WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**2015 House Enrolled Act No. 101
Distance Education Task Force**

Progress Report: September 15, 2015

UNDERSTAND CHALLENGES

IDENTIFY PRIORITIES

GENERATE SOLUTIONS

EVALUATE OPTIONS

INFORM RECALIBRATION: MAKE RECOMMEND-ATIONS

Purpose

This report has been prepared by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) to meet the requirements of the 2015 House Bill No. 0011, and provide a window into the decision making process and progress of the Distance Education Task Force.

> **Section 2.** *Commencing June 15, 2015, the department shall provide monthly progress reports on the work of the task force to the legislative service office.*

Task Force Overview

The task force has been formed to make official recommendations to the legislature on the following:

- A review of the distance education programs currently providing courses
- Programmatic requirements for the delivery of quality distance education
- Compliance with statewide education standards
- Professional certification requirements for distance education instructors
- Transparency in the accounting and administration of distance education programs
- Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The intention of the task force is to review the current challenges in distance education and to explore the possibilities of how to best afford increased access to quality learning opportunities to every Wyoming learner.

Summary of Task Force Activities

As of the date of this report, the following task force activities have been completed:

- Task force membership was established (March 2015)
- Task force meetings from May 2015 through September 2015 were scheduled (April 2015)
- Five (5) task force meetings were conducted (April, May, June, July, August 2015)
- The current challenges in Wyoming distance education were identified (April 2015)
- The priorities of the task force were established (April 2015)
- Options to address the priorities have been and will continue to be researched (May 2015, Ongoing)
- An initial vision and definition for virtual education has been drafted (June 2015)
- Distance education administration models have been proposed and discussed in detail (June 2015)
- Recommendations on teacher certification were agreed upon (July 2015)

- The Subcommittee for Virtual Education recommendation was developed (July 2015)
- The task force voted on which models they would like to move forward as recommendations to the legislature and would develop recommendations on how to fund these models. (August 2015)
- The DETF Funding Subcommittee developed funding recommendations for the proposed single virtual course part-time model for the full DETF to consider at its September meeting. (August-September 2015)
- Two surveys were administered to collect information for the DETF members to consider while making final decisions at its September meeting. (August-September 2015)

Task Force Membership

Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow is chair of the task force and appointed the following fourteen voting members in March 2015:

- Brent Bacon, *WDE Chief Academic Officer*
- Senator Stephan Pappas, *Laramie County Senate District 07*
- Representative John Freeman, *Sweetwater County House District 60*
- Aaron Carr, *Niobrara County School District No. 1 Superintendent*
- Shon Hocker, *Big Horn County School District No. 2 Superintendent*
- R.J. Kost, *Park County School District No. 1 Curriculum Coordinator*
- Brian Farmer, *Wyoming School Boards Association Executive Director*
- London Jenks, *Hot Springs County School District No. 1 Technology Coordinator*
- Scott Mecca, *Albany County School District No. 1 Teacher*
- Julia Cook, *Park County School District No. 6 parent*
- Denise Miller, *Natrona County School Dist. No. 1 Technology Instructional Facilitator*
- David Picard, *Wyoming Connections Academy lobbyist*
- Nicole Tiley, *Wyoming Virtual Academy Head of School*

Ex-Officio Distance Education Task Force Members
- Mike O'Donnell, *Wyoming Attorney General Special Assistant*
- Nick Bellack, *Professional Teaching Standards Board*

WDE Consultants to the Distance Education Task Force
- Rob Bryant, *Director of School Support*
- Laurel Ballard, *Student/Teacher Resources Team Supervisor*
- Alicia Kerns, *Digital Learning Consultant*
- Lori Kimbrough, *Digital Learning Consultant*

- Jed Cicarelli, *School Foundation Team Supervisor*

Schedule of Task Force Meetings

April 16 & 17, 2015: Casper College, 1:00 - 5:00 pm the 16th;
8:00 am - 12:00 pm the 17th
May 28, 2015: Video Conference via WebEx, 3:00 - 5:00 pm
June 24 & 25, 2015: Casper College, 12:00 - 5:00 pm the 24th;
8:00 am - 12:00 pm the 25th
July 23, 2015: Video Conference via WebEx, 9:00 - 11:00 am
August 13, 2015: Video Conference via WebEx, 9:00 - 11:00 am

Future Meetings
September 17 & 18, 2015: Casper College, 1:00 - 5:00 pm the 17th
8:00 am - 12:00 pm the 18th

Distance Education Task Force Report Schedule

June 15, 2015: 1st Progress Report due to the Legislative Service Office
July 15, 2015: 2nd Progress Report due to the Legislative Service Office
August 15, 2015: 3rd Progress Report due to the Legislative Service Office
September 15, 2015: 4th Progress Report due to the Legislative Service Office
October 15, 2015: Final Report due to the Legislative Service Office with recommendations
from the Task Force

Updated Definition of Virtual Education (as of July 23, 2015)

*Virtual education is the delivery of K-12 education primarily through technology outside
of the physical classroom as prescribed by Wyoming statute.*

Updated Vision for Virtual Education (as of July 23, 2015)

*Wyoming's virtual education system seeks to expand learning opportunities by
providing access to global educational resources for all students.*

Underlying Assumptions for New Models

To develop more effective models for virtual education, the DETF agreed upon a set of underlying assumptions to serve as a foundation to build upon. They allow the task force members to focus on the merits of these new models knowing critical components that must be included to address the DETF identified priorities and challenges.

1. Make students and meeting their needs the highest priority of the system.
2. Create a statewide vision of a high quality distance education system.
3. Step away from the current model to consider what could be.
4. Build the distance education system upon research/evidence based best practices.
5. Funding requirements from the Legislature will not increase ADM.
6. Partnerships between school districts & distance education providers should be encouraged.
7. Create a funding model incentivizing the program requirements.
8. Increase flexibility and access for all students.
9. Allow school districts to manage their distance education programs while ensuring equal opportunities are provided to every student.
10. Meet state requirements for standards, assessment, and accountability.
11. Infrastructure is key for success and varies throughout the state.
12. Wyoming will have a K-12 model for distance education.
13. Considerations will need to be made for training and professional development of K-12 distance educators in addition to training of distance education students.
14. Distance education students must be able to access opportunities.
15. Distance education courses for credit will continue to be approved by the WDE.

Identified Challenges to Overcome

Information regarding each identified challenge has been gathered to address and inform task force members of internal research completed and decisions made.

Online Single Course Access: Statewide online part-time offerings are not always available to full-time brick and mortar students.
● A survey to assess the level of need across the state for K-12 students to take part-time (one to two) online courses to supplement their brick and mortar enrollment on an as needed basis was administered through a Superintendent's Memo on August 31, 2015. The results will be provided to the DETF members at the September meeting. See Attachment A for the Superintendent's Memo and Attachment B for the survey.

Brick and Mortar Single Course Access: Full-time online students don't always have access to

classes in their district of residence such as welding, band, or art.
- A survey to assess the level of need for students currently enrolled online full-time to take part-time (one to two) brick and mortar courses or participate in programs in their schools of residence was administered through the online providers or directly by the WDE. The results will be provided to the DETF members at the September meeting. See Attachment C for the survey.

Reporting Issues: Lack of transparency created by online and brick and mortar students reported together.
- The WDE data and accountability staff have determined that under current statutes, official separate assessment and accountability reports for students assigned to the same school violate the current WAEA statutes. The group concluded these students could be treated and reported as subgroups within brick and mortar schools, allowing for separate unofficial reporting to be generated within the reporting system.

Assessment Issues: Additional efforts and costs to administer statewide assessments.
- In an effort to address the burden of the online provider districts administering statewide assessments across the state, the WDE assessment staff was asked about the feasibility of utilizing volunteer proctors. It was deemed that volunteers are not feasible as proctors must be employed by the school district or the online provider and have earned certification. Otherwise there is no line of accountability should a test be mis-administered, etc.
- The WDE assessment team will check to see how other states manage online statewide assessments for virtual education students.

Distance Education Task Force Funding Subcommittee

The DETF Funding Subcommittee met on August 12, August 26 and September 9 to build funding models for each task force recommended virtual education model. The recommendations developed by this subcommittee will be considered by the DETF at its September 17-18 meeting.

DETF Funding of Proposed Virtual Education Models

The DETF is concerned with two types of virtual education; part-time enrollment and full-time enrollment. Part-time enrollment describes the majority of classes being taken in the brick and mortar environment with some courses (typically one to two) taken online. Full-time enrollment describes the majority or all courses being taken online.

Part-Time Enrollment Models

Proposed Part-Time Model A - Virtual Single Course

Proposed model A would facilitate part-time online enrollment. This model would require the development of a system for starting the registration for virtual courses and would be accessed through the WDE website and be accessible to all districts, parents, and students. This site would include, at a minimum, contact and enrollment information for each statewide online provider for online education courses. The emphasis for this model would be on increasing accessibility and ease of enrollment into single course offerings from a variety of providers. This model differs from Wyoming's current model of virtual education in that part-time or single course offerings are not available or easily accessible.

DETF Funding Subcommittee Recommendation: The online course provider district would set a per course fee, any applicable materials fees, and a small enrollment fee. The course fee and any applicable materials fee would be due twenty days after the course begins and the student successfully begins the coursework. If the student does not successfully begin the coursework within the twenty days, the district would only be responsible for paying the enrollment fee and any applicable materials fees. The enrollment fee would cover the costs incurred by the online course provider district when enrolling a student into a course and reserving their space in the learning management system which requires a nonrefundable fee. Billing would be initiated in the online course district provider and sent to the district requesting student enrollment.

Proposed Part-Time Model B - District Consortium

DETF members discussed creating an online collaborative model which would consist of districts collaborating and pooling resources to develop and deliver online courses. Educators across the participating districts would collaborate in the development and teaching of online courses with students from those districts being able take the online courses at no additional cost to their primary district. The advantage behind this model is students would be able to access middle and secondary courses not currently available in their district. Participating districts would identify courses such as Advanced Placement or Hathaway Success Curriculum courses. They would also determine which courses they are not able to provide so the district consortium can determine priority courses for students from across districts to access online.

DETF Funding Subcommittee Recommendation: This will continue to be discussed at the September 15, 2015, subcommittee meeting.

Full-Time Enrollment Models

Proposed Full-Time Model E - Revised Current Model

The current model of distance education in Wyoming operates through the Wyoming Switchboard Network (WSN). Approved WSN programs are housed in districts and provide online courses to students statewide or within district only. Students enrolled full-time online are assigned to grade level appropriate brick and mortar schools within the program district even if they are geographically located outside the district. The WSN houses contact and enrollment information for all approved full-time distance education providers, a course catalog of currently approved online courses, and links to Wyoming state statutes and policies regarding distance education and online learning. The revised version of this model would address the challenges defined by the DETF.

To meet the needs of full-time virtual education students in Wyoming, the Distance Education Task Force proposes to make revisions to the current virtual education model. These revisions include:
  ● Transparency in reporting in online and brick and mortar student categories for all assessments and accountability measures.
  ● Supporting off-site administration of statewide assessments.
  ● Providing an avenue for full-time online students to participate in brick and mortar classes or programs in their district of domicile.

DETF Funding Subcommittee Recommendation: This will be discussed at the September 15, 2015, subcommittee meeting.

Next Steps

The DETF selected the optimal models for both part-time and full-time virtual education in Wyoming during the August 13, 2015, meeting held via WebEx. Throughout the remainder of September, the task force funding subcommittee will explore potential funding alternatives to support the implementation and maintenance of these selected models. Deciding upon a funding model and making final recommendations for virtual education in Wyoming will be the focus of the final DETF meeting on September 17 and 18.

Respectfully submitted:

Brent Bacon, Chief Academic Officer
Wyoming Department of Education
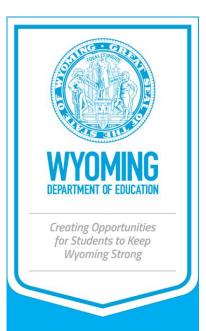307-777-2058
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Attachments

Attachment A - Superintendent Memorandum No. 2015-093

Attachment B - "Need for Part-Time Online K-12 Courses" Survey

Attachment C - "Full-Time Online Family" Survey

Attachment A – Superintendent Memorandum No. 2015-093

MEMORANDUM NO. 2015-093

TO: School District Superintendents
Principals
Curriculum Directors
Special Education Directors
Career and Technical Educaiton Coordinators
Computer/Technology Coordinators
Secondary Guidance Counselors
District Gifted and Talented Contacts

FROM: Lori Kimbrough, Digital Learning Consultant

DATE: August 31, 2015

SUBJECT: Part-Time Online Course Need Survey

INPUT SOUGHT REGARDING STATEWIDE PART-TIME ONLINE COURSES

The Distance Education Task Force is reviewing options to provide part-time online courses statewide for students in Kindergarten through grade 12. As part of the review process, a brief survey has been developed to assess the level of need for these courses across districts. It is anticipated that participation in the online classes would be managed at the school and district level, with the intent being to provide affordable supplemental courses in cases where the need may exist.

The survey must be completed by Monday, September 14, 2015, and can be accessed at:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OnlineCourseNeed.

The Task Force was established by Enrolled Act No. 101 (http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2015/Enroll/HB0011.pdf) during the 2015 legislative session and is chaired by Superintendent Balow. Their final report will be submitted to legislators in October.

For more information, please contact Lori Kimbrough, Digital Learning Consultant, at (307)777-7418 or lori.kimbrough1@wyo.gov.

Attachment B – "Need for Part-Time Online K-12 Courses" Survey

The purpose of this survey is to assess the level of need across the state for K-12 students to take part-time (one to two) online courses to supplement their brick and mortar enrollment on an as needed basis. The Distance Education Task Force chaired by Superintendent Balow is reviewing options to provide statewide part-time online courses to all Wyoming districts.

Your input and recommendations regarding what would be beneficial for your school district and students would be helpful to the task force in the decision making process. The intent behind the models being considered is to offer affordable courses through a state managed online catalog and registration system. The anticipated competitive cost of courses would range from $200 to $800+ per semester or year depending on the course and vendor.

* **1. Please select the school district you represent.**

My district is: [   ]

* **2. The following is a list of part-time (one to two as needed) online course examples students may need to supplement their brick and mortar enrollment or to access opportunities that may not be currently available to them. Indicate which opportunities you think may benefit students in your district if such opportunities were available online statewide. (Select as many as apply.)**

[ ] Advanced Placement (AP) courses

[ ] Hathaway Success Curriculum courses

[ ] Additional world languages not currently offered (such as Chinese, German, Latin, etc.)

[ ] Additional years of world language (such as Spanish III, Spanish IV, etc.)

- [ ] STEM courses

- [ ] CTE courses

- [ ] Credit recovery courses

- [ ] Higher than current grade level courses for gifted and talented students

- [ ] Lower than current grade level courses for remedial students

- [ ] None of the above

Comments (optional)

[   ]

* 3. If part-time online courses aligned to Wyoming standards were offered statewide through a centralized catalog and registration system, do you think your district would take advantage of that opportunity?

- ( ) Yes

- ( ) No

Comments (optional)

[   ]

* 4. If districts utilized part-time online courses for their students, they would be responsible for monitoring student enrollment and course completion. Indicate which items your students would have access to if they were taking part-time online classes. (Select as many as apply.)

- [ ] Time in their schedules to access and complete online courses (this assumes the part-time online enrollment doesn't exceed a full load of courses).

- [ ] Classroom or space in the school(s) for your students to take their online courses during the school day.

- [ ] An instructional coach to students taking online courses (does not have to be a certified teacher).

- [ ] Equipment such as computers or mobile devices available for students to take online courses

within their school.

☐ None of the above

Comments (optional)

[text area]

* **5. Do you already provide opportunities for your students to take part-time online classes?**

○ Yes

○ No

If yes, what online provider or program(s) do you use?

[text area]

6. Please provide any additional thoughts or comments you may have about part-time online courses being available statewide.

[text area]

[Done]

Attachment C – "Full-Time Online Family" Survey

Full-Time Online Family Survey

The purpose of this survey is to identify the reasons why Wyoming students decide to enroll full-time online and whether or not they have access to part-time (one or two) brick and mortar classes or programs if needed. This information is being collected on behalf of the Distance Education Task Force chaired by Superintendent Balow. Your input regarding what would be beneficial for you or your student(s) will be helpful to the task force in the decision making process as they formulate recommendations for legislators.

Parents if you have multiple students enrolled full-time online, please complete a separate survey for each student.

* 1. I am a

◯ Student

◯ Parent or guardian

◯ Other

Please specify

[   ]

* 2. Student grade level at the time of full-time online enrollment and grade level now. Please select a grade level for each drop down menu even if full-time enrollment was decided this school year.

	Grade Level at Enrollment	Grade Level 2015-2016 School Year
Grade Level	[ ]	[ ]

Optional comments

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* 3. The school district we reside in is:

School District

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* 4. Why did you (or your student) decide to go to school full-time online? (select all that apply)

- [ ] To access programs not available locally.

- [ ] To make up missed credits.

- [ ] To get ahead and graduate early.

- [ ] To begin postsecondary education sooner.

- [ ] To pursue passions (sports, performance art, etc.) at a level higher than is offered in school.

- [ ] To focus on academics without distractions from classmates.

- [ ] To progress at individual pace.

- [ ] To share thoughts and ideas without competition with classmates.

- [ ] To learn despite health issues that might get in the way of a traditional class setting.

- [ ] To easily communicate with the teacher when needed.

- [ ] To easily communicate with classmates when needed.

- [ ] For the flexibility to accommodate our unusual schedule.

- [ ] To get away from negative peer groups.

- [ ] To sleep in and do school work when I'm more alert and can concentrate.

- [ ] To escape bullying.

- [ ] We're located in a remote or rural area which makes getting to a school difficult.

- [ ] I (or your student) was being homeschooled but decided to switch to a Wyoming school district online program.

☐ None of the above.

Other (please specify)

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* 5. Do you (or your student) wish to take classes or participate in programs at your local school?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Optional comments

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* 6. Are you (or your student) allowed to participate in the following classes or programs in your local schools? (select all that apply)

☐ Art

☐ Physical Education

☐ Core content area classes (Mathematics, English, Science, etc.)

☐ Foreign Language

☐ Music

☐ Agriculture

☐ Welding

☐ Programs such as gifted and talented

☐ I don't know if full-time online students are allowed to take classes or participate in programs provided by our local school.

Optional comments

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7. This space is for you to provide any additional thoughts or comments you may have about the items and questions above.

Done