

**Task Force for Improving Education
Structural Change and Technology Subcommittee
July 3, 2013**

Present (in person or via conference call): Representative Reed DeMordaunt, Superintendent Tom Luna, Roger Brown, Cindy Wilson, Corrine Mantle-Bromley, Mike Caldwell (substitute for Cheryl Charlton), Mike Lanza, Anne Ritter, Bob Lokken, Alan Millar

Rep. DeMordaunt began the meeting by asking for a roll call and introducing the meeting's topic—Strategy 3: Innovation and Collaboration. He asked the group to first focus on innovation. In regards to innovation, the group discussed the current state of technology in Idaho schools. The Idaho Education Network (IEN) now connects every high school with high speed bandwidth and equips at least one room with distance learning technology. In Phases 2 and 3, the IEN plans to expand the bandwidth infrastructure to middle and elementary schools.

Supt. Luna reported that the Legislature restored the funding for a wireless environment in every high school, and the State Department of Education (SDE) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a wireless managed service. This wireless infrastructure will be an extension of the IEN broadband system. The RFP proposals have now been submitted and are being evaluated. Wireless service to districts that choose to opt in will be rolled out during the 2013-2014 school year. Districts have until August 1, 2013 to opt in to the service.

Anne Ritter noted that the IEN is beneficial for dual enrollment, but that the state may want to consider increasing the limited number of originating units in larger schools/districts.

Mike Lanza asked what capacity there was in schools for growing the technology infrastructure. Rep. DeMordaunt and Supt. Luna responded that the IEN pipeline was laid in such a way that there is capacity to growth without the need for laying more pipe. Bandwidth is managed so that when a district approaches its threshold, that bandwidth is increased.

Ritter asked whether a survey had been done on how students feel about IEN classes. Roger Brown reminded the group that the IEN is simply a tool for teaching—it's not the content or the instructor. Supt. Luna said he believes there is a survey about the IEN and will have it posted on Edmodo. The SDE is also in the process of building a portal for online courses where users will be able to rate courses based on satisfaction and other factors. Corrine Mantle-Bromley told the group there isn't anything innovative about an online class itself, but what is innovative is the teacher's ability to harness the technology as a tool or resource.

Bob Lokken made the assertion that technology in education is not at its apex, and that we'll have to learn to embrace new and changing technology over time. In business, cyclical funding is set aside to maintain and replace equipment. Something similar needs to be instituted in education. Supt. Luna commented that when it comes to the IEN, the funding isn't one-time. The IEN is a managed service that was built knowing that there's an annual investment in equipment. 75% of the money that funds the IEN comes from e-rate dollars that we leverage. A similar managed service model will be used for the wireless infrastructure. Supt. Luna suggested a managed service model would also be successful when trying to place hardware in schools, because it takes into account the expense to replace and renew equipment.

Cindy Wilson remarked that the subcommittee needed to look at what changes are needed to the schedule or the school structure to embrace the possibilities with technology innovations, specifically time for teachers to research, study, and mentor each other.

Rep. DeMordaunt agreed that innovation and collaboration are linked and asked the group whether they agreed one of the preliminary recommendations should be that every classroom in Idaho has a broadband connection. There was general consensus from the group.

Mike Caldwell suggested that innovation requires infrastructure at the state AND regional level. Further support at the regional level could come from education service agencies or regional advisory boards. He also suggested that the group consider how corporations in Idaho could dedicate a portion of their taxes to support technology in schools.

Rep. DeMordaunt referred back to the Project Red study, which says if technology is implemented properly, it can be a cost saver. However, if it's not implemented properly, it is not cost effective and the results are negligible. The role of the subcommittee is not to implement the findings in Project Red, but to recommend an infrastructure that enables schools to effectively implement the best practices in Project Red.

Alan Millar asked if it would be appropriate for the subcommittee to recommend there be an increasing funding stream for technology based on a per pupil count. Districts struggle to implement technology programs because they're not sure of their funding from year to year. He also expressed a concern that letting every district implement technology in their own way isn't a very efficient use of funding.

Supt. Luna said he believes it's the state's responsibility to create a uniform system of education. Broadband infrastructure is critical to this, but it doesn't stop there. A wireless infrastructure creates more access, but until each student has access to a device you won't have equal access and opportunity. Those three things must be in place—broadband, wireless, and devices—and the connectivity must be down to the individual student.

Rep. DeMordaunt asked the group whether there was support for a recommendation around every student having access to a device to promote equal access and opportunity. Ritter preferred recommending a funding stream for districts to apply for technology grants, rather than requiring a device. Supt. Luna discouraged recommending a specific device, but rather recommending how to ensure equal access and opportunity. Millar cited the merit of a one-to-one ratio, or every student having access to a device; otherwise, the technology is less likely to be implemented by the teacher. Wilson advocated for flexibility for teachers to use the device when needed, but not be forced to use the device when not needed. She also stressed the importance of professional development in effective implementation. Lokken synthesized the comments and suggested preliminary recommendations be drafted around bandwidth/wireless infrastructure and individual student devices.

Rep. DeMordaunt then segued to collaboration and job-embedded training. He asked the group what their recommendation would be to encourage collaboration around the state. Various members commented that the issue with collaboration is having the time to make it happen. Some districts, such as Coeur d'Alene and Meridian, have built regular collaboration time into their school calendars.

Corrine Mantle-Bromley suggested a platform that allows teachers to connect electronically and create learning communities. Utah does something similar to this.

Millar noted the importance of the time of the day when teachers receive professional development. He also believes that funding based on enrollment—rather than attendance—and structural change to the school calendar would assist in incorporating job-embedded professional development.

Wilson stressed that short periods of professional development aren't sufficient. She envisions something more radical where the school calendar is changed to allow for a couple of weeks of professional development before or during the school year to collaborate at the content or grade level.

Supt. Luna pointed out that the same technology innovations that the group had discussed as opening learning opportunities to students would also open collaborative opportunities to teachers. The foundation the subcommittee could lay is making sure the time and funding is available and allowing districts to decide how to use it. Innovation will not only be better for students, it will help create a collaborative environment that's better for teachers.

Caldwell referenced a blended learning consortium in the state that receives professional development and a base level of content. The teachers then mix the content, build the lessons, make it their own, and share it across the state with other teachers. He encouraged another way of thinking about collaboration as the sharing of resources.

Rep. DeMordaunt summarized the collaboration conversation to this point as two preliminary recommendations: providing a statewide electronic collaboration system where teachers have the framework to share ideas and resources across the state and providing time for job-embedded collaboration.

Wilson commented that there needs to be time to collaborate and time to create new lessons, grade homework, etc. Supt. Luna asked her what she meant when she said radical structural change was needed. Wilson said adding more days to the contract to be used for collaboration across the school year was one possibility. Millar commented that it could mean a different structure to the school day. He's found with his teachers that three meetings per week for 45 minutes to one hour works well.

Ritter pointed out that when funding is cut, professional development days are cut at the local level because of minimum instructional time requirements at the state level. Lokken argued that the focus should be on results, not micromanaging the amount of instructional hours. Lanza pointed out that if we're talking about moving to a mastery model and delivery of education through the use of more technology, seat time and minimum instructional hours may become irrelevant. Rep. DeMordaunt remarked that focusing more on results and less on seat time may allow for more teacher collaboration time.

Supt. Luna told the group that this sort of structural change would require a willingness to use resources differently. Implementation requires change to make it work. Lokken made an observation from the tech sector that, unless there's a sense of necessity to change, the status quo will prevail. There must be a standard that we hold our local schools accountable to and then allow them to manage the change locally. Lanza agreed that when the recommendations are done, the group's work won't be complete. The subcommittee will need to go to the public and convince them of the importance of these recommendations. Businesses who don't recognize necessity don't survive, but in education kids keep coming to school.

Rep. DeMordaunt acknowledged that the group was out of time, but encouraged them to continue the conversation on Edmodo. The next meeting will be July 19th and the group will discuss Strategy 2: Autonomy/Accountability.

Marilyn Whitney announced that the Fiscal Stability/Effective Teachers and Leaders Subcommittees will be meeting on July 12th and discussing changing the funding model from attendance to enrollment. She encouraged this subcommittee to listen in, if available.