



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

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**MSDE Digital Learning Advisory  
Stakeholders Committee Meeting**

**May 19, 2020  
WebEx Virtual Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

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

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

Members Not in Attendance: Mr. Marshall Pike

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

**Welcome & Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Carol Williamson, chairperson, welcomed the members and reviewed the topics and activities that would be covered during the meeting.

The members reviewed the minutes from the May 5, 2020, meeting. Mr. John Tompkins asked whether questions and dialogue in the virtual chat feature were reflected in the meeting minutes. Ms. Val Emrich, MSDE staff, clarified that chat comments and questions were not incorporated in the meeting minutes but were incorporated in the committee's working documents. Dr. Williamson stated that MSDE legal counsel would be consulted to clarify whether content shared in the virtual meeting chat needed to be included in the meeting minutes or published separately, and whether virtual meetings could be recorded.

A roll call of the members was conducted to approve the minutes:

Roll Call Vote: 20 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstained. Members Absent from Vote: Dr. Joey Jones. The motion carried.

**Follow-Up Discussion of Committee Objective 1**

Ms. Erin Senior, MSDE staff, reviewed with the members the discussion during the May 5, 2020, meeting regarding the committee's first objective, increasing awareness of Maryland's

digital opportunities. An outline for Objective 1 was created from the members feedback; the members were directed to a digital version of the outline. The outline includes suggestions and ideas from the members on how to develop a comprehensive digital awareness campaign, as well as concerns or roadblocks to implementation. The members were encouraged to review and make suggestions to the outline prior to the next meeting but were asked not to make direct edits or changes to the outline document.

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

Ms. Emrich reviewed the group work sessions that the members would break into to review the remaining committee objectives. The objectives are:

- Objective 2: Enhancement of equitable access to and utilizations of digital learning
- Objective 3: Enhancement of career and college readiness opportunities
- Objective 4: Enhancement of educational delivery options

Each member had been assigned into a group to review one of the objectives, including suggested short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies and activities to achieve each objective. The members would be responsible for identifying potential hurdles to objectives and activities, and to identify solutions and other opportunities to ensure successful attainment of objectives.

The meeting was adjourned into breakout group work sessions at 10:24 a.m. The meeting was reconvened at 11:13 a.m.

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

Mr. Brian Beaubien presented on committee Objective 4. Suggested short-term activities included marketing the opportunities made available by broadcast learning. Suggested mid-term activities included increasing teacher capacity through training initiatives, and piloting programs to support broadcast exchanges between local school systems where teachers are not available to offer instruction. Suggested long-term activities included facilitation by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) of a statewide broadcast learning network, and the creation of a barter system to facilitate collaborations across local school systems.

The members discussed how to define educational delivery options, focusing on how to create a more robust educational program. The members discussed not limiting itself to just broadcast learning but making the experience a full online experience. This would include branding the online learning experience, engaging stakeholders, and marketing opportunities. The members felt that broadcast learning would serve as an opportunity to bridge connectivity and accessibility gaps through the usage of television. The members identified as a long-term solution the creation of a state-wide broadcast learning system.

The members identified several hurdles to enhancing educational delivery options. The members felt that overcoming preconceived notions would be a hurdle, as people have several opinions about broadcast and online learning. This would require definitions and terminology used in marketing to be clear and easy to understand. The members identified concerns over

course length, the need for greater funding, making courses more widely available, and issues with accessibility, both in terms of connectivity and in terms of equitable distribution to students with disabilities.

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

Ms. Amy Shepler presented on Objective 3. Suggested short-term activities included creating a checklist for parents with information about online learning and recommended student characteristics. Mid-term activities included the enhancement of opportunities to create stackable credentials using digital and classroom-based instruction, and the creation of a module for students that provides a quiz for readiness and a short online experience. Long-term activities focus on the creation of a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit bids from online post-secondary vendors to partner in the creation of a course that can be offered by MSDE at a low cost.

The members were also cognizant of its definitions and identified a short-term solution to create a checklist for parents on the online experience but rebranding the checklist as a list of items to consider mitigating parent perceptions about online learning. The members also identified mid-term solutions to create an online coursework guide for local school systems, to obtain staff certification to allow for teachers to teach several courses, and to create a plan to involve all students in the online learning experience. Ms. Shepler stated that the members were committed to ensuring equity in terms of accessibility to all students.

The members identified several short-term and mid-term hurdles, including identifying student characteristics of who would be successful in an online experience, discrepancies in course approval between local school systems, defining dual enrollment, teacher recruitment, and managing student expectations. The members also identified hurdles in online etiquette for students participating in online learning. The members recommended creating an online etiquette boot camp for teachers so that instruction models proper online behavior to students. Training would also be offered to increase parent and student stamina for participation in online learning.

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

Dr. Peggy Pugh presented on Objective 2. Suggested short-term activities included marketing an online teaching in Maryland (OTM) course, marketing local school system's capacity to offer their own courses and communicating with online points of contacts regarding qualified online facilitators within their local school system. Mid-term activities included identifying sources of funding to allow for scholarships to pay for facilitators, developing and implementing a process to allow for cross-pollination of funding and student enrollment, and investigating purchasing courses from other states that meet the State of Maryland's standards. Long-term activities included developing a database of trained facilitators that is shareable between local school systems, maintaining an updated high-quality OTM course, and building MSDE courses to replace vendor courses that have historically high enrollment.

Dr. Pugh shared that the members suggested advertising through Title II coordinators as a course intended for full online teaching and keeping a master list of certified OTM courses and including those that are in progress. The members felt that local school systems should develop a policy for online learning that addresses issues such as course selection, process pay for professional staff, and requirements to be certified as an online instructor. The members recommended utilizing resources such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Federal grants to address issues in funding. The members also identified external resources such as the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland as long-term solutions help develop courses.

Dr. Pugh discussed the hurdles that the members had identified. The members identified as hurdles to short-term activities the availability of resources, such as to local school systems or accessibility issues for students and parents at home, the equitability of broadcast learning, ensuring equitable access and distribution to students with disabilities, and a lack of home or parental support for students. The members identified inconsistencies between grant requirements with MSDE and local school systems missions and online vendor training not being consistent with State of Maryland curriculum requirements as hurdles to mid-term activities. The members identified issues with tracking facilitator training state-wide and securing resources for database training, development, and procurement as hurdles to long-term activities.

### **Review & Adjournment**

Ms. Senior shared that the feedback received from the members would be prepared in an outline format for each objective as was done for Objective 1. The members were encouraged to add comments where applicable but were again asked not to make direct edits to the documents. The members were asked to make comments or suggestions by June 4, 2020. The members would breakout into group sessions during the next meeting on June 9, 2020.

Dr. Williamson summarized next steps for the committee prior to the next meeting. Dr. Williamson recommended returning to the roadblocks identified by the members during previous meetings, and stated that the committee will need to be cognizant of these roadblocks moving forward. Ms. Emrich clarified a question in the chat from Ms. Anna Gannon regarding certification of instructional staff in online coursework; teachers must be certified in their content area to teach an online course.

Dr. Gina Solano recommended the creation of a state-wide online learning certification. Ms. Gannon discussed further issues regarding teacher certification for online learning; Dr. Williamson inquired about inviting a staff member from the MSDE Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval to answer questions regarding certification. The members expressed approval with the suggestion.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.