

Arizona eLearning Task Force

Minutes of the Meeting Thursday, February 5, 2009 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Arizona Department of Education Conference Room 417

Members Present:

Debra Lorenzen – Representing Kim Flack (non-voting)

Doug Barnard – Representing Joe O'Reilly (non-voting)

Rosalina Escandon – arrived at 10:42 a.m.

Coy Ison

Ted Kraver

Mark Nichols

Cathy Poplin, Chair

Members Not Present:

Sandi Grandberry

Rod Lenniger

Casey Loman

DJ Harper

Handouts:

- Agenda for February 5, 2009
- January 5, 2009 Meeting Minutes
- Good News for Ed Tech in the Economic Stimulus Bills: February 2009: *THE Journal*
- Things to look for in TAPBI presentations – Mark Nichols
- Primavera Online High School General Program Overview
- Peoria Unified School District General Program Overview

Welcome and Introduction – *The meeting is recorded on tape and is available for full review.*

Cathy Poplin called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Cathy welcomed those in attendance and began by informing task force members of the new appointments and resignations to the ELTF. There has been an unfilled position on the ELTF for an expert in online formative assessment. Coy Ison was appointed by the Governor Napolitano's office at the beginning of January to fill the position. Lisa Long, TUSD, resigned from the ELTF. Lisa's position on the ELTF was appointed by the Governors' Office. Cathy has contacted Carla Phillips, the Education Liaison for Governor Brewer's Office, about filling the vacant position. Max Ivey, with GITA, will be replacing Chris Cummiskey's position on the ELTF. DJ Harper will continue to be GITA's representative on the ELTF.

Cathy asked Hank Stabler to begin the introductions and updates from the ELTF members.

- Hank Stabler, ADE Consultant. No update.
- Ruth Catalano, ADE Consultant, No update.
- Coy Ison, Executive Director of AzTEA, introduced himself and briefly informed the ELTF of his background. Coy has been with AzTEA for three months and prior to working for AzTEA, Coy was the Director of Technology for the SE Education Service Center in Price, Utah for nineteen years. Coy managed several federal grants and assisted

with the creation of the online formative assessment engine models, UTIPS (Utah Test Item Pool Services.)

- Coy informed the ELTF that AzTEA just had its second of three technology conferences in Tucson on January 31st, with an estimated 400 people in attendance. The third of the three technology conferences is the WOW (Way out West) conference will be May 2, 2009 in Peoria, AZ.
- Debra Lorenzen, representing Kim Flack with ASSET Eight, introduced herself and told that ASSET will have a conference on June 6, 2009 at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication building at the ASU downtown campus. The conference is for ASSET Educator Members. A membership charge of \$60.00 will give you access to this event. The theme for the conference is “Think up Stream.” There are three strands to the conference: STEM, Project Based Learning & Early Childhood/Pre-School education. Technology is woven throughout the three strands.
- Mark Nichols, ASU/IDEAL, introduced himself and informed the ELTF that Arizona’s oldest technology conference in AZ, MEC, will be held on March 9-11, 2009 at the Lattie Coor Building at ASU Tempe.
- Doug Barnard with the Mesa Distance Education Program, representing Joe O’Reilly, introduced himself with no updates.
- Ted Kraver, with eSATS, introduced himself and informed the ELTF he attended a meeting with the Speaker of the House of Representatives. President Obama’s Administration has re-focused from research based to development and innovation in the area of education. Ted stated this is good for eLearning. NIST, National Institute of Standards and Technology, presented at ASU a few weeks ago on funding, which is about \$50 - \$100 million a year for TIP (Technology Innovation Program). Ted was asked to write a white paper on Individualized Learning. Ted stated it will take a couple of months before the white paper is complete. The object is to get subject of eLearning into the area of research.
- Krystal Nesbitt, Administrative Assistant under Cathy Poplin/ELTF, introduced herself, with no updates.
- Cathy Poplin, Arizona Department of Education, introduced herself and stated most of her updates will be covered under Legislative Updates listed on the agenda. Due to not having enough members for a quorum, Cathy stated the approval of the January 5, 2009 meeting minutes will be postponed until the next ELTF meeting. Cathy spoke with Rosie Escandon and she will be arriving shortly to the ELTF meeting. Casey Loman requested to join the meeting via conference phone; however, Krystal Nesbitt but was unable to contact her.

Legislative Updates (State and Federal) – Various ELTF members

Cathy referred to the article handout *Good News for Ed Tech in the Economic Stimulus Bills: February 2009: THE Journal*. Cathy informed the ELTF that nothing is certain but as it stands now, Education Technology is slated to receive \$1 billion in the President’s Stimulus package to support the 21st Century classroom. The funds will flow through the existing Enhancing Education through Technology Grant (EETT). It is predicted that \$500 million will flow to states in July 2009 and needs to be spent by September 2010. The other \$500 million will go to states in July 2010 and needs to be spent by September 2011. The \$1 billion new dollars is in addition

to the existing \$267 million in the program. The main focus of the money is to create jobs, save jobs and at the same time increase technology in the classroom and increase IT support.

Doug Barnard advised the ELTF of a new TAPBI School law, House Bill 2356 introduced by Rep. Rich Crandall. One piece of the bill will restore the funding mechanism that TAPBI schools had before the law was changed during the 2008 legislative session. TAPBI schools had previously been able to collect ADM funding throughout the year. The current law stops ADM after the 100th day. The new bill also adds an “academic integrity” element that will require all final exams must be proctored. Doug stated the Mesa Distance Education Program already proctors all their tests.

Primavera Online High School TAPBI Presentation – Damian Creamer, Executive Director

Before the presentation began, Cathy Poplin pointed the ELFT members to the handout: “Things to look for in TAPBI presentations.” Mark Nichols created the guide.

Damian Creamer began by informing the ELTF that he and his wife founded Primavera Online High School in 2001. Primavera’s mission is to serve all students with an emphasis on the following categories: students with behavioral issues, those identified as dropouts, those who are pregnant and/or teen parents, those adjudicated as youthful offenders, and those with poor academic standing as manifested by their failure to keep up with their cohort group. Primavera is an approved alternative school. They also offer credit recovery courses.

Primavera has been in operation for 5 years, focused on grades levels 9-12, with locations throughout the state. In 2003, Primavera was chosen to participate in the TAPBI school program; accreditation was received in 2005 through the North Central Association and CITA.

The AIMS test is required and is administered throughout the state of Arizona. This year there will be 1,600 students taking the AIMS test at one time. An online registration system was created to assist with registrations and to ensure students go to their proper testing facility.

Damian introduced Dana Van Deinse, Principal of Primavera. Dana began by informing the ELTF that Primavera has over 100 staff members, all teaching courses from a distance. 100% of the teachers are highly qualified in their subject area. Cathy Poplin asked if 100% of their teachers are highly qualified. Dana responded 100% of all teachers are highly qualified in the subject area they teach. 87% of them have their Arizona teaching certificates and are certified in those subject areas that require certification and degrees. They provide their teachers with a full professional development program. Currently there are 35 full-time teachers with 78 adjunct teachers.

The current student to teacher ratio is 35:1 for most classes. However, math classes have a lower student to teacher ratio: 25:1 or lower. Primavera teachers are required to make weekly phone calls to parents as well as use regular email to communicate with parents. Live online tutoring sessions are now being offered. The main part of the online process is the discussion board’s forum and daily course announcements. All assignments must be graded and feedback must be

provided to the student within 24 to 48 hours of the assignment. There is a two-level instructional monitoring process.

- A weekly teacher evaluation is conducted by an independent course auditor by computerized reports or individually going into teacher's online classrooms each week. The auditor provides administration with reports to provide a quick overview of what is going on in the classrooms. Training is offered to teachers based on the observations of the auditor.
- They also conducted in-class observation (done online) based on the NACOL Standards for Quality Online Teaching. Teacher classrooms are visited every 3-6 weeks, to ensure best practices are being used, to see what teaching strategies are being used and to discover if the teacher is meeting the needs of the student, especially with special need students.

15% of the student population falls under the category of Special Education/ELL. The special education staff provides additional support to teachers and parents on a daily/weekly basis. The program is very flexible, allows for monitoring, and requires that accommodations are allowed to assist students with their assignments.

The ELTF asked questions:

- Coy Ison asked if Primavera used a course management system.
 - Dana responded that they used Adobe Connect sessions to host classes. They are currently using Blackboard but are migrating to a course management system created internally.
- Cathy Poplin asked how they conduct in-class observation.
 - Dana stated the actual "in-class" observation is done online. The classroom is visited online unannounced during the day. The administration spends time reading the communication flow between parents and teachers.
- Ted Kraver asked how they determine their student to teacher ratio. Are they full-time equivalents to a normal school year?
 - Dana responded, in the actual classroom, various sections will be limited. For example, we offer a discussion on U.S. History, the number of students in the discussion room will be limited to 35. This is done to allow the teacher the ability to focus on the discussion.
- Cathy asked if there was a cap on how many students a teacher serves in a year.
 - Dana stated that teacher can teach up to a 120 students per year. Classes start every two weeks.
- Doug Barnard asked how long do courses take to complete.
 - Damian responded that the courses take 6 weeks to complete. Block style schedule, 30 lessons in each course, 2-3 hours instructional time. Students are placed in a cohort of 30-35 students in a class. Students receive 6-8 credits a year.
- Cathy asked if a student could accelerate quicker than 6 weeks, and if so, what the limit is.
 - Damian stated they used to allow students to accelerate, also known as adaptive release. However, if a student maintains an 87% or higher grade average, the student will be allowed to take three courses at a time, instead of the normal two.
- Doug asked how many readability checks their curriculum software has.

- Jared Richardson, Curriculum Designer for Primavera responded that they first use Microsoft software to determine grade level, and then second, the materials are reviewed 2-3 times by beta tester.
- Cathy stated that if 15% of the student population were Special Education or ELL students, how many are truly considered “at risk students”?
 - Dana stated the at risk category is probably 50% - 60% of the student population; the ELL student population is small but steadily growing.
- Cathy stated that according to Primavera’s charter school report, there are 7,859 full-time students enrolled. She asked what constituted a full-time student. Are the “concurrent students” listed credit recovery students?
 - Dana responded that students who maintain two courses throughout the school year are full time students.
 - Yes, “concurrent students” are credit recovery students.

Damian introduced Jared Richardson, Curriculum Designer for Primavera. All curriculum is aligned to the Arizona state standards. There is a project at the end of each unit where the students will have to apply what they learned to a real life situation. There is also a discussion session for each unit as well. Primavera uses the following resources to develop curriculum:

- Curriculum – Pedagogies
- Gagne’s 9 events
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Bruner’s Constructivist Theory
- Keller’s Arch

Primavera uses motivational features to keep students engaged. Jared demonstrated what the math curriculum looks like. The ELTF members asked questions.

- Doug asked how do you ensure the work assigned was completed by the correct student, and does the student have to pass the final exam to receive a passing grade?
 - Jared stated that may be a concern on the regular tests, however for the projects and discussions, each student has a signature they use in order for the teacher to recognize them. They are looking at solutions to improve the validity of work completed to assure that it was completed by the correct student.
 - The final grade is based on the grade from work completed throughout the course as well as the discussions. It is possible for a student to pass a class even though they failed the final exam, based on their grade before they completed the final exam.
- Mark Nichols asked what percentage of the content was purchased and what percentage was developed in-house. How many instructional designers do you have? How much flexibility do teachers have to adapt the content?
 - Jared answered that the purchased content is personalized for a particular unit. A teacher’s voice is put with the content. Instructions, what is important, how to extract the information needed.
 - There are 4-5 curriculum designers working with the teachers.

Damian informed the ELTF that they have an agreement with their publishers to allow personalization of content to align the content to Arizona Standards. Damian introduced Manoj

Modi, Director of Software Development. Manoj gave a presentation about the technology at Primavera.

Manoj informed the ELTF that all materials are controlled in-house even when the materials come from a third party. One central database designed so the student data is not going through multiple places. Student data can be accessed from their student management system, once the student is enrolled in a class that information is then sent to the learning management system. When a student takes a class, the information is shared with the teacher instantly. Primavera created a Parent/Student Portal. The parent and student can see their own personal data.

Security is a key part of the system. The following is a list of security features:

- Servers are located at an ultra secure facility
- Firewalls are in place
- Secure VPNs
- All data is encrypted
- SSL certificates for website
- Students and parents have their own username and password
- Role and level based security

The ELTF asked questions:

- Mark asked how many developers are on their staff. And was this all built in-house?
 - 4 full-time and 4 contracted, always a team of 7-8. All ideas and concepts are done in-house.
- Cathy asked how long they have been using this particular interface.
 - The student management system is 3-4 years. Additions are constantly being added. The parent/student portal has been used for 6-8 months.
- Hank asked how you address students with tech issues at home. Do you offer tech support? What system requirements are needed for a student to take classes?
 - Systems are in place in case a student has technical issues. They have a tech support help desk the students can call and a technician will assist them over the phone.
 - The biggest challenge is internet access.
 - Supports Mac and Windows
 - 4 support staff members
 - Online tech support
 - Internet access with a flash player
- Doug asked how attendance is taken.
 - Damian, attendance is parent generated. Parents must log-on and provide hours that the student worked.

Computers are provided if a student does not have access to a computer and Internet reimbursement is provided as well. The rate of growth is steady, in 2003 the number of students enrolled was 150, 2007 was 2,600 and in 2008 enrollment was 2,100. Damian thanked the ELTF for taking the time to listen to their presentation.

Peoria TAPBI Program Presentation – Robert Keagle, Administrator for K-12 Academic Services

Cathy Poplin introduced Robert Keagle with Peoria TAPBI School within the Peoria Unified School District. Robert began by giving an overview of the Peoria eCampus Virtual High School. The eCampus staff has 3 members, Robert Keagle, his secretary and a tech person. Peoria's eCampus runs more like a program than an actual high school.

Peoria eCampus Virtual High School offers students the option of taking a course online. Course delivery is web-based and courses are fully aligned to the Arizona State Standards. PUSD curriculum standards are taught by highly-qualified, certified district teachers. PUSD benchmarks and end of the course assessments are included. The eCampus opened in the fall of 2004. They offer 31 courses with 21 teachers; enrollment continues to grow each year.

Online courses are offered every semester. Students must register when they would register for a regular Peoria Unified School District high school courses. Attendance is tracked electronically, uses the Moodle system. Parents have to verify student hours weekly. Students must complete five hours a week or an hour a day. Face-to-face meetings with parents and students are required at the mid-semester mark. If a student falls below 70% at anytime, the teachers will contact the school counselor and the parents. The student is sent to mandatory tutoring sessions. At the end of each semester, surveys are sent to students and parent to obtain feedback for improvement.

Summer classes are 10 hours a week in order to get all the work done within the time frame of the summer session. It costs \$275 a course in the summer. If a course is taken within the normal course load, online classes are free; if a student is over their course load, the cost is \$275 a course. There are currently 21 online teachers with 30 students each. Teachers teach within the regular Peoria School District in addition to teaching online courses. AIMS test are taken by all students, similar to the traditional high school.

The ELTF asked questions:

- Ruth asked if a student could complete a course all at once
 - Course cannot be completed all at one time due to the time frames set for assignments.
- Doug asked what steps are in place to catch cheating by students
 - PUSD has a policy in place for plagiarism and it states what will happen to a student if they are caught cheating. Training is provided to teachers to help them notice when a student is cheating. When a teacher catches a student cheating, the parent is notified and the student will not get credit for that assignment.
- Hank asked if there was a pre-screening process to select students for the eCampus program
 - Yes, there is a pre-screening process. Peoria uses their school counselors to assist in the pre-screening process

Discuss ELTF Legislative Report – Cathy Poplin

Cathy stated due to the time, an update of the ELTF Legislative Report will be given at the next ELTF meeting.

Report by ELTF workgroups – All members

Cathy asked the ELTF groups to present on the areas of eLearning assigned to them.

- Hank and Mark discussed data and expressed a need for additional information from Vince Yanez to complete their report.

No other groups available to report. Groups will report at the next ELTF meeting.

Next meeting is March 6, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Arizona Department of Education, conference room 417.

Public testimony

No public comments

Adjourn

Cathy Poplin asked for a motion to dismiss. Coy Ison made the motion to adjourn, Mark Nichols seconded, no opposes. Cathy adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.