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State Superintendent of Schools

**MSDE Digital Learning Advisory
Stakeholders Committee Meeting**

**April 16, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

Council Members in Attendance: Dr. Carol A. Williamson (Chairperson), Mr. Brian Beaubien, Ms. Carol Beck, Mr. Brad Engel, Ms. Anna Gannon, Ms. Robin Hopkins, Ms. Yasmine Juhar, Ms. Marsye Kaplan, Mr. Andrew Moore, II, Ms. Rebecca Pensero, Dr. Peggy Pugh, Ms. Nina Riggs, Ms. Kelly Ruby, Ms. Leann Schubert, Ms. Amy Shepler, Ms. Susan Spinnato, Ms. Tonya Sweat, Mr. Jonathan Turner, and Dr. Christine Welch

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

Members Not in Attendance: Ms. Donna Baker, Mr. Brian Dulay, Dr. Colleen Eisenbeiser, Dr. Julie Evans, Ms. Marquita Friday, Dr. Joey Jones, Mr. Scott Nichols, Dr. Gina Solano, Ms. LaTanya Taylor, and Mr. John Tompkins

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. when a quorum was established.

Welcome & Approval of Minutes

Dr. Carol Williamson, chairperson, welcomed the members and the members reviewed the minutes from the March 19, 2021 meeting. A motion to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2021 meeting as presented was made by Ms. Tonya Sweat and was seconded by Ms. Marsye Kaplan. A roll call of the members was made to approve the minutes.

Roll Call Vote: 19 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstained. The motion carried.

Dr. Williamson reviewed the meeting agenda with the members and the topics that would be discussed. The members would receive an update on virtual program legislation. The members would be able to provide feedback on material that will be presented to the State Board of Education in an update on digital learning during the April 27, 2021 State Board meeting.

Updates

Ms. Val Emrich, MSDE staff, provided an update to the members on virtual learning focused legislation filed during the 2021 General Assembly, which concluded on April 12, 2021. The members had previously received legislative updates during the February and March 2021 meetings, respectively. Ms. Emrich shared that none of the virtual learning focused legislation that was filed passed the General Assembly.

Ms. Erin Senior, MSDE staff, provided an update on the subcommittee created to expand broadcast learning across the State of Maryland. Ms. Senior shared that seven committee members volunteered to serve on the subcommittee, and that a meeting of the subcommittee will take place in the coming weeks. Ms. Senior shared that any members still interested in joining the subcommittee should contact her via email.

The members were asked if they had any questions regarding the work of the subcommittee; Ms. Carol Beck asked for further clarification on the mission of the subcommittee. Ms. Senior clarified that the subcommittee would focus on broadcast learning and expanding broadcast learning opportunities through cross-district collaboration across the State of Maryland. Mr. Brian Beaubien expressed his willingness to serve on the subcommittee.

Ms. Senior provided an update to the members on summer professional learning opportunities available to educators across the State. Ms. Senior shared that the summer course catalog is available on the MSDE Blackboard site and encouraged the members to share the catalog with colleagues within the local school systems (LSS). The members received information on the costs of summer courses and some of the modifications to the course offerings for summer 2021. Ms. Senior shared that a course focused on blended learning (asynchronous learning and online synchronous teaching) will be piloted during the summer.

Dr. Williamson stated that several questions were asked in the virtual chat feature regarding passage of virtual learning education focused legislation. Ms. Emrich reiterated that no new legislation or regulations regarding virtual learning or virtual schools was passed during the 2021 General Assembly.

Digital Learning Board of Education Presentation

Dr. Williamson shared that the Board of Education Virtual Learning Work Group had expressed interest in providing an update to the full State Board regarding digital learning during the State Board meeting on April 27, 2021. The work group members were interested in receiving feedback from the Digital Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) members on the content of the presentation. The members were directed to the draft PowerPoint presentation and the content, which included information on the establishment of the work group and the DLAC, including the stakeholders invited to represent the committee, and the expansion of the DLAC mission and member representation in October 2020. The members also reviewed a slide discussing the selection of Canvas as the MSDE learning management system (LMS) platform.

The members were asked for feedback on the slides presented to this point. Ms. Marsye Kaplan requested in the virtual chat that special education be added as a representative stakeholder on the DLAC. Mr. Andrew Moore asked for clarification on the approval of the LMS; Ms. Emrich clarified that the LMS was approved by the Board of Public Works (BPW) as the LMS used by the MSDE. Ms. Susan Spinnato recommended in the virtual chat that the slide regarding the LMS could be amended to reflect that the LMS is the MSDE platform and not the State platform. Dr. Peggy Pugh asked in the virtual chat whether Blackboard would no longer be available with the selection of Canvas; Ms. Emrich clarified that Blackboard will be replaced by Canvas.

Dr. Williamson directed the members to the slide of Maryland's virtual accomplishments and reviewed the accomplishments listed. The members were asked for their feedback on accomplishments that should be added or content that should be revised; no additional feedback was provided. The members reviewed the slide on professional learning, which was based on data collected from spring and summer 2020. The members were asked for their feedback on the professional learning slide; no additional feedback was provided. The members were directed to the slide on the MSDE 2021 summer professional learning initiatives and were asked for their feedback; no additional feedback was provided.

The members were directed to the slides regarding Maryland's virtual initiatives and support provided through ESSER II set-aside funding, which includes courses provided through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Maryland Public Television (MPT). Ms. Emrich shared that the content on the ESSER II set-aside funding slide was accomplished through the initial allocation of ESSER II funds, and that the following slide will be accomplished in the next allocation.

Ms. Anna Gannon asked in the virtual chat whether a statement should be added to the accomplishments slide regarding the investigative work the subcommittee did in response to vendor submissions to the Request for Information (RFI). Dr. Williamson stated that the RFI was discussed in the slide but that the language could be clarified. Mr. Beaubien discussed in the virtual chat the importance of addressing social and emotional learning, and that issues with social and emotional learning have been a major issue for both students and parents. Dr. Williamson concurred with the concerns expressed by Mr. Beaubien.

The members reviewed the slide focusing on current LSS virtual opportunities, as the Board of Education work group has been interested in knowing current offerings within the State. Counties currently offering virtual opportunities include Frederick County, Kent County, and Queen Anne's County. Ms. Leann Schubert shared in the virtual chat that Baltimore County has had an eLearning program since 2012. The following slide reviewed virtual opportunities that are in development, including a virtual program in Harford County and blended virtual program/school applications by several counties. Ms. Gannon shared in the virtual chat that Howard County is seeking budget approval for a fully digital education center for the school year 2021-2022.

The members reviewed the final slide regarding next steps, which includes supporting cross-district broadcasting course opportunities, supporting LSS expansion of virtual learning opportunities established to meet student needs, and advancing the Future Ready Schools (FRS)

framework as a resource for LSSs. Dr. Williamson expressed thanks to the members for their feedback on the presentation; the committee staff would incorporate all feedback into the presentation to share with the Board of Education work group.

Future Ready Application and Process

The members discussed the FRS framework and the larger issues facing LSSs with how to use technology and using technology in instruction to create a comprehensive learning environment for all students. The members had expressed during a previous meeting using some of the ESSER II funds towards helping LSS in implementing the FRS framework. Dr. Pugh discussed the FRS framework and how the framework could be shared with LSSs to alleviate concerns with taking on another initiative.

The members were directed to an example of a report generated by FRS and the content and feedback provided in the report. Ms. Emrich directed the members to the survey portion of the report, which is used to assess current infrastructure and needs. The report provides a snapshot of current readiness across the seven components (gears) that make up the FRS framework. Dr. Pugh discussed the experience for Washington County Public Schools completing the initial FRS framework and the insights gained from the survey results on infrastructure needs and areas for improvement.

Ms. Sweat expressed her support for the FRS framework, the information provided in the report, and with the benefits that the FRS framework could provide to LSSs. Dr. Pugh expressed that cross-state collaboration could be a valuable output to utilization of the FRS framework, as it would allow districts to collaborate to share best practices. The members expressed approval with the anonymous district specific report as a selling point for LSSs, given that response data is not shared and that the report is only for the purpose of assisting and helping LSSs identify their needs, areas for improvement, and opportunities.

Ms. Sweat asked for clarification on the question design in the survey; Ms. Emrich stated that the question responses were with the options of “yes, no, or not yet a priority.” Dr. Williamson asked whether the allocation of ESSER II funds would be beneficial to LSSs to bring in a consultant or contractual staff to assist in completion of the survey; Dr. Pugh expressed that such a funding allocation would be beneficial to LSSs. The members were directed to the FRS framework dashboard website, which includes how to get started and suggested stakeholders to be involved in the completion process of the framework. The framework website also includes subsequent steps with recommendations and potential tasks.

The members were asked for their feedback or questions with regards to the FRS application and process as presented. Ms. Sweat asked whether it would be the initiative of the MSDE to promote the FRS framework to LSSs, whether there would be training for staff, and if districts would designate a staff member to receive the training. Dr. Pugh expressed support with providing training to LSSs and with designating a district staff member to be on boarded through training.

Ms. Senior asked, on behalf of Mr. Beaubien, how leadership changes within LSSs would impact participating and completing the FRS framework. Dr. Pugh stated that in Washington County Public Schools the framework was completed under previous leadership. Dr. Williamson expressed that new leadership may not know about or understand the framework, which is an issue that would need to be addressed.

The members reviewed phase 1 of the Future Ready application and process, which would involve all LSSs in the FRS process. Ms. Emrich shared that the second phase would involve the development and implementation of an LSS action plan to address their needs based on the feedback collected from the framework survey. Ms. Emrich shared that funding allocated to LSSs under the second phase might go towards professional development for staff if that was an area of need identified through the survey. Ms. Gannon asked in the virtual chat about offering funding to LSSs as an incentive rather than as a direct allocation.

Dr. Williamson shared that one consideration that will have to be made are changes through the Kirwan legislation with regards to changes in credits and assessments, and that digital learning will be a component of the implementation. Dr. Pugh expressed it would be helpful to get a list of what funding allocated through Kirwan is restricted to specific areas; Dr. Williamson stated that a list of this information can be developed and provided.

Dr. Williamson asked the members whether the process was simplified sufficiently to allow for LSSs to be able to complete phase one during summer 2021. Ms. Sweat expressed that there is time to complete phase one, however, summer schedules and vacations may complicate completion. Dr. Christine Welch expressed concerns for smaller LSSs with completing phase one due to insufficient staffing and manpower, specifically as districts work to determine instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Gannon expressed that if stipends are being offered that summer would be the ideal time to advocate for completion of phase one for LSSs.

Next Steps and Adjournment

Dr. Williamson thanked the members for their contributions and for their attendance. The members were informed that the next meeting will be held Thursday, May 20, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The date for the June meeting, originally scheduled for June 11, 2021, will be reassessed, and confirmed to the members at a later date.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m.