



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## Quality Digital Learning Study Minutes July 10, 2013

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:13. Chair Franklin asked all present to introduce themselves and explain their connection to education and/or technology. Chair Franklin then outlined the purpose of the committee, which is to use the state's resources and assets to develop a plan to best prepare our kids for college and the workforce.

Chair Franklin referenced two studies: *Digital Learning Now* gave Arkansas an "F" in digital learning and *The Broadband Imperative* emphasized that schools need more bandwidth. He outlined the committee's timeline of six months to come up with recommendations to present to Governor Beebe to address digital learning.

Chair Franklin asked members to come up with recommendations for subcommittees. He suggested needing to know what is currently available in the state and what service providers can currently offer.

Adrienne Gardner was recognized to discuss the broadband landscape in the state. She gave highlights from several reports (*Digital Learning Now*, *TechNet*, and *Connections, Capacity, and Community*). She stressed that broadband is both an education and an economic development issue. She discussed maps that show the ARE-ON, AWIN, Arkansas Highway, and e-Link fiber networks, as well as a map showing bandwidth deficits at school demarcs. Len Pitcock pointed out that the demarc map showed what schools are purchasing, not what is available. Claire Bailey told the group that DIS is working with districts to get more accurate information. She also stated that many schools are purchasing more bandwidth this summer, so the map totals will likely change.

Brittany Kincaid was recognized to discuss educational applications possible with increased bandwidth. She outlined the SETDA's *The Broadband Imperative*, which highlights what several successful states are doing with digital learning and gives recommendations for k-12 policy makers on how to improve broadband access and digital learning in other states. She

stressed that the educational applications possible with increased bandwidth are basically limitless. She highlighted Khan Academy and STEM Works schools in Arkansas.

Vice-Chair Richard Abernathy was recognized to talk about a statewide survey done by AAEA to determine broadband availability and use. He shared several stories about the difficulty some schools have even getting bandwidth. Len Pitcock and Katie Burns indicated it would be useful to have a list or map of the schools that are not able to get the bandwidth they need.

When asked if Common Core was the reason that the Department is so concerned about bandwidth, Dr. Kimbrell replied that that issue may have started the conversation, but it has evolved into a discussion about the need to increase bandwidth to better teach kids.

Chair Franklin asked what information or speakers the members would like to see at later meetings. Dr. Ahlen said he'd like to know what specifically is being done in classrooms to create a benchmark for what is needed. Chair Franklin mentioned the need to incorporate professional development in the eventual implementation of the plan. Chair Franklin encouraged members to send him any thoughts or questions they have before the next meeting.

Dr. Franklin reminded members that the next meeting will take place at 10:00 a.m. on August 14.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50.