

MINUTES**JOINT INTERIM COMMITTEE ON ADVANCED COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY****Thursday, October 18, 2012****1:30 p.m.****Room 151, State Capitol****Little Rock, Arkansas**

The Joint Interim Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology met on Thursday, October 18, 2012 at 1:30 p.m., in Room 151 of the State Capitol, in Little Rock, Arkansas. The following committee members attended:

Senator Linda Chesterfield, Chair; and Representatives Mike Patterson, Chair; Efreem Elliott, Billy Gaskill, Jeremy Gilliam Karen Hopper and Jeff Wardlaw.

Also attending: Senators Joyce Elliott, Jack Crumbly, Gene Jeffress, and Jimmy Jeffress. Representatives Denny Altes, Tommy Baker, Bruce Cozart, David Fielding, Reginald Murdock, Fred Allen, Darrin Williams and John Walker.

Senator Chesterfield called the meeting to order. She recognized Representative Patterson for comments. She also recognized Mr. Joe Jett, unopposed candidate for District 56.

Consideration to approve Minutes of April 11, 2012, April 26, 2012, June 20, 2012, September 10, 2012, and September 27, 2012 [Exhibits: B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, B-5]

Representative Karen Hopper made the motion to approve the minutes. Without objection, the motion was approved by the Committee.

Update on Planning for Implementation of Common Core in Arkansas: Testing, Technology and Resources (K through 12)

Ms. Kim Michel, Director, On-Line Development, CommLearn Online, was recognized and gave a brief history of the Chicago Life Opportunities Initiative (CLOI's) Educational Collaboration Program. She stated that CLOI's goal is to reach out to as many teachers and professionals in the areas of reading and math that evolve around the Common Core Standards through the transition from face-to-face instruction to online instruction. CLOI found some concerns as to how the Common Core assessments will be implemented. Ms. Michel stated that a lot of schools are struggling with having the budget and knowledge to implement the Common Core Standards within their schools. One of the main concerns is technology. Some of the schools technology systems may not be up to the broadband standards and may not have the hardware to meet the needs of the students and teachers as well as students and teachers who may not have all of the technological abilities therefore; professionals in the field have to make sure that teachers understand the Common Core Standards as well as how to use the technology.

CLOI's professional learning design includes locating effective focused teachers (EFTs). Ms. Michel stated that if schools have EFTs they can address and prepare the students to be college ready, which is the ultimate goal of the Common Core Standards. As a professional learning company, CLOI will work with states' and school districts to provide them with a product that is geared towards a mix between face-to-face professional learning and online learning. Some of the benefits of having online learning include having access for an entire year.

Ms. Michel stated that CLOI's program can be used with any curriculum, noting that it teaches the foundations of concepts such as comprehension and algebra. The schools can also apply and implement the Common Core Standards within the program's knowledge base. **[Handout #1]**

Mr. Bryan Fields, Director of Education, AETN/PBS Arkansas, was recognized and gave a brief overview of AETN's analytical report. He stated that Act 2318 of 2005 was passed by the state legislature and provided funding for online professional development. The act established a partnership between the AETN and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) to create and provide online professional development available to all licensed educators free of charge. Mr. Fields stated that Arkansas IDEAS stands for Internet Delivered Education for Arkansas Schools (IDEAS). Currently, Arkansas

IDEAS serves over 37,000 Arkansas teachers and has delivered 496,000 hours of online professional development. Mr. Fields stated that Arkansas IDEAS is a one-of-a-kind online resource for our states' teachers and administrators, noting that it provides Arkansas educators with the highest quality online professional development available in the country. Mr. Fields added that Arkansas IDEAS utilizes cutting-edge technology and offers the only statewide, online professional development portal for educators in the nation.

Mr. Fields stated that AETN has over 1800 hours of high-quality research driven professional development, and 177 hours of Common Core trainings that is available to teachers and administrators. He stated that all of these hours have been approved by ADE, noting that AETN's Common Core library addresses areas such as leadership, math, and English. After speaking with the leadership of ADE, the IDEAS team created a Common Core micro site that functions as a dissemination point for ADE Common Core trainings. Mr. Fields stated that there is a hunger for Common Core training in Arkansas.

Mr. Fields shared that in the last three months, the Common Core website has experienced 43,940 total visits, noting that it has had visitors from all 50 states. Mr. Fields stated that people are looking at Arkansas for Common Core guidance and leadership. The most common downloaded document that the out of state visitors downloaded was ADE's strategic plan. Mr. Fields added that over 75% of Arkansas' educators are registered. Senator Chesterfield asked where is the other 25% of educators. Mr. Fields replied that AETN had over 4,000 people to register last quarter. At the request of Senator Chesterfield, Mr. Fields will submit a copy of the map utilization training portals map throughout Arkansas and the analytical report to committee staff.

[Handout #2]

Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education (DOE), was recognized and stated that as DOE is working towards the implementation of the Common Core Standards in English, language arts, and math. It is important for everyone to understand that we still have the Smart Core curriculum; which is a set of courses that are required for students to take, and the Core curriculum; which is a set of courses that students can opt into, noting that they must first opt out of the Smart Core curriculum. Dr. Kimbrell stated that the idea around the Common Core Standards is a set of learning standards in the aforementioned courses not a set of courses. He added that the content standards around English, language arts, and math have been adopted across the nation by the states.

Dr. Kimbrell stated that DOE is trying to align an assessment that is separate and apart from the ACT, noting that the Arkansas Department of Higher Education along with universities and colleges are a part of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortiums. These consortiums have partnered to develop the assessment that will determine college and career readiness. Dr. Kimbrell stated that the assessment rollout is scheduled for 2015. The assessment will be common among twenty-four states, including Arkansas. Senator Chesterfield asked will this assessment replace the ACT and SAT assessments. Dr. Kimbrell replied "yes".

Dr. Kimbrell stated that students can choose to take the ACT and SAT, but for colleges and universities the new assessment will be another option to determine whether or not a student is college and/or career ready. Dr. Kimbrell explained that students would enter colleges, if they have met the benchmark score or exceeded it without having to take remedial courses in English, language arts or math. If students are not college or career ready they will have the opportunity to take remediation and get content standards support during their senior year of high school. The consortium is trying hard to build a system that will support students in their learning to be college and career ready and prepare teachers to be ready to deliver instruction around the Common Core Standards. Dr. Kimbrell stressed the importance of students being able to use information content skills to solve problems, noting that developing systems of instructional delivery will help students in this area. Dr. Kimbrell discussed some of the resources that DOE has utilized such as a pilot grant. He concluded by stating that **Dr. Laura Bednar, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, DOE**, has built a strong team at DOE, and that she is a tremendous leader.

Senator Chesterfield emphasized that she is concerned about all students and especially students not having access to the internet, noting that she does not want to create a generation of "haves" and "have nots". She asked how we are moving along with providing internet access for students when they are at home; and how are we coming along with accommodating students that do not have access. Dr. Kimbrell replied that **Mr. Boardman, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, DOE** and **Mr. Cody Decker, Director, Information Systems, Division of Research and Technology, DOE**, would provide the answers to those questions in their presentations. He stated that all of the efforts that DOE has had with creating technology opportunities across Arkansas goes to the Division of Research and Technology and the Department of Information Systems

(DIS), which is generating maps with codes for all of the schools in Arkansas to determine the available bandwidth in each school and in each school district. Dr. Kimbrell stated that DOE is looking forward to reviewing the maps and discussing them with each school district to determine what their needs are. Dr. Kimbrell stated that one of the main priorities in the lives of children who are in poverty includes having access to technology. He stressed the importance of making technology accessible to every child in Arkansas. Senator Chesterfield stated that the committee will work hard to ensure that every child in Arkansas has internet access.

Dr. Laura Bednar, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, DOE, was recognized and stated that classroom teachers have the most difficult and the most important job. She stated that one of the things that Arkansas is doing different than other states is to allow teachers the opportunity to access the online Professional Learning Development Initiative (PLDI) 24/7. Dr. Bednar stated that ultimately DOE's vision is to do the same for students in Arkansas.

Dr. Bednar stated that educators who are embracing the online PLDI include pre-school through high school professionals. She noted that there are still some challenges, and DOE will need the help and support of the legislature to move forward. Senator Chesterfield asked, has the program been implemented in the Arkansas Better Chance Schools and in our Pre-K programs. Dr. Bednar replied that the Common Core Standards are not written for Pre-K, noting that Pre-K teachers have been very involved with supporting this initiative. Senator Chesterfield stated that as we look at improvements in this area, we must look at some funding resources because we may lose the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds that have been a part of the funding for the Arkansas Better Chance program. She encouraged legislators to think about funding for this program as they look at funding opportunities for education.

Correlation between Common Core Standards and ACT Assessments

Dr. Laura Bednar, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, DOE, was recognized and mentioned a report that was released by ACT on September 26, 2012. The report outlined a new component of the current ACT system called ACT Aspire, which is the first digital longitudinal assessment system that will provide actionable information about students from an early age through high school. Regarding the correlation between the Common Core Standards and ACT Assessments, Dr. Bednar stated that we need to know the vision of ACT, and what it will continue to provide. Senator Chesterfield asked has the professional development training reached all of the schools and districts. Dr. Bednar replied that the access is there and has been made available, noting that some of the schools have embraced this and are taking advantage of the professional development training. Dr. Bednar stated that DOE is seeing 100% participation district wide from teachers in areas of the state where there are great school leaders. Senator Chesterfield asked are funds being provided now to allow poor children the opportunity to take the ACT before their senior year. Dr. Bednar replied that DOE does provide the universal opportunity for all students to take the ACT. Senator Chesterfield stressed the importance of poor students being able to take the ACT their junior year of high school so that they have the opportunity for remediation in high school, if needed. She added that she is willing to work with DOE to find a way to fund the ACT for poor students to take the ACT their junior year.

Mr. Jim Boardman, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Research and Technology, DOE, was recognized and gave an update regarding the readiness of the schools concerning equipment, operating systems, bandwidth, etc. Mr. Boardman stated that DOE does not have the exact amount of bandwidth that is needed to do the assessments, noting that it is hard to determine what is needed because the tests and timeline for taking the test has not been developed. Mr. Boardman feels that there will not be a significant problem with bandwidth to provide the assessments. He stated that the DIS has helped with the bandwidth increases that they are experiencing now, but more importantly PARCC is offering a low bandwidth solution for the assessment. Mr. Boardman noted that Arkansas will have significant problems with instruction delivery noting that as schools move into doing more professional development and blended learning online more bandwidth for instruction will be required.

Mr. Cody Decker, Division Leader, Division of Research and Technology, DOE, was recognized and presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Common Core & PARCC Assessments: Tech Readiness Tool". Mr. Decker stated that the Technology Readiness Tool (TRT) is one of the specific tools used to collect data from school districts to gauge their readiness for the next generation of assessments. The intended result is very specific and actionable information regarding the extent to which local infrastructure does or does not meet readiness criteria. It is a secure online website that allows each school district in Arkansas the ability to access the site to search and change any data that has been uploaded. School districts' can also review reports for all of the data. The TRT will help to determine if schools are ready for the online assessments.

Mr. Decker stated that some of the goals of the TRT include: establishing a baseline inventory of technology and supporting infrastructure in schools, collecting data regarding ongoing improvements to school technology, assisting states and districts in evaluating their own readiness for technology-rich learning and computer-based assessments, providing reports that inform about specific strategies to address local needs, providing information about technical platform architecture and assessment designs, and providing a common definition of technology readiness for all states.

Mr. Decker discussed some of the different dimensions of readiness. He stated that the TRT is only useful if data is entered in it. School districts that do not enter the information on their current technology will lose their voice in future consortia work and will fail to understand their current level of readiness.

Regarding the data collection parameters, the collection and calculation of various technology readiness parameters will occur in phases with enhancements and refinements made prior to each bi-annual data collection window. Mr. Decker stated that bandwidth capacity is needed to administer all of the assessments.

Mr. Decker briefly discussed the PARCC information on device requirements for assessments. He stated that desktops, laptops, netbooks and tablets will be compatible devices provided they are configured to meet the established hardware, operating system, and networking specifications.

Senator Chesterfield asked how DOE is helping school districts that have purchased bandwidth that did not meet the minimum requirements. Mr. Decker replied that DOE is in partnership with a DIS team that works with school districts, noting that it may be the default configuration of devices that are not compatible but could be adjusted to become compatible. For example, if computers have a smaller screen size than the 9.5 inch minimum required screen size the computer may work but may need a larger monitor.

Mr. Decker discussed the PARCC bandwidth requirements. He stated that both wired and wireless networking is believed to be compatible. PARCC will define the requirements at a later date. There will likely be a mixture of assessments that are administered online in a live fashion and in many cases where bandwidth is insufficient there will be an option to download the assessments in advance of them being administered.

Mr. Decker gave a brief overview of the Arkansas school survey percentages reported for internet bandwidth utilization. He stated that 35% of the respondents did not complete the survey; 38% of respondents identified their current bandwidth utilization as 50% or more and 26% stated that bandwidth utilization is between 76%-100%.

Mr. Decker discussed the Information Technology Readiness Tool completion status list for school districts. He noted that 53 school districts reported 100% completion as of October 1, 2012. The TRT readiness tool includes another data collection window that is currently open but will close on Friday, December 14, 2012.

Mr. Decker stated that DOE has a State Readiness Coordinator Team that is available to assist school districts with the TRT. Regarding comments that were made about schools that have not been participating with the TRT or have had limited participation, Representative Hooper asked Mr. Decker is there anything that legislators can do to assist him with encouraging school districts to participate. Mr. Decker replied that any motivation that can be provided to nudge the school districts to use the TRT would be appreciated. After checking the TRT today, Mr. Decker stated that 72 school districts had entered one or more devices into TRT.

Advantages of Broadband Access in Higher Education throughout Arkansas

Mr. Donald Bobbitt, President, University of Arkansas System, was recognized and discussed the state of higher education and how technology can have an impact on education. He stressed the importance of preserving education.

After a brief discussion regarding the University of Arkansas System's educational model, Mr. Bobbitt stated that the U.S. is ranked 12th in the world in the number of twenty-five to thirty-four year old individuals that have a college degree, he stated that a few years ago the U.S. was ranked #1. Mr. Bobbitt stated that the group of students that are coming through K-12 now may be the first generation in the history of the U.S. with lower educational attainment than their parents. Mr. Bobbitt stated that for-profit, online institutions have experienced a 236% increase in enrollments over the past decade while, higher education in public and private schools have experienced a 25% increase in enrollments.

Mr. Bobbitt stated that these are very significant challenges that are not going away. He stated that President Barak Obama's blueprint for the future is almost an identical goal of Governor Beebe's education goal for Arkansas, which is to double the number of degrees by 2045. Mr. Bobbitt stated that looking at the global interest in our system, and the financial pressures we face, there is a need to educate more students in a modern system to compete in a 21st Century economy. Mr. Bobbitt noted that over the past year, students that studied at for-profit institutions acquired \$32 billion in Pell grants however, the chance of success in one of these institutions is lower than that of public and private institutions. Regarding the financial aid cycle at the federal level, Representative Hopper asked do you see challenges with regards to financial aid for Arkansas' public institutions. Mr. Bobbitt replied that this is a hurdle that the University of Arkansas System is facing now. He stated that some of the accreditation agencies and federal agencies that oversee financial aid have been slow to embrace the new paradigm that is before us, but they are changing. There are good people that understand the issues who are trying to broaden the view at the federal government level and with accreditation agencies.

Senator Chesterfield stated that we concentrate so much on K-12 but we have to look at the needs of those individuals that are in the higher education community and work with them to create solutions. She concluded that if we do not have this collaboration we will never get this state where it should be.

Representative Hopper thanked the chairs of the committee for agreeing to conduct a meeting with the Higher Education Subcommittee on the campus of the Arkansas State University (ASU) at Mountain Home. Through this visit the committee was able to see the interesting things that ASU is doing with distance education. She announced that as a result of the committee meeting at ASU Northwest Arkansas Community College in collaboration with ASU now has a degree program in Funeral Science using distance learning technology. Representative Hopper stated that the two institutions have pooled their funding from the Federal Carl Perkins Grant to purchase technology to make the partnership available.

Mr. Sam Walls, President, ConnectArkansas, was recognized and stated that he thinks the ball is rolling and we have to stay after it, he stated, "Arkansas has the opportunity to make a giant leap."

Mr. Mike Abbiatti, Executive Director, ARE-ON, was recognized and gave a brief update on ARE-ON. He stated ARE-ON has completed its Phase I optical networks component taking care of the four-year institutions, and Phase II associated with UAMS is expected to be completed by July 31, 2013. Mr. Abbiatti stated that optical networks were put in place to allow higher education to meet its needs of processing power and transferring big data, noting that other states are realizing that Arkansas is a "thought leader". He noted that the Arkansas High Performance Computing Center in Fayetteville is an asset that everyone can use including their K-12 colleagues, DIS colleagues and corporate friends.

Mr. Abbiatti stated that ARE-ON is driving on in its research and education mission. ARE-ON wants to support its K-12 colleagues and their issues. He concluded by stating that the bandwidth issue has to be a team effort. Senator Chesterfield asked is every college in Arkansas hooked up. Mr. Abbiatti replied that every public four-year and two-year public college will be hooked up by July 31, 2013.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.