

Notes from Online/Blended Learning Open Discussion 1/11/11
Hosted by Independence Institute

Morning session:

After Randy DeHoff's presentation about the Digital Learning Council's 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning, he shared some observations about Colorado.

1. Definition of online program in statute is out-of-date (enacted in 2007)-- The standard model for instructional delivery has changed, not teacher standing in front of virtual whiteboard teaching over Internet) * Idaho has a good model definition that CO should adopt
2. Blended learning is where online learning was 10 years ago: how to define, fund and regulate?
- Colorado League of Charter Schools, Colorado Department of Education, and Colorado Cyberschool Association, et. al, have met and struggled with formulating definition
3. Funding model for competency-based learning: online educators need to be part of discussion – single-day count doesn't work well for online (flow of students, needs to be acknowledged)
4. Mobile learning has already started, experimentation underway – one district in Arkansas has outfitted school buses with wireless, one district in Texas did the same, found discipline problems dropped; *Disrupting Class* by Clayton Christensen: in 10 years, learning will not be limited to 6 hours a day in classroom but a 24/7 environment
5. Military Tier II / Online learning obstacles: Congressional solution to be sought – state rules allow children of military who are Colorado residents to enroll in Colorado online schools – data hard to collect, but we know there are at least several hundred enrolled ... online schools can get out word locally to put pressure on military branches to recognize online education as viable

When Randy was asked what are Colorado's most significant challenges, he said:

- The need for a competency-based system
- Ensuring funding follows child on course-by-course basis
- "Consolidation" as 4-letter word, but there will be move toward sharing services and finding economies of scale, and online ed certainly will be part of those conversations
- Infrastructure - EagleNet (run out of Centennial BOCES) is making progress, has brought in \$160 million in federal and other funds to expand broadband over next 3 years
- Universal access not there in most schools, typical is one computer lab available to one class at a time

Afternoon Session: Facilitated discussion by Dr. Kathryn Knox – Obstacles to Innovation and Ideas to Support Innovation

IDEAS to support innovation:

- Sharing services – collaborative work, including CSAP, to reach remote students
- Online schools negotiate with district for “customized” funding model (level of responsibility for courses) – used to have that ability, repealed in 2007, SB 215 [REVISIT] routinely, district says pay only half or nothing – need structures that increase choice and encourage cooperation, not who owns the child but how do we work together to support student growth
- Revisit all of SB 215 (incl. SBE rules) and definitions, esp. online education [through HB 1412 ... CCA]
- May need a study on Average Daily Membership that includes rolling enrollment to determine pros and cons to various schools” that way “dropout mitigation” may be a pro in the study
- Student's needs must drive decisions / educate districts and schools about options and how to attain services from other schools as needed
- School-accessible statewide data system to track cohorts, etc. – with school access to data (CSAP, GED, grad.) – “records belong to student” needs direction and clarification
- Statewide centers for CSAP testing for online or blended multidistrict models
- Common interim assessments to determine comparable achievement among online schools (“triangulation”) ... make sure tests are online
- Consider late April time for CSAP 'til 2014 [currently driven by testing and checking timeframe]
- Clarify with all schools what needs to be sent in student records file / transcript (there is much variety in what is or isn't included which impacts schools)
- E-rate: “unlock” wireless access outdoors and different locations / use of FB essay contest [CIPA only requires filters, not access to social networking sites]
- Invite military recruiters to events (i.e., Capitol) – supply pressure from bottom to change Tier 2 issue
- State online learning endorsement (optional extra credential / enhancement, not required)... a national endorsement may be coming
- More post-secondary partnership and communication, allow for student teaching in online schools and charter options, etc. = cooperation. Post-secondary faculty needs understanding of the varied online models.
- Consider changing policy so that if a student drops out of school but returns after the age of 21 his education can still be funded.
- Need a glossary of terms and examples of supplemental, online, hybrid, blended, and credit recovery
- Revisit idea of “local control”
- Clarify state report to legislature: what information is necessary and helpful?
- Keep role of teacher and instruction primary in decision-making – not curriculum or technology – online is not delivery of instruction as much as facilitation of learning
- Change the system to allow for 24/7/365: learning anytime, anywhere
- Allow teachers to work for 2+ districts (this may already be allowable)
- Teach authorizer to oversee and evaluate appropriately: reduce amount of paperwork

OBSTACLES and CONSTRAINTS to innovation for achievement

- Competency-based funding // funding child to course level [Florida Virtual School] = funding equity
- Breaking up Per-Pupil Revenue by student and time at elementary level. In general, for funding now its just full-Time//half-Time with few options if a student just needs one course out of the current school.
- CSAP challenges for part-time students and accountability in “splits” (students attending more than one school) – accountability based on three one-time actions (Oct count, spring CSAP, grad / completion – *prescribed by Fed law, student stays in cohort, but if he or she leaves school, falls off district books)
- SB 163's changes to accountability and accreditation somehow negate the constraints in 07-215: how much of 215 is still relevant with SB 163? State is trying to figure out, leaving operators in holding pattern about where re-certification process is, etc. [Rich Wenning from CDE has said: wait until we get through full year of process]
- ICAPs for all students 6-12... create any problems? (Didn't seem to be a problem with schools in attendance.) More discussion desired as this develops
- October count by rule and definition, not just “login” but a better definition of an online program; there is conflict in practice (need interpretation to eliminate the disconnect) – Ex: student logged in for count day but counted as brick and mortar student because brick and mortar school kept student on attendance roll – what counts as login? Concurrent enrollment? Face to face tutoring in online vs. one 3 minute login? Which is better? Brick and mortar applicants after October count (direction needed from state!) ... administrative convenience trumping student need
- CSAP administration: contains many issues, time of year and incomplete learning time (do at end of year with quick return of findings) or online tests with immediate results
- Student record files: info very inconsistent from different districts and takes time to follow up
- Lack of access to cohort information, needed for time line and graduation plan
- Status of Military Tier II students (limits student choice; online is a solid option for preparation)
- Teachers and principals aren't being trained in online schooling in teacher prep programs
- Students who are over 21.... only funded through 12th year
- Confusion of terms and models (overlap, change) for various audiences
- School district boundaries may be a constraint to choice: More flexibility? School districts should not consider children in the boundary as “property” of district
- Communication flows / public meetings / all being at the table for issues and decisions relating to online/blended models
- Onerous reporting requirements and time lines; delete redundancy (statutes and SBE rules); clarify evaluation and use of online report with authorizer
- “Course completion” needs clarity if we keep the online report
- Need more post-secondary / K12 cooperation and collaboration
- Bell schedule (in online?) and school calendar vs. 24/7 potential
- Outcome of online report groups all online schools, averaged together similarly, not accurate (will be changed in coming reports to increase accuracy)