments.

Ms. Nina Riggs asked for clarification on supports in place for students without family support. Ms. Senior shared that all students in the examples given were provided a personal device and a hot spot for connectivity from the local school system (LSS) that they attend. Dr. Christine Welch inquired about the platform used to conduct virtual learning; Ms. Senior clarified the types of digital platforms used. The members discussed further the platforms used within their respective LSSs.

Ms. Anna Gannon asked if data and feedback had been collected on students that were not able to connect to online courses, and the effectiveness of the online presentations compared to physical classroom instruction. Ms. Senior shared that she was not aware that any data had been collected and shared from her personal experience that the initial rollout of remote learning was not ideal but improved as lessons became more familiar and structured.

#### **Review of Committee Objectives 2-4**

Ms. Val Emrich, MSDE staff, directed the members to a document in the committee's Google Drive folder of key definitions related to digital learning in the State of Maryland. The members were asked to review the document and to add comments and suggestions; however, the members were asked not to make direct edits or changes to the document.

Ms. Emrich reviewed the working groups that the members would break into to review three of the four committee objectives. The members would review suggested short-term, mid-term, and long-term activities or strategies to accomplish each objective, identify potential suggestions to help accomplish each objective, and identify potential hurdles or roadblocks to accomplish. The members would reconvene and each working group would report out to the full committee with its updates and recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned into breakout group work sessions at 10:42 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 11:15 a.m.

#### **Discussion of Committee Objective 2**

Dr. Peggy Pugh presented on Objective 2-enhancement of equitable access to and utilization of digital learning. The members discussed the differences between guidebooks and policies, and the importance of synchronous instruction. The policies would address areas such as course selection, pay for professional staff, and requirements to become certified as an online instructor. The members also discussed challenges with ensuring student engagement, both in terms of connectivity and in all students being engaged while viewing digital content.

The members amended their recommended long-term solution of securing assistance and support from the University System of Maryland (USM) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to help achieve long-term strategies and activities. The members felt it important to also include community colleges as higher education partners. Long-term strategies and activities included developing a database of trained facilitators to be shared between LSSs, negotiate volume pricing for vendor courses, and build MSDE courses to replace vendor courses.

### **Discussion of Committee Objective 3**

Ms. Amy Shepler presented on Objective 3-enhancement of career and college readiness opportunities. The members discussed as a short-term activity how to build upon existing relationships with community colleges, and how each LSS could consider ways to expand dual enrollment. The members had previously identified how to define dual enrollment as a short-term hurdle. The members discussed developing a plan to involve staff in online learning as a mid-term solution; the members had previously recommended creating a plan for students. The members also discussed creating an online help desk to resolve technical issues, as well as a content help desk to aid with questions regarding the curriculum.

The members identified solutions and hurdles to accomplishing the long-term activity of creating a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit proposals from online post-secondary institutions to partner in the creation of a course that can be offered through the MSDE at a low cost. The members identified bringing together interested LSSs to develop the RFP as a long-term solution. The members also recommended distributing the RFP to interested institutions of higher education, including community colleges. The members identified as hurdles to long-term activities developing a model to evaluate the RFP and the potential lengthy procurement process to approve the RFP.

### **Discussion of Committee Objective 4**

Mr. Brian Beaubien presented on Objective 4-enhancement of educational delivery options. The members discussed several issues regarding scheduling, including how scheduling is organized at the local level. The members recommended that scheduling should account for more than one student in the same school and how scheduling compares to elementary and secondary schools. The members also identified as short-term hurdles the need to know how LSSs are providing devices to students or providing them to scale.

The members identified several additional solutions to accomplishing the short-term objective strategies and activities. In the process of engaging stakeholders about their experiences with digital learning, the members recommended applying data to make modifications, involving the State to make recommendations for LSSs to improve its programs, and ensuring that guidance and recommendations from the MSDE to LSSs be flexible and adaptable. The members also recommended that best practices be provided regarding scheduling synchronous learning meetings for elementary and secondary students and recommended the creation of a weekly office hour requirement for staff, with a description of what office hours include.

## **Review & Adjournment**

Ms. Emrich reviewed upcoming professional development opportunities offered by the MSDE during summer 2020 that focus on blended and online learning. Ms. Emrich directed the members to the MSDE remote training module, which includes content offered by LSSs. Topics included are assessments, early intervention and special education, accessibility, and English learners. Ms. Emrich shared that completion of training modules can be counted towards professional development credits for educators.

Ms. Emrich reminded the members that comments and suggestions to the definitions document in the committee's shared drive should be submitted as soon as possible. The members were reminded to only make comments and suggestions and to not make direct edits to the document.

Dr. Williamson discussed with the members recent conversations regarding online learning at the State Board of Education, and upcoming activities related to the committee. Dr. Williamson asked for volunteers to meet to discuss topics to include in a presentation to the State Board on the committee's activities at the next meeting of the State Board on June 23, 2020. Interested volunteers were instructed to contact the committee staff.

The members were reminded that the next meeting would take place on July 21, 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.