



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Quality Digital Learning Study Minutes November 21, 2013

Members present: Dr. Ed Franklin, Dr. Richard Abernathy, Representative Dan Douglas, Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Len Pitcock, Adrienne Gardner, Susan Harriman, Dr. Jay Barth, Cody Decker, Dr. John Ahlen, Claire Bailey, Elizabeth Bowles, and Katie Burns.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00. Eleven guests were in attendance. Chair Franklin welcomed everyone and recognized Claire Bailey to give a presentation about the Department of Information Systems (DIS), of which she is director.

Ms. Bailey provided QDLS members with information about the structure of DIS and some services it provides:

- DIS does not receive general revenue and is not allowed to make a profit.
- Dis has 225 employees
- DIS provides data center hosting, voice service, professional services, storage and backup, and operational services.
- DIS maintains the state network, which has three Internet points of presence.
- DIS maintains a centralized Cyber Security Office.
- DIS provides E-Rate training and files the state E-Rate application.

Ms. Bailey pointed out that she is became the State Broadband Manager in the last legislative session.

Chair Franklin thanked Ms. Bailey and recognized Cody Decker. Mr. Decker referred members to the survey handout. Some members had asked that the survey be updated. Mr. Decker noted that the latest iteration asked school districts about reasons they were not able to get their requested amount of bandwidth, among other things. Twenty-one schools districts have responded, and ADE is working to refine the data.

Julie Lombard of the Office of State Procurement was recognized. She updated members about the status of the bid.

Chair Franklin recognized Adrienne Gardner to talk about two handouts given to members. Ms. Gardner summarized “Project Tomorrow” and “Project 24.”

Chair Franklin then recognized Dr. Ahlen. Dr. Ahlen presented the following policy options to the group:

1. The current system is fine with some minor tweaking (status quo)
2. A private sector solution
3. A public build-out
4. A public-private partnership

The members then discussed the different options. Comments from members included:

- “From an infrastructure perspective, providers make Arkansas a low priority because of our small population.”
- “Buying together should lower the cost.”
- “There is currently inequity. Some students are missing out.”
- “We also have some human capital issues that are barriers to teachers and students.”
- “Seventy-one percent of schools are already using the private sector.”
- “The private sector option would cost more in certain parts of the state.”
- “Using the private sector option would mean less efficient demand aggregation.”
- “Many pros and cons apply to all options.”

Dr. Ahlen stated that he thinks a public-private option is ultimately best. He would like the partnership to establish deeper ties between state government and providers. Ms. Bailey pointed out the need to maximize spending to benefit the entire community, and Ms. Harriman agreed that the hope was for the current effort to raise up the entire state. Dr. Abernathy also agreed that it is an economic development issue indeed, but we must acknowledge our constitutional obligation to provide an adequate education to all students in Arkansas.

Members decided that they needed a little more time before endorsing one of the policy options. The group agreed that they need a clearer picture of what a public-private partnership means. All needed time to think about how to maximize resources and what a public-private partnership would need to look like to suit their respective industries. Ms. Harriman asked members to send their definitions to Brittany Kincaid before the next meeting.

Chair Franklin adjourned the meeting at 12:00.