

Governor's Task Force on Virtual Education Community Forums Overview



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Background



- ⌘ In April 2002, the Task Force conducted a series of one-hour community forums around the state.
- ⌘ Opportunity for members of the public to provide their best ideas on the development of online learning opportunities for middle and high school students.
- ⌘ After a brief CD-ROM presentation highlighting several online teaching and learning technologies currently available, members of the public provided brief comments and/or submitted written comments.

Schedule



| Date | Location | Participants |
|-------------|--|--|
| 4/12/02 | Forks – Forks High School | 25 parents, teachers, students, and school administrators |
| 4/15/02 | Seattle – Nova High School and the Islamic School | 41 students, parents, and teachers Governor Locke attended |
| 4/16/02 | Pasco – Pasco High School | 8 teachers, parents, and school administrators |
| 4/17/02 | Toppenish – Toppenish Middle School | 20 community college students, high school students parents, school administrators |
| 4/18/02 | Omak – Omak High School | 7 parents and school administrators |
| 4/23/02 | Bellevue – Bellevue High School | 25 parents, teachers, and school administrators |

Guiding Questions



- ⌘ What challenges need to be addressed for online learning to be effective in your community?
- ⌘ What have you wanted to study that was not available locally? What resources?
- ⌘ What are the benefits of online learning?
- ⌘ What would have to be in place for you to study this subject online?
- ⌘ Who should decide whether a student can take a course online?
- ⌘ Who should pay for online learning opportunities?
- ⌘ What is the most important thing the state could do to make these opportunities more widely available?

Community Perspectives

⌘ Forks

- ☒ More experience with online learning than other communities visited.
- ☒ Focused on benefits of online learning for rural communities: Increases course offerings and reduces isolation felt by many rural schools.
- ☒ Felt strongly any online education initiative should be funded at current state levels.



Community Perspectives

⌘ Seattle (Nova High School)

- ☒ Audience composed entirely of students, parents, and staff from Nova and the nearby Islamic School.
- ☒ Concerned about ensuring equality of access to courses.
- ☒ Effectiveness of teaching/learning in an online learning environment lacking person-to-person interaction.
- ☒ Concerned about diverting already limited state funds to develop a statewide online learning initiative.



Community Perspectives

⌘ Toppenish and Pasco

- ☒ Both communities shared concerns about providing equal access and course opportunities for Hispanic students.
- ☒ Online ESL courses would help ESL students master English.
- ☒ Concern about the lack of access to computers with Internet at home.
- ☒ Enthusiastically offered to participate in any initial pilot program.



Community Perspectives

⌘ Omak

- ☒ Felt statewide online learning initiative could help their students think "beyond the orchards" about future careers.
- ☒ Online courses should resonate with local interests and needs.
- ☒ Special needs students should be considered.
- ☒ Very excited about being able to offer Omak children the same opportunities as urban children.



Community Perspectives

⌘ Bellevue

- ☒ Must develop a streamlined user-friendly course enrollment and credit granting system.
- ☒ Bandwidth a key issue - if it is in place, then quality content could follow.
- ☒ Teacher preparation programs must produce teachers who can effectively use technology in education.
- ☒ If funding follows the student, various forms of competition might be created.



Benefits of Online Learning



- ⌘ Enables schools to offer more courses and to individualize learning
- ⌘ Provides choices for non-traditional students
- ⌘ Increases interaction with other cultures and communities
- ⌘ Empowers parents and students



Challenges

- ⌘ Find a name that communicates
- ⌘ Keep this initiative commercial free
- ⌘ Do not re-invent the wheel
- ⌘ Find a means to build student/teacher relationships and a sense of community
- ⌘ Access challenges may limit cross-cultural exchange efforts

Program Design



⌘ Establish clear policies for student enrollment

- ☑ Collaborative decision between parents, children, and teachers made at the school level.
- ☑ Limit the number of online courses students can take.

⌘ Provide student support

- ☑ Students should have a support person or group at their school to help with online course issues.

Program Design (cont.)



⌘ Provide technical support

- ☑ Courses should always be up and running, regardless of where they are accessed.
- ☑ If public access machines are provided at schools, community centers, or libraries a system should be in place to support them.

⌘ Continue to involve citizen advisors

⌘ Set and maintain standards for conducting on-line courses

⌘ Accommodate special needs populations

⌘ Provide teacher training

Key Issue: Content



- ⌘ Use multiple course formats within content areas
 - ☑ ex. Offer six different Biology II courses each appealing to different learning styles.
- ⌘ ESL and foreign language courses are a key area of need and opportunity
- ⌘ Courses should be developed based on local community needs
- ⌘ Create the best interface design possible

Key Issue: Access



- ⌘ Maintain and expand the K-20 network
- ⌘ Primary access should be provided at school
- ⌘ Promote access at public libraries and community centers
- ⌘ Thought should be given to home access, too
- ⌘ Facilities must be open at appropriate times. Ensure technical support is in place.

Key Issue: Funding



- ⌘ Secure adequate funding before launching the project
- ⌘ Ensure K-12 virtual education is free to all
 - ☑ Online education should be an equalizer.
- ⌘ Money to support this initiative should follow the students
 - ☑ Must be done in a way that does not create competition for resources.

Key Issue: Funding (cont.)



- ⌘ Seek private sector contributions
 - ☑ Industry benefits from a more tech-savvy emerging workforce.
- ⌘ Pursue alternative funding options
 - ☑ The Twenty-First Century Learning Communities grant program might be a model for this initiative.

Key Issue: Timing



⌘ The time is now

- ☑ Many attendees stressed now is the time to invest in online education.
- ☑ There are good models, a clear need, and proven benefits.

⌘ Supplement classroom courses and provide online courses

⌘ Create a pilot

- ☑ Communities Task Force visited would be ideal for pilot programs.