

# Online Course Graduation Requirement

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*A report for the Maryland General Assembly*

**December 1, 2013**

**Prepared by: The Maryland State Department of Education  
*with*  
The Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning**

**Prepared for: Maryland General Assembly**

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Dr. Clayton Wilcox, Public Schools Superintendent Association of Maryland (PSSAM)

Val Emrich, MSDE, Director of Instructional Technology

James Rosapepe, Senator, Maryland General Assembly

Christopher Shank, Senator, Maryland General Assembly

Aruna Miller, Delegate, Maryland General Assembly

Andrew Serafini, Delegate, Maryland General Assembly

Cathy Allen, Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)

Terry-Ann Chiu, Maryland Parent Teacher Association

Kaye Howe, Virtual Learning Provider, National STEM Digital Library

Peter Haydock, Virtual Learning Provider, Smithsonian

Justin Hartings, Representative of Business Community

Lisa Phipps, Parent of an Online Student

Joshua Dorsey, Teacher (engaged in Digital Instruction)

Kenya Campbell, Baltimore Teachers Union

Anna Gannon, Maryland State Education Association

Kimberly Worthington, Charter School Advocate

Robert Cole, LSS Representative, Howard County

Erin Senior, LSS Representative, Anne Arundel County

Matthew Winner, LSS Representative, Howard County

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## **Introduction**

Senate Bill 689 (2012) established the Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning (MACVL) to address digital learning in the State of Maryland. This Council consists of members from the General Assembly, Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), Maryland Parent Teacher Association (MPTA), Maryland State Education Association (MSEA), the Baltimore Teacher's Union, virtual learning providers, the Office of the State Superintendent and the Public Schools Superintendent Association of Maryland (PSSAM). Also included are members from the business community, the parents of students enrolled in online courses, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and educators from Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Membership (see Appendix A-page 9) includes a geographically diverse group of individuals appointed by the Governor and educators chosen by MSDE. The Council met five times since its inception in 2012; the meeting minutes are attached (see Appendix B- page 11) reflecting the processes involved.

The Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning is required to submit a report and recommendations on or before December 1 each year. This report outlines the Council's activities conducted as of November 30, 2013 to meet the requirements described above. The report specifically looks at the feasibility of requiring on-line courses as a graduation requirement.

## **Executive Summary**

As part of this feasibility study, a survey was administered to the twenty-four LEAs with a response from twenty-one LEAs (see Appendix C- page 36). The majority indicated that an online course should not be mandatory for graduation. A summary of the survey indicated that the majority agreed a digital experience should be required to support and enhance student learning. LEAs varied regarding when and how often the experience should be provided. There was interest by LEAs to provide students digital experiences that meet the outcomes described in the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning. As a result, the Council agreed upon a statewide definition for digital experience.

**Digital Experience** – Education in which instruction and content allows students to interact with digital media to support and enhance learning.

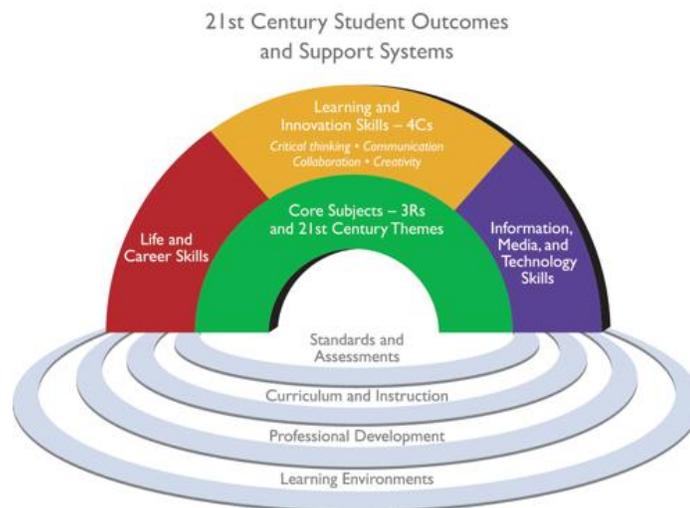
Survey results indicated that funding and infrastructure limitations exist and the disparity among the LEAs creates an equity issue that would make a graduation requirement for all students difficult. The implementation of the new Common Core State Standards and the accompanying assessment, PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career) along with the new science standards (Next Generation Science Standards) and the Maryland State STEM Standards of Practice and Frameworks will require LEAs to strategically refocus technology priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environment (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills).

The MACVL supports and recommends that each LEA develop a plan based on set parameters that include student accountability for digital experiences that meets its individual system needs and provides access for all students.

## Maryland Digital Experiences

Through a Digital Learning Overview Survey, LEAs identified initiatives and programs that support the Framework for 21st Century Learning. The Framework presents a holistic view of 21st century teaching and learning that combines a discrete focus on 21st century student outcomes (a blending of specific skills, content knowledge, expertise and literacies) with innovative support systems to help students master the multi-dimensional abilities required of them in the 21st century and beyond.

The key elements of 21st century learning are represented in the graphic and descriptions below. The graphic represents both 21st century student outcomes (represented by the arches of the rainbow) and 21st century learning support systems (represented by the pools at the bottom). *Framework for 21st Century Learning*. Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Web. 15 Nov 2013.



<http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>

For the purposes of this study, MACVL defines the digital experience as follows:

**Digital Experience** – Education in which instruction and content allows students to interact with digital media to support and enhance learning.

**Examples include but are not limited to:**

- Online courses
- Blended course/environment (in addition to LEA offerings, all Maryland students are provided the opportunity to access the blended High School Assessment courses for Algebra I, English 10, Biology, and Government provided by MSDE through the Learning Management System )
- Graduated immersion of online opportunities based on grade level
- Innovative experiences such as pilots, Digital Innovation Grant initiatives

As reported by LEAs, the information below highlights some of the digital experiences occurring throughout the State of Maryland:

- 1:1 digital device to student ;
- Implementation of collaborative learning platforms ;
- Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD);
- eTextbooks/iBooks;
- ePortfolios;
- Blended and online courses;
- Video conferencing between experts or classes;
- Exploration into virtual desktop solutions;
- Social media for instruction and collaboration;
- On-going updating of infrastructure;
- Tablet implementation; and
- Project/Problem based digital learning environments.

### **MACVL Survey**

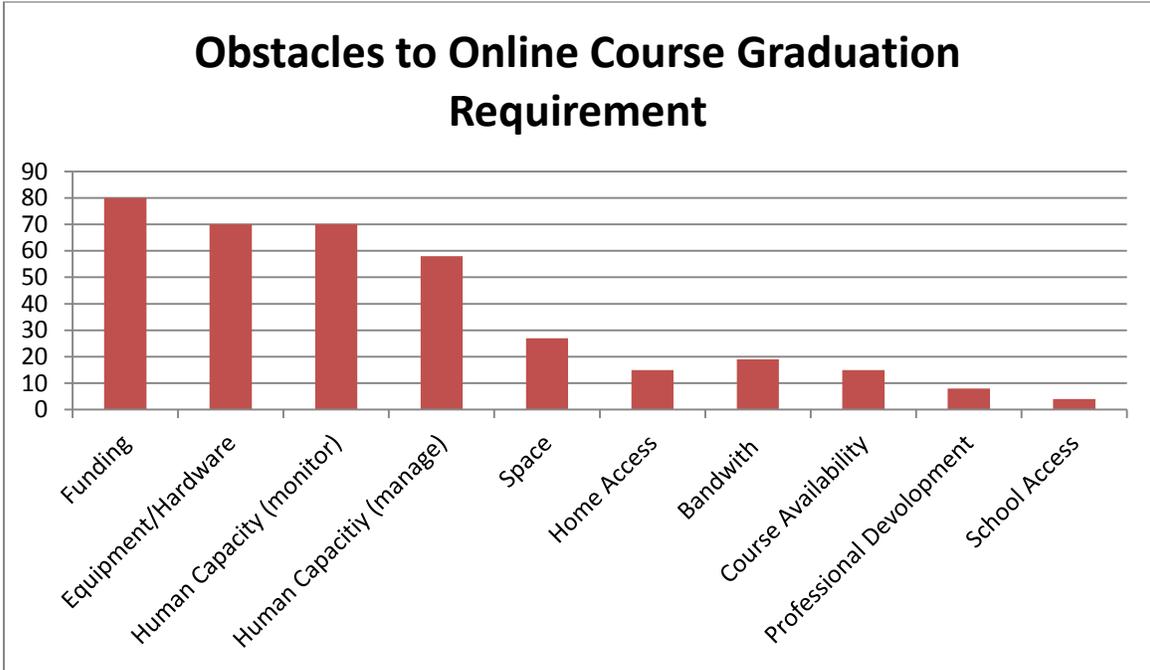
During the September 2013 MACVL meeting, council members generated various survey questions to measure the level of support and concerns of LEAs as well as available resources that relate to the proposed graduation requirement. Twenty-one out of twenty-four LEAs responded with multiple respondents from some districts. Respondents were designated by the individual LEAs.

An overview of the survey results follows:

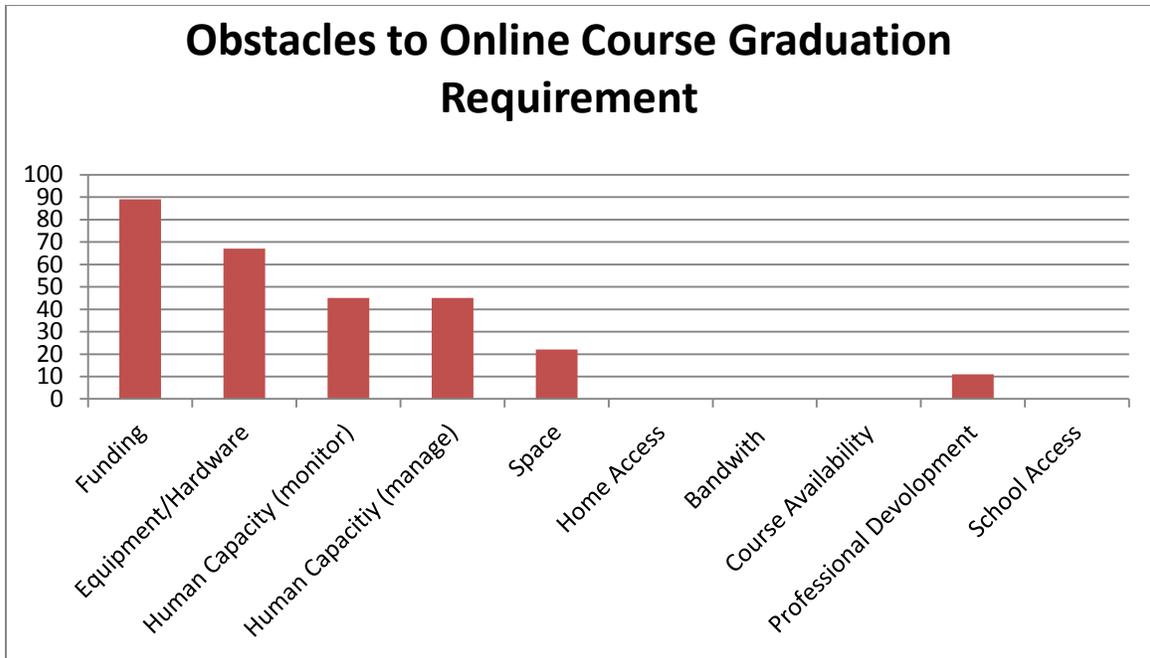
- When asked about the favorability of supporting the completion of an **online course** as a graduation requirement, 65% were opposed and 35% were in favor.
- When asked whether their system would be in favor of supporting the requirement of an online experience that includes a measure of accountability for graduation credit, 65% were opposed and 35% were in favor.
- When asked what level of Internet access is available in their school system (it should be noted that the understanding of infrastructure varies from district to district), 65% of the LEAs reported that their district lacks equitable high speed access to the Internet while 19% of the LEAs offer broadband access only. Depending upon location, the remaining 16% reported a combination of high speed and/or broadband access.
- Similarities were noted in response to the question, “What obstacles would your system encounter if all high school students needed to complete an online course for graduation?”
  - Twenty-one LEAs identified funding as an issue;
  - Eighteen LEAs identified equipment/hardware as an issue;
  - Eighteen LEAs identified human capacity to monitor as an issue;
  - Fifteen LEAs identified human capacity to manage the program as an issue;
  - Seven LEAs identified lack of space as an issue;
  - Five LEAs identified lack of bandwidth as an issue;

- Four LEAs identified home access by students as an issue;
- Four LEAs identified course availability as an issue;
- Two LEAs identified professional development as an issue; and
- One LEA identified school access as an issue.

The chart below depicts a percentage view of the results listed on page 5:



Additionally, of those who responded favorably to the online course requirement for graduation, 89% responded that funding was an obstacle. These respondents did not indicate that home access, school access, bandwidth and course availability were obstacles. The chart below depicts these responses.



\*Numbers provided indicate percent of responses for completing an online course for a graduation requirement.

Below \*\*The format of this question was open ended therefore respondents could cite more than one obstacle.  
virtual/online learning?”

- 85% of respondents indicated that their system allocates less than \$25,000.00 towards online learning.
- Non-system funding sources include parental payment, grants, and institutions of higher education.
- 35% of respondents believe that the allocated funding is sufficient for their district’s current digital needs.

Reasons cited for the use of student online courses include credit recovery, advanced placement, home and hospital, blended courses, original credit, graduation, scheduling issues, multiple learning styles.

#### **MACVL Recommendation**

**Individual LEA Plan** - Each LEA will develop a comprehensive plan for student digital experience that includes accountability. Plans will be submitted to MSDE by a date to be determined by the Council. Full implementation will take place by the beginning of school year 2016-2017.

Plans should include:

- Accountability
  - Assessment of student work
  - Evaluation of program
- Time management requirements for students

- Teacher professional development
- Responsible stakeholders – who will manage the implementation, evaluation, and reporting of the plan
- Timeline for recommended action –implementation by school year 2016 – 2017

Possible benefits of this plan include the ability for each district to address its unique needs; allow for flexibility; provide time for a pilot implementation; provide time to gather necessary system resources; and prepare students for future digital experiences in college and career.

LEA possible concerns include the determination of new sources for funding or the reallocation of existing funds; equity of access for all students; marketing efforts to stakeholders and/or infrastructure capabilities.

In an effort to assist districts as they develop their plans, the MACVL is offering some examples of digital experiences. These examples have been incorporated into this report as Appendix D (page 37).

Appendix E (page 39) includes a proposed plan written by Clayton Wilcox, Ed.D., Superintendent, Washington County Public Schools.

### **Summary**

To prepare students for successful college and career experiences, the Council recognizes the necessity and value of integrating digital experiences into teaching and learning for all students from Pre-K through Grade 12. Based on feedback from the LEAs, the MACVL determined that student participation in an online course could serve as one option from a menu of digital learning experiences. However, most members recognized that a traditional online course as a graduation requirement may not provide the level of constancy nor the depth and richness for learning that on-going access to digital experiences would. There was consensus on instituting a required digital experience as determined by each LEA based on student needs and capacity of each district. The MACVL in collaboration with the MSDE, and with approval from the State Board of Education, will determine requirements that include accountability measures for LEA written plans. Full implementation will take place by the beginning of school year 2016-2017.

**Appendix A**

**Senate Bill 689  
Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning  
Mission & Members**

**Mission:**

The mission of the Council is to encourage and support the education of students in accordance with National Standards of Online Learning and State Law.

**Members:**

The Council consists of the following members:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Council Affiliation</b>
Dr. Lillian M. Lowery	State Superintendent of Schools
Val Emrich	Director, Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Office
Senator James C. Rosapepe	Senate of Maryland
Senator Christopher B. Shank	Senate of Maryland
Delegate Andrew Serafini	House of Delegates
Delegate Aruna Miller	House of Delegates
Dr. Clayton Wilcox, Superintendent of Washington County	Public Schools Superintendent Association of Maryland (PSSAM)
Cathy Allen	Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)
Terri-Ann Chiu	Maryland Parent Teacher Association
Kaye Howe, National STEM Digital Library (NSDL)	Virtual Learning Provider
Peter Haydock - Smithsonian	Virtual Learning Provider
Justin Hartings	Representative of Business Community
Lisa Phipps	Parent (student must participate in Digital Learning Opportunities')

Joshua Dorsey	Teacher (engaged in Digital Instruction)
Kenya Campbell	Baltimore Teachers Union
Anna Gannon	Maryland State Education Association
Kimberly Worthington, the Executive Director for the Maryland Charter School Network	Charter School Advocate
Robert Cole, Howard County, K-12	LEA Representative (appointed by Department)
Erin Senior, Anne Arundel County, K-12	LEA Representative (appointed by Department)
Matthew Winner, Howard County	LEA Representative (appointed by Department)
Joquetta Johnson, Baltimore County	LEA Representative (appointed by Department)
Sharon Gallagher, Baltimore County	LEA Representative (appointed by Department)

## Appendix B

### **Minutes**

Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning  
November 8, 2012  
Maryland State Department of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street, Conference Room 8  
Baltimore, MD 21201

**Advisory Members in Attendance:** Dr. Lillian Lowery, Valerie Emrich, Cathy Allen, Kenya Campbell, Terri-Ann Chiu, Robert Cole, Joshua Dorsey, Anna Gannon, Justin Hartings, Peter Haydock, Kay Howe, Joquetta Johnson, Erin Senior, Honorable Andrew Serafini, Senator Christopher Shank, Matthew Winner, Kimberly Worthington.

**Guests in Attendance:** Jay Bansbach, Kenneth Battle, Matthew Frailing, Matthew Greenwood, Gary Smith, Dennis Rasmussen.

**Welcome and Introductions** (Dr. Lowery): Bipartisan support from people from across the State – one of the first conversations with the governor around digital learning – best thinking from around the State – every level from around the State PK-20+ and early learning

### **Meeting Notes:**

Review of Senate Bill 689 and Identify the Council's Responsibilities (Renee Spence) – (HB745) – Chapters 290/291 – establishment of the council, welcomed staffing of this council on behalf of the Governor, with so many priorities hard to get virtual learning moving forward, making some recommendations – amended themselves onto the council, important work

Rules included for the Council were that members cannot be compensated but can be reimbursed for mileage, etc. Will make recommendations to the State Superintendent and to the General Assembly – (reference bill pg. 5) – list – will prioritize later which council will address first – last item “what other tasks may be needed” – report dues by December 1, 2013 – Speakers of both Houses, House Ways and Means and Senate Health, Education – motion regarding the “Chair” of the committee (Sen. Shank)

Sen. Shank – become number 1 in virtual learning, how can we encourage, does the state need to get out of the way – look at examples that can work, can invent from the ground up – bi-partisan issue – bill does specify – does elevate with Dr. Lowery chairing

Motion: Sen. Shank nominated Dr. Lowery, Sen. Serafini (seconded) – all in favor

Sen. Serafini – example from New Castle school district – student completed while in Africa – economic viability for students, in favor of blended learning – new reality of students today – partnership with MSDE – number one in virtual learning

Report on Digital Learning in Maryland (Val Emrich) – PPT slides – not been able to review and approve courses, Bob Cole – COMAR legislation funded by Title II D – roles in school systems, subsidizing

enrollments, no operating budget at MSDE – supporting digital initiatives with no additional funds – no data available for 2010-11 due to push back to local school districts, MSDE also contracting with local school systems (end of federal funding), all call to points of contact – recommendations (Dr. Lowery): have break down by district –

Val: Courses submitted to date -- PPT – explanation of UDL and Accessibility (Dr. Lowery) -- question: Sen. Serafini – repeating the work of other states – no: QM started with College

Q: Sup. Wilcox – Florida virtual courses accepted – we or locals would review – credit bearing – if developed locally is same process (K-8 can move on – not credit bearing) -

Process the same (Justin Hastings) – for locally created courses

What is statute? SB674

Bob Cole – did advocate for decentralizing the process while here at MSDE, example: Algebra Data Analysis –

Q: with Common Core Standards will approval become faster? Should but not necessarily – may also vary by district about what is allowed – local policy also barrier to access

Renee – Sen. Rosapepe – reason for SB674 – how can we get more courses approved – legislation allows both avenues – locals review and recommend and final vetting at MSDE

How is data being collected in regard to student success? (Kaye Howe) – Hopefully don't look just at grades

Del. Serafini – financial course example (financial literacy) – Virginia course – need people to become lifelong learners –

Dr. Lowery to Bob Cole – how is there a way to expedite – recommendations: administrative support also an issue – all states that lead the effort and it has come from the Governor, etc. Florida (FTEs) funded at the state level – specific funding stream – getting bureaucracy out of the way – get outside entities to run as an agency

Val: Big concern – unions see jobs going away to virtual schools – Erin Senor (Anne Arundel County) teaching across district lines – grown immensely – can no longer find funding – growing our own teachers and teachers don't feel threatened – lot of money to send students to schools

(Cathy Allen) America's Promise – implement a program in St. Mary's Co. – can take before, during, or after school or through another site – 2 classrooms dedicated – 20% of students interfaced with the program – jump of 5% - will be replacing summer school in some cases and evening high school classes – accepted through MSDE and buying through the vendor – what is we are advocating for – blended learning -- teacher in the room – does not go through the review process – 80/20%

CIOs – St. Mary's 2.5 mil. through military granting authority – 410 classrooms in St. Mary's County

ePortfolios – pilot in Anne Arundel County using Three Ring – can capture especially in non-tested areas, music education, art, etc.

Joquetta Johnson – Baltimore County students awarded with their own domain

Streaming video resources – Safari Montage, Discovery Education – can be used in instruction – using in the context of creating their own digital textbooks

Professional development – underlying everything – for our teachers, use our EdTech funding – funding no longer available – needs to be up front before the technology – administrators must be part of that –

Joquetta Johnson – must also be accountable for what you are learning –

Supt. Wilcox – we are 12 years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century – how do we create the conditions that every student will take an online course in the next 5 years – homeschoolers (500) in Washington Co. – they don't need that – cart and horse mixed up – discuss virtual courses, then we embrace pd for the folks that need to teach virtually in a blended --

Gradual virtual learning experience – from elementary school and up (Terry Chiu) – scaffolding for all teachers – question

(Anna Gannon) As educators – needs to be a number of hours of exposure for anything to come to fruition and be adopted as a permanent experience – strong learning community in Howard Co – technology changes so rapidly – need to grow our own educators, supports in place

Kaye Howe – pressures of learning communities – granularity – people doing things so well – save a lot of time and effort and find what we need from other places – use professional resources that are out there --

Josh Dorsey – steep learning curve for teachers, those need to take risks, school culture – high enrollment at some schools and none at others – change in school culture – AP Calculus course as example

Fear – loss of jobs, prioritize professional development (Erin Senor) – offer online professional development –

How do we remove roadblocks and enhance virtual learning?? Professional development then will come along.

Prioritize Responsibilities (Renee Spence) –

Bob Cole - through the lens – all these are components of virtual learning, going to be bold in what we are looking to do – systemic changes

Sen. Shank – subcommittees and work virtually (smaller groups)

Del. Serafini – example integration of virtual learning as part of the educational process – bold thinking, has to be systemically – should be “efficiencies” – no option to opt out (local counties)

Dr. Wilcox - Recommendation: - group Require every student in the state of MD that every student has to have completed a credit bearing course

Dr. Wilcox - Recommendation: Group to look at teaching and learning and what will that compensation and curriculum look like –

Sen. Shank – thoughts around these three areas – send in and share with each other (Sup. Wilcox – add students to advisory) – self-identify with a subcommittee through e-mail – subcommittees meet online, set chairs – subcommittees can ask for presentations

- Finance and policy -
- Curriculum and student services
- Technology infrastructure and training

Expectations – what are they? Inclusion of media literacy (St. Mary’s) – 21<sup>st</sup> century skills –

Justin Hartings – how do we blow away the current model – what is the solution for technology – hope we can find a process and way to facilitate MSDE, maintain standards –

<b>Determine Next Steps:</b>
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Goals – for each subcommittee

Set Future Meeting Dates

Need employers – as part of group – people are becoming generalists and being employed in smaller sector

### **Overview of Digital Learning in Maryland**

#### **Online Courses:**

The Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunity program offers both student and professional online courses. These courses are offered directly through MSDE or are approved courses by specific vendors. Due to funding constraints, the approval of new courses has been curtailed since February 9, 2006. With the passing of Senate Bill 674, procedures have been set to allow reviewing of new courses by both MSDE and districts. Vendor reviewing fees will be used to support related activities.

June 2012 course information below:

	Number of courses
MSDE student courses	14
MSDE professional development courses	23
Vendor student online courses	62

Summer 2012 student (credit bearing) online course submittals and review status:

19 courses – Quality Matters

3 courses – Frederick County

- 7 pending release from vendor – on approval track and should be available Spring Semester
- 5 approved
- 1 withdrawn by vendor
- 4 QM awaiting revisions
- 5 denied (3 Frederick, 2 MSDE)

Two “Race to the Top” projects, Project 7 and Project 21, are dedicated to developing Common Core professional development courses and student modules.

**Recovery Courses:** Unless a recovery course falls under the MSDE definition of an online course, districts provide them in a blended format that includes instruction by the classroom teacher. Several districts use vendor modules or parts of courses to provide this blended environment.

**Example:** Over the summer Harford County provided 18 blended recovery courses for 575 students. Baltimore, Frederick, Harford, and Prince George’s Counties have also reported the use of recovery courses.

### **MDK12 Digital Library**

The MDK12 Digital Library is a statewide purchasing consortium created to serve all 24 school districts and approximately 100 non-public schools that to date has saved the taxpayers of Maryland over \$1 million. Housed at the MSDE, the project has developed by-laws, a MOU, and a committee structure similar to the structure that has been in place since the project's inception as a Federal Title IID Grant. For the 2012-13 school year consortium members have access to negotiated pricing for digital content from over 14 major content providers including e-book content, and are all again subscribing statewide to a suite of ProQuest/SIRS databases. The consortium is in the selection/evaluation process for new content to be added for the 2013-14 school year and continues to work with public and academic libraries to form a larger purchasing consortium.

### **eReader Study**

Thirteen districts in the State of Maryland are piloting the use of mobile devices to supplement instruction, for ELL support, or as eReaders. At this point most of the devices are deployed in school libraries as eReaders. As funding allows, schools and districts continue to investigate the possible benefits of these digital tools.

Below is a list of the current devices:

Nooks, Kindles, Kindle Fires, iPads, iPod Touches, Sony, Kobos

HB 1220 (2012) - Secondary Education - Electronic Reader Pilot Program (School Libraries) – Study background research has been completed. Thirteen schools systems across Maryland are currently running or have completed eReader Pilots to date. For local school systems it is advantageous to have

an eBook delivery platform that will deliver content to any eReader device (mobile, laptop, desktop, or eReader).

### **iPads and iPods in Instruction**

Although MSDE does not ask for information related to iPads, many districts share their initiatives with us.

Examples are below:

At least seventy-eight of Anne Arundel County Public schools use iPads or iPods to supplement instruction, support ELL students, develop ePortfolios, and/or for creating and delivering student productions. Funding for the purchases has come from various sources - school, central offices, PTA/PTO. Apps have been reviewed and posted on the district's Intranet. Although the inclusion of these devices is limited in the schools, one middle school was able to equip each sixth grade student with an iPad to enhance the school's Problem Based Learning approach to learning.

Prince Georges County utilized Title 1 funding to provide iPads for each middle school. Teachers and students are creating iBooks to supplement classroom instruction. Students use the Apps and iPads on a daily basis to support learning.

Talbot County provides iPads for high school students for instruction as well as a textbook source.

St. Mary's County secured a grant to purchase iPads for instruction.

Administrative Use of iPads: In both Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties, administrators use iPads for teacher observations and productivity. An informal report (August 2012) reflects the purchase/use of 6,056 iPads for administrative or instructional throughout Maryland.

### **ePortfolios**

Various counties have explored the use of Microsoft 365 and ThreeRing for student ePortfolios. ThreeRing provides an interface between mobile devices and computers.

### **Streaming Video and Multimedia Assets**

Four districts and nine individual schools have purchased Safari Montage's digital streaming product. 17 districts have adopted Discovery Education centrally or in individual schools

## Minutes

Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning

February 25, 2013 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Miller Senate Office Building - President's Conference Room (West I)

11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Advisory Members in Attendance:** Cathy Allen, Kenya Campbell, Terry-Ann Chiu, Robert Cole, Joshua Dorsey, Anna Gannon, Joquetta Johnson, Dr. Lillian Lowery, Del. Aruna Miller, Lisa Phipps, Del. Andrew Serafini, Sen. Chris Shank, Matt Winner, Kim Worthington, Val Emrich

**MSDE / DLS Staff in Attendance:** Dr. Henry Johnson, Michial Gill, Jay Bansbach, Lynn Rosen

**Guests in Attendance:** Dennis Rasmussen, Brian Meshkin (Howard Co BOE), Jim Wilhelm, Spear Lancaster (CLF), Randal Mickens (MSEA)

**Not in Attendance:** Pat Forester, Justin Hartings, Peter Haydock, Kaye Howe, Sen. James Rosapepe, Erin Senior, Dr. Clayton Wilcox, Gary Smith, Renee Spence

**Welcome and Introduction of New Members:** Dr. Lowery welcomed Lisa Phipps a parent who has joined the MACVL. Others in the room including guests introduced themselves.

### MSDE Updates (Val Emrich)

#### Legislation

**SB 461 – Primary and Secondary Education - Online Courses and Services – Accessibility – (40 sponsors) –** had its first reading in the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee – Jan. 30. – cross filed - HB 1176 (Delegate Hixson, et al.) - Ways and Means.

This bill generally codifies the requirement established in Chapters 287 and 288 of 2012 that the development, review, and approval of an online course or service by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) or a local board of education must include an assessment regarding the accessibility of the online course or service to individuals with disabilities, including the blind. MSDE or a local board of education may contract with a third party for (1) the development of accessibility assessment or (2) the development of a method by which the online course or service will be made accessible to individuals with disabilities, including the blind. The State Board of Education may set reasonable fees for these services.

**HB 532 – State Board of Education - Online Courses - Graduation Requirement (7 sponsors) - First Reading Ways and Means – Jan. 30. – no cross-file .**

This bill requires a student to complete an online course to graduate from high school beginning with students entering grade nine in the 2015-2016 school year. The online course must be approved by either the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) or the local board of education as specified under current law.

Comments from Sen. Shank and Del. Serafini -- bill intended to push as a State and become a conversation starter – task the council with putting together a plan/blueprint ... amend bill to send to MACVL and report progress back to the legislature... look at other states (what are the experiences of other states and locales) – Mooresville, NC, Florida, etc. Must have buy in from stakeholders – State Board of Education does not like the legislature dictating education policy.

Accessibility and Accountability – data collection as a means for finding out what local school systems need – Hopkins perhaps a willing partner

Bob Cole – programs availability to communities at large, other states have had Governor endorsement and legislative allotments and/or FTE model - Independent funding

### **Online Course program**

Course update (since 9/2012):

- 89 courses approved and available
- Approved - 13
- Pending - 3
- Denied – 3 Frederick Co., 3 QM, 2 MSDE
- Pulled by vendor – 3
- Comment re: 2 MSDE – both health courses (with vendors) – dated and need to enrich content
- April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 (MSDE), 1 pm – Online student course summit (12 vendors attending) expectations for course submission – invitation extended to MACVL members

### **RTTT projects**

- Learning Management System – LMS - Production date June 2013
- Spring pilots include: 1 student course, 2 PD courses, 4 eCommunities

## **Review Overarching Council Goals**

- Investigate and revise statewide policies to facilitate the expansion of online learning opportunities to include sustainable models for funding (FTEs, scholarships, etc.) and possible graduation requirement and/or no opt-out for LSSs.
- Provide a sustainable technology infrastructure to allow for the expansion of digital resource use that ensures content is shared and available across local school systems.
- Develop models (including funding) for the expansion of teacher and administrator training/professional development regarding the use and delivery of digital content and technologies in the teaching and learning environment (both pre-service and for current teachers).

Goals were read and accepted by the MACVL – goals were provided by council feedback gathered in late December/early January online survey.

### Introduce Sub-committees and Establish Charge/Goals

Charge for each sub-committee - Identify committee goals, Begin planning and identify possible work products to be developed (examples – whitepapers, blueprint for progress, legislative reports, etc.)

Curriculum and Student Services	Finance	Infrastructure and Training
Cathy Allen	Justin Hartings	Kenya Campbell
Terri-Ann Chiu	Delegate Aruna Miller	Anna Marie Gannon
Robert Cole	Senator James Rosapepe	Kaye Howe
Josh Dorsey	Erin Senior	Joquetta Johnson
Peter Haydock	Clayton Wilcox	Delegate Andrew Serafini
Matthew Winner	Kimberly Worthington	Senator Christopher Shank
Lisa Phipps		

### Introduce the MACVL Blackboard eCommunity / Break into Subcommittees

MACVL members were introduced to the eCommunity established to become a repository for their work and a way for subcommittees and the council in general to share information with each other. Directions were provided for access to the community that included screenshots for members to become familiar with navigation. Each subcommittee was provided a wiki location to record their work for the day.

MSDE Blackboard - <https://msde.blackboard.com>

ID: email address

Password: first initial and last name

### Subcommittee Work: Curriculum and Student Services

**Leader: Cathy Allen, Recorder: Bob Cole**

#### Goals:

- Investigate and revise statewide policies to facilitate the expansion of online learning opportunities to include sustainable models for funding (FTEs, scholarships, etc.) and possible graduation requirement and/or no opt-out for LSSs.

Understand what opportunities are currently available? What are the barriers?

What makes an effective online course?

How do we streamline a process of getting courses online?

Clarify: what method of delivery and type of course are we including under our definition of online course

Possible goal- reach into lower-grade levels to prepare students to gain competency to meet requirements for online testing

Can be different expectations that can be embedded within curriculum or what could be covered under a state-wide requirement?

Leverage existing models to facilitate sharing within and across districts

FLVS model- if courses are approved in other states- should give them a "pass" in MD; other approvals could facilitate or expedite a review process

Some identified barriers include not having a "choice model", have districts allow local control of curriculum, and limitations on systems for supervision and/or staffing

Range of options available and way they are handled; state-wide makes it more difficult to standardize policy

School boards assume that it takes a different cost (FTE) or elementary versus secondary student; e.g., we don't expect the dollar to follow the student; even though that's how we fund the student

83% of school system budgets go to personnel

Asking local county government- here is the goal- how are you going to do it? Want to increase OL in every county- determine how you would do that.

Looking at possible models of curriculum development- looking at acceleration for students moving ahead

ES using Edmodo- they have the information for what "site" looks like and using Skype for communication; ability to offer more opportunities

How can we ensure students have access and expectation and balance with our ability to provide?

Need to address or indicate the role of PD as part of recommendations; teachers who are using PLCs and have opportunities are more apt to be able to implement online

See more uses in the work force; how could this be mirrored in the school systems?

Very important to define online learning; help provide a common vocabulary for people to understand what we are talking about

Establishing the need for online proficiencies; make the case for how it impacts students to be college and career ready

What would it look like- what classes, type of curricula, options?

Focus on competencies and not the percentage of time spent on the Internet

What do we expect students to achieve through online learning? Understand that learning takes place all of the time. Are students actively involved? How are they able to participate and contribute?

Are students' views and expectations for competencies different than adults? Are what we planning to design meeting the needs and expectations for students?

Two perspectives: revamping the curriculum OR presenting the curriculum in a new way

Providing a model that is not tied to existing structure- technology is allow students to expand walls of the classroom; OL- are you offering something that expands the learning experience; improves experience by offering new ways to approach content

- Provide a sustainable technology infrastructure to allow for the expansion of digital resource use that ensures content is shared and available across local school systems.

- Develop models (including funding) for the expansion of teacher and administrator training/professional development regarding the use and delivery of digital content and technologies in the teaching and learning environment (both pre-service and for current teachers).

#### **Subcommittee Work: Finance**

Goals:

- Craft a plan to dictate how funding flows and bring to light the argument for repurposing dollars
- Explore funding (inclusive of facilities support) that would incorporate a variety of virtual learning models to provide options for school districts
- Explore the notion of a consortium with vendors

#### **Subcommittee Work: Infrastructure and Training**

**Leader: Senator Shank, Recorder: Kenya Campbell**

**Goals:**

- 1) Collect current data. Where are we now?
- 2) Research. How are other states resolving issues with technology?
- 3) Incorporating all stakeholders (parents, superintendents, ITD, teachers, resources, higher ed, etc.)
- 4) Training: Consider hybrid training with the incorporation of master teachers to provide PD.

Plan to meet goals:

#### **Next Steps**

Dates for next meetings???

## Minutes

Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning

May 20, 2013

Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Carver Staff Development Center

2671 Carver Road, Gambrills, MD 21054

**Council Members in Attendance:** Clayton Wilcox, Justin Hartings, Anna Gannon, Lisa Phipps, Robert Cole, Josh Dorsey, Cathy Allen, Peter Haydock, Val Emrich, Henry Johnson (for Dr. Lowery), Kenya Campbell

**MSDE Support for Council:** Jay Bansbach

**Guests in Attendance:** Mary Guzman, Stephanie Chill, Christina Drushel, Pat Forester, Kathleen Mooney, Sheila LoCastro, Randal Mickens, Sharon Gallagher, Lynn Rosen, Abby Shriver, Christian Hodges

### Student Characteristics and online delivery choices (PowerPoint posted in MACVL Community)

- Amendment to HB 532 – Dec. 1, 2013 (feasibility study for the Governor)
- Students Need to or Want to:
  - believe in purpose and authentically engaged
  - feel motivated
  - overcome negative feelings associated with school
  - set short/long term goals
  - take charge of learning
  - ongoing support for time management
- Indicators predicting success:
  - sustained support (registration and throughout course)
  - technology support
  - social interaction engagement
  - experienced/trained facilitators
  - flexibility to provide personalized learning
- Facilitator led
  - interactive method of online teaching that creates a community of learners
- Blended
  - combination of face-to-face and online experiences
- Self-paced
  - courses with no or little teacher involvement

### Panel Discussion

Stephanie Chill, student – MD. Youth Advisory Council (MYAC), Abby Shriver, student – MYAC, Christian Hodges, student – National Youth Advisory Council – State Chief of Staff – MD. Assoc. of Student Councils – Appointed to MD. State Board of Education -2013-14 SY, Mary Guzman, High School Online Facilitator, Joshua Dorsey, High School Online Facilitator, Sharon Gallagher, District Point of Contact

**Q: What are the benefits do online courses provide?**

A: Stephanie Chill (student) - convenience of not being restricted to a single class session, may revisit content; reinforce understandings and concepts, additional time with content a benefit

A: Abby Shriver (student) - manage your own time and work at your own pace, access materials for additional support, advancing at your own pace

A: Chris (student) – just finished AP Apex history course – advantage of taking a class that can be managed in your own time given a current load of extracurricular activities

A: Mary Guzman (teacher) - opens doors for other students that lack a specialized course offering in their schools. Supports students in special situations ex. Home/Hospital, etc. Mary recalled an example of a student that had the opportunity to attend a prestigious ballet school in Russian – was able to come back to take her AP exams after studying online.

A: Joshua Dorsey (teacher) - equity and accessibility, support to students in rural areas, personalization with the ability to pace yourself and can focus on where you are struggling.

A: Sharon Gallagher (District POC) - equity in options, adding to Mary's comment - finding highly qualified teachers in a district sometimes difficult to find can then rely on an online teacher from another setting.

**Q: What successes have you experienced? What features improved your learning and made it engaging?**

A: Abby (student) - can do it anytime, re-watch, rewind, repeat content – helps her better master content.

A: Chris (student) - working on it at night, flexibility, grading periods didn't align

A: Stephanie (student) – personal sickness - home and hospital program was able to keep her on track with her peers in school; still had some face-to-face interactivity with teacher and other students by using Skype and whiteboard apps.

A: Mary (teacher) – personalization for students -- what is now available technologically is incredible - math applications, pen casts, Google hangouts to share screens, work in Elluminate, use Skype.

A: Josh (teacher) - need to create pool of facilitators -- work in evening -- additionally feedback is not static, benefit to online teaching - all content is front loaded – facilitating interactivity

A: Sharon (District POC) - advantage of being able to take an online course over summer to prerequisite a course needed for the fall for students struggling or for students to accelerate their learning, AP exam flexibility, home and hospital or other special needs to personalize learning

**Follow-up Q: Bob Cole (advisory) – What are some of the elements you miss out on in not having a face to face class?**

A: Abby (student) – likes personal discussion, learning from other students, discussion boards in online class too unwieldy - too many people in the class (200) - didn't work because of number of students. Took too much time to read comments and after first few – they started repeating, grading on discussions very strange!

A: Chris (student) – considered dropping online course, few people in discussion group and later he was the only person so in regard to garnering points for discussion – he was talking to himself – made no sense.

A: Stephanie (student) - no other students there so can't do group work, no collaboration with one another.

**Follow-up Q: Bob Cole (advisory) - What was transformative for facilitators?**

A: Mary (teacher) - level of student interaction, doing so much more teaching with the use of interactive tools – raising the level of interaction based on experience gained from teaching online.

A: Josh (teacher) – have to let go of the pillars of the traditional classroom, -- students sometimes need to work at their own pace and can take quizzes when they were ready (competency based assessment). For companies like Apex, etc. students become educational commerce - can't imagine only ever teaching online because you lose the face-to-face. Have become a better teacher because I can't read body language of students or do a visual check for understanding therefore must be more concise with language used in the course.

**Follow-up Q: Justin Hartings (advisory): What about the students that are not motivated? Did method of delivery engage other students?**

A: Mary (teacher) - not motivating for them if they are not motivated in the classroom, hard to get them engaged, mentor in a local school system is very helpful and can work with the student in addition to the facilitator – need additional local support

A: Josh (teacher) – most offerings geared for students that are "high-fliers" - for struggling students course needs to be more dynamic -- java based applets, etc., utilizing tools and programs for heightened engagement. Capacity for this type of development lies with the commercial market and is difficult to do locally.

**Q: What other challenges have you faced in your online course(s)?**

A: Abby (student) - time management always a challenge for online courses, some content “dumbed” down so I felt it was a waste of time – and then in turn didn't want to go online to work. Would think this would be difficult to address if you have to take the course as a graduation requirement - how would this be handled?

A: Chris (student) - so easy to get behind – lack motivation sometimes and don't log in because content is sometimes boring. Reading is also very heavy for each assignment (40-60 pages of reading) and sometimes this is content that could be delivered more interactively.

A: Stephanie (student) – natural inclination to procrastinate especially when there are a lot of readings. Cool way to construct content was in chunks where the online teacher broke down the assignment into chunks – so were assigned a thesis statement that had to be approved, then we had drafts due, all along content was submitted to TurnItIn to check for plagiarism. I liked the additional accountability – not seen in every course.

Q: Bob (advisory) - **Project-based learning - does that make a difference for you?**  
General discussion

Abby (student) - you have a class mod to work on, online course tend to lack personal interaction - wasn't enough time to work

Chris (student) - stay up all night for 3 days Josh - can hide in a online environment - physically see instructor - prioritize for a f2f instructor

Stephanie (student) - helps seeing a teacher and getting feedback from teachers and peers

Sharon (School System POC) - vendor courses - designed for a full year where students aren't there but 185 days especially in AP course - design and standards important –

Dr. Wilcox (advisory) - can't work in the traditional model of how course are bought - courses need to be designed in another way to engage using things like 3D gaming technology – sometimes need to build it yourself

Sharon (School System POC) - connections that need a real relationship -- not found in a packaged course.

Dr. Wilcox (advisory) - teachers accessible to kids, kids accessible to other kids (Halo example)

Cathy Allen (advisory) - In St. Mary's County - must be a person in the classroom using APEX courses - still students that it doesn't work for -- just cut the ribbon for a national flight academy (learning through gaming situations) -- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) - working in real time - so many disciplines a part of it -- one size doesn't fit all

Abby (student) - are mentors specific to content experts - cross-disciplinary teams work - develop expertise

Chris (student) - challenge - school calendars don't necessarily line up -- averaging of grades become an issue.

Q: Josh (teacher) - **Would you take an online class again?** (directed to Chris) – No was response from Chris.

**Q: What is the most important way a facilitator can help his/her learners succeed?**

A: Abby (student) being there for encouragement - individualized plan, need to see a face, responding in a real time setting -- facial cues -- need video, etc.

A: Chris (student) – FL Virtual School - facilitators call and reach out to check on you on a regular basis

A: Josh (teacher) - establishment of relationship, if it can't be there then there needs to be a shift in the paradigm (development of interactives)

A: Stephanie (student) - more tools, more access to technology, GIS/GPS in a geography course as an example.

**Q: When a course is delivered online as opposed to face-to-face, developing a strong learning community becomes a necessity. How can the facilitator and students make this happen?**

A: Stephanie (student) - use and incorporate social media - should be used to help students interact with each other and use in groups, embrace instead of shun questions regarding cheating

A: Abby (student) – regarding cheating -- no test proctoring or very limited especially for quizzes - use tools for applying to the real world -- shift needs to happen in the schools, not regurgitation but application.

Comment: Dr. Wilcox (advisory) - our assessments must change

Josh (teacher) – important emphasis on life skills (time management, working collaboratively on assignments -- need to create new environments for assessment – look at competency based.

**Q: Bob (advisory) - Online competency based courses?**

A: Abby - example used in economics (Macro and Micro economics) - not excused from any instruction although student had a clear understanding of all the content.

Sharon (POC) - leveraging technology to create an optimum experience -- maybe not a full course but experiences.

<b>Finance Discussion - Susan Bowen, <i>Director of Budget and Finance, Anne Arundel County (AACo)</i></b>
--

Statewide in 2012, there were 72,700 ninth grade students. Course costs run around \$800.00 per student.

**Q: What kind of financial impact will the graduation requirement of an online course have on the Local School Systems?**

### **What kind of infrastructure impact with this requirement have on the Local School Systems?**

Just under \$5 mil. to have to budget to pay for the courses – do not believe that we are saving teacher time and salary -- never seen distance learning save a dime.

Access to technology in schools -- requirement for technology resources - laptop \$385 per year for a lease -- 20,000 computers in AACo - 78,000 students, looking at a standard of one-to one access. Seat costs - \$5 mil per year. Also issues with information security, testing information.

Unanswered questions: What about students with IEP and 504 (learning difficulties)? - What about professional development for online teachers? What about equity of access? – How would access be provided?-- flat costs in an operating budget are liked -- AACo spends - 0.4% on teacher professional development and courses, 2% on technology and infrastructure.

Bob (advisory) - Intent of law - recognizing providing equity for all districts, multiple ways of accomplishing, district requirement for an online course -- invest more in online courses to benefit all classrooms - strategically look at an "online" experience -- digital competency, competency based education a better avenue - had multiple ways to approach that model -- using technology and content to provide equity - OER stable resources.

Sharon (POC): Collective effort to leverage quality teachers to develop content, when you are looking at something of this magnitude - how do we deal with equity issue (dial up vs. FIOS) -- land line vs. cell phone, etc.?

Susan (Finance) - \$132 million statewide increase for schools next year statewide - subtract \$52 million needed for an online course graduation requirement -- leaves school systems not much to fund other initiatives.

#### **Homework and Next Steps**

- Please research your assigned school system or school.
- Create an overview that includes information about funding, supports, and access.
- Post your overview in the appropriate folder located in the Content area of your eCommunity.
- Full day meetings

## Minutes

Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning

September 25, 2013

Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center

975 Indian Landing Road, Millersville, MD 21108

**Advisory Council Members in Attendance:** Dr. Clayton Wilcox, Justin Hartings, Josh Dorsey, Cathy Allen, Joquetta Johnson, Erin Senior, Anna Gannon, Kenya Campbell, Robert Cole, Lisa Phipps, Sen. Chris Shank, Val Emrich

**MSDE Support for Council:** Jay Bansbach, Michial Gill

**Guests in Attendance:** Susan O'Brien (UMUC), Christina Williams, John Wollums (MABE), Dr. Henry Johnson (MSDE), Dr. Jack Smith (MSDE), Randall Mickens, Lynne Rosen, Brian Shepter, Sharon Gallagher, Likhitha Butchireddygan (Student)

### Welcome and Introductions

#### Recap of last MACVL meeting and reporting out – homework

Mixed feelings (Cathy Allen) from students re: courses, more discipline required than anticipated, finance – having access very problematic from school systems viewpoint across the State, need more 21<sup>st</sup> century alignment, more content above the level of what the teacher already knows

Homework – Michigan requirement for student online experiences (Bob Cole, Josh Dorsey) – 1<sup>st</sup> State to develop 2006 – since original requirement – no modifications to original structure, academy determines how they will meet the requirement, state virtual school, came up with a career directions course (Career Forward) – 20 hour, self-paced developed to meet the requirement – placing digital content in courses and counting that toward requirement – no data collection at state level to verify compliance, funding for school (529) – no-profit set up between higher education and State department – sits outside of the department of education – initial State funding, generate funds through enrollments, district level (Josh Dorsey) – looking at Detroit (only foreign languages) – online learning experience (embedded into a course, a lot in existing courses – district has oversight, (Bob) – moved away from State focus (skills) and looking at seat time waivers

Virginia (Cathy Allen) – one non-credit bearing virtual course using a variety of vendors (APEX, Kaplan, BYU) – offerings at HS level (AP courses, foreign languages) – financing comes from local school systems – new process so not a lot of data reporting out at this point – Virtual Virginia (local schools systems) can offer course without State approval – can only offer to 10% certified have to go to State board (students outside the system) – vendors hired teachers with no State certification, discrepancies in data collection, reopened window with vendors after a year, # of courses – couldn't get course in their own school or fit within schedule (about \$800 per course) – 768 courses and more coming, 90% review of standards – allowed competition between providers, quick scan of average teacher load – ELA 132 students, electives 155 students, math – 75, science 47, Social Studies – 132 (concern about turn-around time and feedback provided re: conversation with students)

FVS – in service 15 years – providing to all 67 districts, K-12 public, private, charter – graduated first K class, established independent entity (125 + courses) – all accepted for credit and transferable, funding through FPFV – only receives funding after students complete courses, training for Florida districts, flex options for global teaching accessed 24/7 – all teachers from Florida- 150,000 students, FVS a zoned area and is its own district, funds full-time students, cuts this year for the first time, not hiring outside Florida, opened the State to outside vendors – competition for students and local funding – do constant upgrades and sell licenses to other vendors so districts, sell franchises (or content) – primary franchisees other school districts, FV – FTE – virtual double-dip going on

Senator Shank – report out later

**Overview of MSDE RT3, LMS and projects** – 93 courses now being offered 4,530 courses being offered – money coming (fall, winter, summer – more data out there for summer)

Exploration of LMS (see PPT) – only reason to log-in is for taking a course, model lessons, seeds and units – Common Core resources – list of resources including those for parents, better communication (Dr. Wilcox) – working with Apple (8 school systems) to work on same resources (redundancy) – access to seeds -- information disseminated at the academies – exploration at individual school level, Adolescent literacy modules – created by vendor and pulling 4 science, 4 social studies, 4 ELA, 4 math, HSA Courses – being scrubbed (hybrid) – all available in two weeks, PAARC assessment course will replace algebra and English, Supplemental Resources Modules (2<sup>nd</sup> grade module) –

Comments re: equity in regard to technology – how do all students access these resources?? Rural Maryland – dial up in home – providing infrastructure – Dr. Wilcox/Justin Hartings - reconstructing for testing, Sharon Gallagher - content regardless to drive support for more technology, transition bridge – plan to address those issues – St. Mary’s - technology needed over \$1,000,000 – only \$1,000,000 from RT3

See PPT Slides

4 HSA Courses – ELA, Algebra 1, Biology, Government

13 Adolescent Literacy Modules

4,000-6,000 instructional resources to support classroom learning and teaching,

375 – Adolescent literacy modules

### **Lakita - Personalized Learning and Student Voices**

FV and Johns Hopkins Center for Talent and Youth (very self-paced) – very different experiences, FVL – pace and have to keep up – done independently after school (lot more resources in courses and more teacher context than with CTY) – very into teacher/student relationship – negative sides to both of that – FVL really tried to make it a project-based experience – would your classmates make a different decision? Most might choose CTY because of options of working with self-pace, does structure of FVL

help you work more with others (more available) -- difference – CTY more motivated students (SAT acceptance) - FVL (paid upon completion) – more motivation to support all students, choices based on flexibility – Dr. Wilcox - do you use any online resources outside to supplement your online course? – Khan Academy, etc. – response used resources for AP History, etc. – locate resources (major in statistics)

What do students want and need??

- Career and college requires exposure to online experiences that include accountability and time management skills
- Learning that connects to real life experience
- Access to quality online experiences that provide multiple ways to learn and apply
- Collaborative experience
- Courses and Modules – (learning experiences)
- Professional Development – modules – algebra 1 (more content information and background for teachers – concepts aligned to Common Core
- RT3 – PD (see list – PPT)
- eCommunities – changed log-ins for council

## Options

### Online Solutions

Proposal – Dr. Wilcox (see handout) – bogged down in a lot of different stuff – spent some time speaking – rebrand courses – pilot smaller Virtual Learning Model of choice – ask each district – look at course content (MSDE) – move to real time approval process for pilots – if students gets caught in a snafu – each system would write a report including a cost analysis – virtual learning environment not create a virtual high school, in Allegany focus Algebra II and some foreign language courses – all online or blended – blended in Allegany – populate with content resources – need a vetted site with content – Dr. Algebra (as example) – would have multiple legs --

Health (Mandatory) – consider creating an online course using a course requirement for high school students such as ½ marking period (see slide) – if built would be a perfect item

Leveled experiences – (see PPT) - \$188,000 – elementary experience given by library media specialist (digital citizenship) –

Dr. Wilcox - Laggards in terms of technology (MD) – recommendation for the legislature – have some districts that are willing – fast/fail concept

Dr. Johnson – number of positions that can be considered – funding full amount \$50,000 per pilot won't happen from MSDE (funding) – transition course (credit recovery SB740) – COMAR requirement – 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of students to determine College and Career ready --

Cathy Allen (St. Mary's) – multiple courses through APEX – 3<sup>rd</sup> year – 6% increase in graduation rates at one of most challenging high schools (replaced evening high school and summer offerings) – how do you determine what is successful if you don't have a control group --

Digital Citizenship mini-courses

Other proposals -

Menu

Cost Analysis (see slide) - \$2.3 mil. -- If dividing evenly by 24 school systems – allocation every year – What if they use their own content? Cost drops down anywhere between \$185.00-425.00 per course – are we making the assumption of a fully online course? – Feasibility study needed

Del. Shank - in terms of council – moving issue forward (rolling discussion) – if you have a market i.e. graduation requirement then market forces act (course options) – likes Dr. Wilcox proposal – need to be a better job for creating opportunities for students – LEAs become labs for examining virtual education – this is way to spur legislature to tackle the funding issues, budgets, etc. Makes sense to him.

Less about online learning and more about digital literacy – should be menu of digital literacy opportunities – more important for an online course or an online learning opportunity – prepare our students to go out into world

Justin Hastings – harnessing the digital connections and opportunities to provide more tools for students to learn –

Andrea (UMUC) – look at results of grant awards – before making final decisions, lots of studies, within first week of course can determine if student will pass or fail with 85% accuracy – can use keystrokes to determine

Dr. Wilcox – adaptive learning tools watch you every time you interact – will call Lillian and say is this a priority – believes funds can be found --

### **Group Work and Discussion**

At each table: discuss the options, identify a recommendation, write down your choice and support with reasons and justify it. (If your table does not agree, put forth multiple options supported by justifications) --

Draft of Recommendation – set forward recommendations – feasibility around it – ask 3 jurisdictions to develop pilot projects – do not move forward on the graduation requirement

Collect what is being done in each district – what data do you have to show successful – St. Mary's as an example –

Cathy Allen – read off task force charge –

Pull of resources locally based on options – capture from across the State – 4-5 models being utilized – Assess what is out there – also assess what is happening in other states, survey quick turn-around

Del. Shank - Data from last year – core of report – coordinates efforts of all counties

Table top discussions – recommend questions – survey all 24 LEAs --

Sharing out –

Josh – fork in the road or focusing on online experiences – decision needs to be made – computer to student ratio an issue – mandate is unfair – really marginalizes parts of our State – if focus is online courses – where the money will come from and what it means for success and displacement of teachers, objective to pilot using online courses – if focus on digital literacy (much more subjective) –

Anna Gannon – are you in favor of a mandatory experience, online course, experience required for graduation, glossary (explain or define what each might look like), what type of funding would be needed to implement any of these models, what do have and need infrastructure, collecting information about initiatives – under definition of terms – is there is a disparity? How many students actually have internet at home – how can we mandate? What does the council have or need to make the best decisions?? What we know is going on – here is the data.

Cathy Allen – most already covered – DLS – Senator Shank – (what was comment about DLS and Sen. Shank) – instead of a graduation requirement – would it be more appropriate to deliver a class already required and put it into an online experience – ask each district how they define online learning – how are locals using an online environment for PD – analyze deadlines with broadband initiatives.

## Minutes

Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning  
November 14, 2013 - 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM  
Crofton Public Library- Conference Room 1 and 2  
1681 Riedel Road, Crofton, MD 21114

**Advisory Members in Attendance:** Cathy Allen, Robert Cole, Val Emrich, Anna Gannon, Justin Hartings, Erin Senior, Dr. Clayton Wilcox

**MSDE / DLS Staff in Attendance:** Dr. Henry Johnson, Michial Gill, Cindy Hasselbring

**Guests in Attendance:** Mark Ledford, Tyler Bennett, Sharon Gallagher, Jordan Roberts, Kathy Carmello

**Welcome and Introduction of Guests**

### Overview of Goals, current Digital Initiatives, and Survey Results (Val Emrich)

#### Senate Bill 689:

- Reviewed Council activities as outlined in Senate Bill 689
- Discussed the goal for the today's meeting: respond to the proposed bill requiring the completion of an online course for a graduation requirement by submitting a feasibility report
- Provided a timeline for the submission of the final report to the group:
  - Feasibility Report due: December 1, 2013
  - November 19, 2013: draft of report submitted to Senator Shank and Michial Gill for editing and posted in the MACVL Blackboard eCommunity for review by all Council members
  - November 25, 2013: Feedback required so the report can be edited and submitted before the holiday break
  - November 26, 2013: Feasibility Report submitted to the Governor's Office and posted in the MACVL Blackboard eCommunity

#### Digital Innovations:

- Handouts provided to all members of the committee in attendance and posted in the MACVL Blackboard eCommunity for those members not in attendance
- Summary of digital initiatives and innovations occurring throughout Maryland in school year 2012-2013 and school year 2013-2014

#### Digital Learning Survey Results:

- Handouts provided to all members of the committee in attendance and posted in the MACVL Blackboard eCommunity for those members not in attendance of the compiled results from the Digital Learning Survey
- Questions were asked in regards to who received and completed the survey in each LEA
  - Surveys were distributed to the contact person designated by each LEA as their Technology Liaison

### **Feasibility Sub-committees (Val Emrich)**

Explanation was provided for the remainder of the morning activities. Those in attendance were divided into three groups. Each group was tasked with writing a section for the Feasibility Report. The groups wrote about the Digital Learning survey results, innovations occurring throughout Maryland, and a summary of the minutes.

After the drafts were written, time was allotted for all members in attendance to read and provide feedback on the drafts they were not assigned to write. Drafts were revised according to the suggestions and then submitted to the MACVL Blackboard eCommunity.

### **MACVL Recommendation and Sub-committee Work (Val Emrich)**

Val reviewed one of the options which were discussed at a previous MACVL meeting in regards to online learning and digital experiences for students. The proposal was that LEAs would develop and submit a written plan describing how students in their district would be required to have an online or digital experience by school year 2015-2016. The LEAs would be required to examine their own needs and current status to determine the plan. The plan would be submitted by 2014.

A discussion began as a result of this proposal. The discussion focused upon providing students with meaningful digital experiences and progressed to discussing what meaningful digital experience means. It was agreed that there are multiple interpretations of the term digital experience and that as a result the term needed to be clarified for the LEAs and the other stakeholders throughout Maryland. A committee member mentioned that IHEs have indicated that students are not graduating prepared with the digital experiences needed to be successful in college and their future careers. As a result, the vision is that by providing this written plan to MSDE then the districts will start to address these deficits.

Those in attendance also discussed the differences between the districts (in regards to infrastructure, funding, equipment, etc) and how these differences can impact student experiences throughout the state. It was also mentioned that many educators and administrators feel overwhelmed trying to implement the CCSS and prepare for PARCC.

Val reminded the council that a viable solution needed to be submitted for the feasibility report.

A member agreed; but, stated that if you leave it open to the districts without setting some parameters then the LEAs may not have the necessary understanding to adequately address these needs. It was agreed that guidelines need to be established to assist those LEAs who may struggle with the proposal. All agreed that, one thing the State can do is to identify competencies for these skills and provide them to the LEAs.

Some of the council members determined that there is a need to define what an online and a digital experience is and that they need to come up with specific skills as well. Others thought that this is too much to add with so many new initiatives already required of the LEAs.

The following definition was created by the council:

Digital Experience: Education in which instruction and content allows students to interact with digital media to support and enhance learning.

Examples: Online course, Blended course/ environment; graduated immersion; Innovative experiences;

Once the definition was agreed upon, the Council agreed to recommend in the feasibility report that all LEAs be required to write a plan regarding how they were going to provide a digital learning experience to the students within their district.

Members of the council then selected one of the previous recommended online or blended course options to expand upon as an example to be included in the report. The Council members separated into groups to discuss and write the benefits and considerations of each option. The submissions will be added as appendices to the Feasibility Report for LEAs to consider when creating their district plans.

<b>Next Steps</b>
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Next meeting: February 16, 2014



## **Appendix D – Possible LEA Digital Experiences**

**Required Online Course** - Every student within the LEA would be required to take an online course before graduation.

Any plan should address:

- Accountability
  - Assessment of student work - successful completion
  - Evaluation of program – number of students who successfully complete an online course
- Time management requirements for students - scheduled time for in-school work and planned time after school hours
- Teacher professional development – varies by LEA
  - County teacher - highly qualified and MSDE Online Facilitator training
  - Vendor provided instructor and Student Support teacher
- Responsible stakeholders - Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO) Point-of-Contact (POC), Mentor teachers, counselors, principals, budget office, parents, students, vendor teachers
- Timeline for recommended action – varies by LEA

Benefits to each LEA might include allowing students the opportunity to accelerate learning; self-regulate; set and achieve goals; take responsibility for personal success or failure; problem solve; earn credits and participate in courses off campus; and have a broader menu of course offerings.

LEA possible concerns include affiliated course costs; technology infrastructure (including equipment and bandwidth); access for students before and after school hours; limited peer and teacher interaction; staff to monitor students, alignment with district curriculum; all student learning accommodations (requirement for all students?); and space within a school to implement a program.

**Leveled Experience/Graduated Immersion** – Supportive individualized and leveled online instruction that increases in duration and accountability with each grade level advancement. This experience could focus on topics such as digital citizenship, online safety, communication, technology literacy, research, and Common Core aligned curriculum that would supplement classroom instruction.

Any plan should address:

- Accountability
  - Assessment of student work - successful completion
  - Evaluation of program – number of students who successfully complete instruction

- Time management requirements for students
- Teacher professional development – varies by your choice of digital experiences
- Responsible stakeholders - counselors, principals, parents, students, instructors
- Timeline for recommended action – varies by LEA

Benefits to each LEA might include supplementation to existing classroom instruction; instant and expanded access to all student groups (Special Education, Gifted and Talented, English Language Learners); activities developmentally appropriate; scaffolding that builds, expands and reinforces experiences and knowledge year-after-year.

LEA possible concerns include consideration of infrastructure to account for implementation and available access outside of the school day; funding for equipment and/or development of online content; technical support and monitoring; purchasing software and hardware; staffing to facilitate experiences; professional development; classroom space; home and school access; bandwidth; and availability of course/content.

**Blended Experience** – The conversion of an existing face-to-face course that is already a graduation requirement for all students to one that would be completed partially online and partially in a face-to-face classroom environment.

Any plan should address:

- Accountability
  - Assessment of student work - successful completion of the online portion of the course
  - Evaluation of program – student and teacher surveys
- Time management – set requirements for students
- Teacher professional development – training for online facilitators
- Responsible stakeholders - counselors, principals, parents, students, facilitators
- Timeline for recommended action – varies by LEA

Benefits to each LEA might include facilitative support for students and group learning; creation of more flexibility for LEAs; appeal to students based on a variety of media experiences; resources already available (MSDE); and assistance to students to transition to college and career.

LEA possible concerns include funding; availability of technology and infrastructure, professional development, equipment replacement; and ensuring relevance of experience.

## **APPENDIX E:**

**The example plans below have been proposed by Clayton Wilcox Ed.D, Superintendent, Washington County Public Schools:**

### **1. Virtual Learning Model**

As the superintendent member on the council, my recommendation is that Washington, Worcester, and Baltimore County be afforded the opportunity to start and pilot a Virtual Learning Model (VLM) in their individual district. The superintendents of these LEAs have agreed to participate and each is personally invested in the use of technology as a means of improving instruction and student learning.

Each district would partner with a provider or consortium of providers to initiate the process of offering VLMs for original, renewal, remediation and/or dual enrollment credit. Each pilot would serve as a model for virtual learning initiatives that could be adapted by other school districts or the state of Maryland.

The superintendents of the pilot districts coordinate efforts to ensure fidelity of implementation, the creation of a variety of partnerships focused on creating sustainable VLMs, monitoring of success and creating a report for the MACVL within an identified time frame. The final report will then be shared with the legislature and other interested stakeholders.

The prototypes will explore delivery methods, identify required elements within a viable VLM, and target the most efficient and cost effective soft and hardware solutions. A determination will be made of the sustainability of a specific model given current funding parameters in the State of Maryland. Each district will also look at demographic characteristics of program participants, engagement and completion statistics.

Each district will seek a small start-up grant (\$50K to each district) to complement the time and investment in the pilot projects. These funds could be used to purchase courseware, personnel, management software and hardware. Pilot districts would also ask the MSDE to expedite any course approval request made within the confines of the projects.

It is believed that this approach will save time and money by creating three laboratories for success within vested districts; resulting in sustainable and replicable models for twenty-first century learning. This will provide additional options for students in Maryland.

### **2. Virtual Course Works in Washington County:**

The project titled, *Virtual Course Works* is housed within Western Heights Middle School and has earned start-up financial support from AT&T through a \$25,000 grant.

Washington County will offer course development projects which combine computer-based gaming, virtual worlds and aspects of the Maryland Common Core Standards in both an Algebra 1 and an English 9 courses. Student interns and teachers are involved in this project. Interns from Washington County Technical High School's computer-game development and animation program, and a college intern are modeling and programming, while teachers are mapping out courses and writing lesson plans. Students will navigate within a virtual world using avatars. Lessons designed within each course will have components involving online chat, social media experiences, video, animation, and simulation.