

Arizona eLearning Taskforce

Minutes of the Meeting Friday, February 8, 2008 10:00am – 12:00pm Arizona Department of Education Conference Room 417

Members Present:

Brian Sherman – Representing Chris Cummiskey
Sandi Grandberry – via conference phone
Lisa Long – via conference phone
Theodore Kraver

Rosalina Escandon
Joseph O'Reilly
Cathy Poplin

Members Not Present:

Debra Lorenzen
Rod Lenniger
Casey Loman
Mark Nichols

Handouts:

- Agenda for February 8, 2008
- January 7, 2008 Meeting Minutes
- eLearning Task Force Program Exploration Categories
- Congratulations - schools selected to move to Phase II in the Instructional Technology Systems Pilot Grant
- Middle School Math Pilot Directions & Application
- House Bill 2064
- Greater Arizona eLearning Association (GAZEL)/Arizona Summit 2008

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

Cathy Poplin called the meeting to official order at 10:10 am. Cathy welcomed those in attendance and asked the ELTF members to introduce themselves and give a brief two minute update.

Rosalina Escandon introduced herself and informed the ELTF that Cartwright School District will be having their technology conference on March 7th & 8th. Rosalina is still looking for presenters and asked if anyone on the Task Force would be interested. Cathy said she would do a presentation on IDEAL.

Brian Sherman was representing Chris Cummiskey and filling in for DJ Harper. Brian is part of the Strategic Planning Unit of GITA.

Cathy Poplin introduced herself and began her update by informing the ELTF members that the Educational Technology Unit will now report to Margaret Garcia-Dugan, the Deputy Superintendent and it is no longer a part of the School Effectiveness Division. Cathy informed the ELTF members that she has a draft of the *Reports and Recommendations* from the Twenty First Century Summit - Fall 2007. Cathy did not make copies of the draft report but did say she will email copies of the report to the ELTF members.

Cathy pointed out that within the handouts present is a copy of an email from Rod Lenniger. Rod is out of town and unable to attend the meeting. At the last ELTF meeting Mark Nichols said he would create suggested areas of exploration spreadsheet for the ELTF. A copy of the spreadsheet is within the handouts. The spreadsheet will assist the ELTF with exploring different eLearning projects in Arizona.

Cathy asked that the guests in attendance introduce themselves and they included: Jerry Lewis, Associate Superintendent of Sequoia Chart Schools; Ron Neil, Superintendent of Sequoia Charter Schools; Mary Gifford, Director of the Arizona Virtual Academy; and John Kelly and Elise Piatt with Triadvocates.

Approval of Minutes from December 18, 2008 & January 7, 2008

A quorum was determined. Cathy asked the ELTF to review the December 18, 2008 and the January 7, 2008 minutes. ELTF members noted no changes. Theodore Kraver made a motion to accept the minutes and Rosalina Escandon seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved and will be posted.

Update on Instructional Technology Systems Pilot Grant Process – Cathy Poplin

Cathy referred the ELTF to the “Congratulations” handout. The handout lists the schools that have been selected to move to Phase II in the Instructional Technology Systems Pilot Grant. They are:

- Puente de Hozho, Flagstaff USD
- Edison, Phoenix ESD
- Simonton, JO Combs SD, Queen Creek
- Navajo, Scottsdale SD
- Robins, Tucson USD

Theodore Kraver represented the ELTF in the reviewing process. Theodore shared with the ELTF the reviewing process. Lisa Long shared with the ELTF the excitement of one of the schools on the list. Cathy informed the ELTF the Phase II application is due March 21, 2008. The reviewing team will reconvene and begin the review. The review team will visit the top three schools. Cathy would like to have the recommendations by April for the State Board Meeting.

Update on the eLearning Summit Feb. 20, 2008 & New Legislation – Theodore Kraver

Theodore gave an overview of what the eLearning Summit will entail. The summit is February 20, 2008 at the Mesa Convention Center for one day only. The ELTF is one of the sponsoring organizations for the Summit. Superintendent Tom Horne and Cathy Poplin are scheduled to speak. Theodore shared with the ELTF what Superintendent Horne feels are our strongest areas of Educational Technology. Super. Horne’s gave a speech at the opening of the new Pearson building and the eight areas are IDEAL, Statewide Instructional Technology (SIT) Project, the ELTF, the Middle School Math Pilot Project, eighth grade Tech Literacy Program, the Instructional Technology Systems Pilot Grant, E-Rate & the ADE 1 to 1 laptop initiative.

Theodore gave an update on three new legislative bills. House Bill 2064 has seven new areas of responsibilities for the eLearning Taskforce. Ted also talked about Senate Bill 1104 which is about TAPBI schools and will increase the number of TAPBI schools. House Bill 2816 is TAPBI school bill. This bill will deal with TAPBI funding and will begin to tackle the issue of seat time.

Update on Middle School Math RFP Update and RRP Evaluation – Hank Stabler

Hank Stabler briefly went over the evaluation process. There were twelve submittals and the first meeting for the evaluation team was on January 24, 2008. Expert advisors joined the evaluation team to review specific components of the submittals. The next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2008. The evaluation team is hoping to narrow the field down and have final selections by the middle of March.

Update on District/School Application for Middle School Math Pilot – Ruth Catalano & Hank Stabler

Ruth Catalano asked the ELTF to look at the list of five finalists for the Instructional Technology System Pilot Grant and consider those serving grades 6 – 9 as possible candidate for the Middle School Math Pilot.

Theodore asked if the Middle School Math application was the same as the Instructional Technology Systems pilot application. Ruth replied there was a great deal of overlap. Any part missing would have need to be given by the schools. For example, math details were not a part of the Instructional Technology System Pilot Grant. Thus, these schools would need to send in their math details if they wanted to apply for the Middle School Math pilot project. Theodore commented that automatically holding two positions would not be fair to the other schools that applied.

Joseph O'Reilly suggested giving the two schools extra points or special consideration, but not to automatically consider them. Sandi Grandberry concurred with Ted and Joseph; it would not be fair to automatically consider them. Rosalina Escandon agreed with Joseph. The ELTF decided not to give the schools any special consideration.

Cathy Poplin informed the ELTF they will revise the application once more and hold two training webinars before it will be released. She will notify the ELTF before it is released.

Presentation by Arizona Virtual Academy (TAPBI Charter) – Mary Gifford, Director

Mary Gifford presented on the Arizona Virtual Academy. AZ Virtual Academy is based in Tucson with a Phoenix office. AZ Virtual Academy is the largest of the TAPBI schools with 3,600 full time students in grades K-11. AZ Virtual Academy has been in operation for six years.

Once a child enrolls in the school, each student is sent home four to six boxes of curriculum materials needed for their classes. For example, they send the microscopes for Science, globes for Geography, workbooks, etc. One computer, monitor and printer are furnished per household/family, except high school. Every high school student receives a computer and print/fax scanner for their home. AZ Virtual Academy has an Internet reimbursement program; they reimburse families for their Internet usage on a semester basis.

AZ Virtual Academy's curriculum is aligned with Arizona State Standards. Families must use the AZ Virtual Academy's curriculum; Parents may not substitute any of the materials. Mary showed examples of their Math, Science and Reading curriculum. Certified teachers are assigned to each family. Special Education and Title I students receive an additional teacher. High school students have a content specific teacher. State testing and instructional help are all a part of AZ Virtual Academy. Full teacher and administrative support, technical support is available twenty-four hours a day seven days a week.

Parents must sign a commitment letter. AZ Virtual Academy has a parent mentoring program to assist new parents to the school. AZ Virtual Academy has stated that 96% of the parents do not withdraw their children from the school if they are a part of the parent mentoring program. Parents must enter their child's attendance for everyday.

Theodore Kraver asked if AZ Virtual Academy created their curriculum/software or if they purchased it from a vendor. Mary said they create their own curriculum/software. AZ Virtual Academy has their own software company called K-12, the Curriculum Company. Oxford and K-5 Math are purchased commercially. Theodore also asked what was the student to teacher ratio. Mary informed the ELTF that they have 30-35 families per teacher and Special Education has 20-25 families to a teacher.

Presentation by Sequoia Choice Arizona Distance Learning (TAPBI Charter) – Ron Neil, Superintendent and Jerry Lewis, Associate Superintendent

Superintendent Ron Neil began his presentation by stating that Sequoia Choice originally started out as a program for deaf students. Now only a small percentage of their enrolled students are deaf. Ron gave each ELTF member a folder of materials highlighting the different areas and advantages of the Sequoia Choice Distance Learning Program and gave an overview of his program.

Sequoia Choice TAPBI Schools are aligned with the Arizona State Standard and focused on teacher accountability. They provide constant communication between the teachers and the students. Video conferencing is used for the teacher and student communication. All teachers are highly qualified and certified. There are two teachers in every computer lab. Online teachers are required to travel and visit all the computer labs. Teachers work 365 days a year. Teachers are responsible for reporting on student progress and the success of their students.

When a student transfers from a traditional “brick and mortar” school, Sequoia Choice gives the student a pre-assessment test to insure they are prepared for the grade level their transcripts indicate. Independent assessments are used along with the curriculum assessments to insure the assessments are accurate. Cathy Poplin asked what independent assessment they used. Superintendent Neil replied FAST Math, a Sequoia Choice built program. The independent reading assessment they use was developed by the Ministry of Education from Ontario Canada.

Superintendent Neil stated the common misconception is that distance learning is only a student at home with a computer. To truly assist the student at home they require more. Students receive textbooks along with an online version of their curriculum.

Cathy asked the ELTF if they would like to continue their discussion regarding TAPBI Schools. The ELTF agreed they would like to continue this discussion.

Next Meeting

Cathy informed the ELTF the next meeting will be March 7, 2008.

Public Testimony

No guest comment

Adjourn

Cathy Poplin adjourned the meeting at 12:17pm