

Virtual Education Advisory Committee (VEAC)

Meeting Information

Date: 4/10/19

Location: WDE Zoom Meeting

Committee Members: **Angelique Littlejohn**, Jamie Christensen, Katie Swistowicz, Laurie Davis, **Nish Goicolea**, **Representative Freeman**, **Richard Parker**, **Senator Kost**, **Shannon Siebert**, Steve Hopkins, **Tanya Sisneros**, Zeta Anderson

WDE: Shelley Hamel, John Bole, **Kim Morrow**, **Laurel Ballard**, Robin Grandpre, **Lori Thilmany**, **Leslie Zimmerschied**

Guests: Bob Jensen, Josh Daniels, Jody Rakness, Tim Hancock, **Molly Mulcahy**, **Whitney Romrell**, **William Johnston**

*(Names in **bold** indicate meeting attendees)*

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Virtual Education Acts
 - a. [House Enrolled Act 0005](#)
 - b. [House Enrolled Act 0118](#)
 - c. Implications and Next Steps
3. Chapter 41 Rules Revisions
 - a. Additions
 - b. VEAC Term Lengths
4. Virtual Education District Accreditation Status
5. Virtual Education Program Renewals and Applications
6. Distance Education Grant Release
7. Other Discussion Topics

CHEYENNE OFFICE

122 W. 25th St. Suite E200
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-7675

RIVERTON OFFICE

320 West Main
Riverton, WY 82501
307-857-9250

ON THE WEB

edu.wyoming.gov
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Notes

Virtual Education Acts ([HEA 0005](#) and [HEA 0118](#))

- House Enrolled Act 0005 amends W.S. 21-2-202(a)(xxxi)(A) and W.S. 21-13-330(g) to allow more flexibility to school districts when providing virtual education opportunities for students.
 - The first amendment allows districts to utilize postsecondary faculty to instruct virtual education courses when a Wyoming certified teacher isn't available.
 - The faculty member must be employed by an appropriately accredited postsecondary institution teaching the same content area as the high school course.
 - A school district utilizing this waiver exception must obtain a letter from the postsecondary institution confirming the faculty member's employment and courses being taught.
 - The second amendment allows for an agreement between districts so the resident district can maintain enrollment even if the student is participating in a virtual education program for more than 50 percent of their classes.
 - The agreement between districts describes the responsibilities of each district in terms of the services each will provide.
 - The district that maintains membership will enroll the student in a grade level appropriate brick and mortar school, claim average daily membership, and include the student in accountability measures and reporting.
- House Enrolled Act 0118 excludes school districts from virtual education program requirements when they enter an agreement for a classroom teacher to remotely instruct students of the other district.
 - The teachers in these instances must be employed by the district offering the course and they must teach the class(es) in person at their district, as well as through remote education to the students located in the other district.
 - The new legislation, W.S. 21-13-330(m), provides specific guidelines and requirements for remote education agreements and school district responsibilities.

- Additional overview points regarding the remote education act:
 - This legislation only applies to courses being delivered between districts.
 - Students must be located in the school they attend for their traditional brick and mortar classes during the remote education classes for attendance tracking purposes.
 - Providing remote education does not make districts eligible to apply for the Distance Education Grant funds.
 - The reporting of remote education classes on the Wyoming Department of Education data collections is the same as virtual education classes or other K-12 concurrent enrollment classes.
- Implications and Next Steps
 - Amendment to House Enrolled Act 0118 to allow for remote education delivery within a single school district.
 - Senator Kost and Representative Freeman will work with the Legislative Service Office to draft an amendment that will allow remote education classes to be delivered from one school to another with the same school district.
 - Senator Kost and Representative Freeman believe the restriction to remote education delivery between districts only was an oversight.
 - The Virtual Education Advisory Committee members agreed this amendment should be made so there isn't a different standard for within district delivery compared to delivery between two districts.
 - Provide school districts with guidance information and revise the Chapter 41 Virtual Education Rules.

Chapter 41 Virtual Education Rules Revisions

- Additions
 - The changes to the virtual education statutes will require some revisions of the Chapter 41 Rules but they won't be nearly as extensive as those required by the 2017 distance education legislation.
 - We may need to add a definition for remote education to the rules but probably not much more than that in regard to House Enrolled Act 0118.
 - Senator Kost asked that any revisions be kept as simple as possible.

- The process for revisions will start by talking with the Department attorney general for review and input regarding possible changes. The Virtual Education Advisory Committee will also review and recommend revisions before other stakeholder input is collected.
- Both acts become law on July 1, 2019, and we anticipate being able to promulgate the rules revisions over the summer so school districts have the proposed rules by the start of the school year.
- **VEAC Term Lengths**
 - When the Chapter 41 Rules were revised in 2017, the Virtual Education Advisory Committee (VEAC) established rules regarding the VEAC since it was just written into law.
 - The VEAC determined the term lengths would be four years with members volunteering to end their term after the first two years so membership would be staggered in order to ensure continuity in the group.
 - The two year mark is this summer and several members have naturally left the group either by moving out of state or no longer being connected to virtual education.
 - We can suggest a list of replacements for those members and present them to Superintendent Balow for selection.
 - A survey will be sent to VEAC members to either suggest replacements or vote on suggestions.
 - The group agreed going forward any members who drop should be replaced as we go rather than waiting to fill positions.
 - The discussion then led some members who have not been attending meetings for some time.
 - The group agreed that after a year of not attending, members should be dropped.
 - Emails will be sent to members not attending to find out if they are still interested in serving on the VEAC.
 - Any memberships lost to those no longer interested in serving will be included in the replacement selection process.

- Future members will be informed of the attendance expectations knowing there will be times when individuals are unable to attend due to other commitments.
- The group discussed allowing members to serve consecutive four year terms given the small number of individuals involved in virtual education in the state.
 - That is a practice that is common with other committees and the VEAC is in agreement to allowing members to continue to serve as long as they are making contributions and it isn't against what was written in the Chapter 41 Rules.
 - Since the Chapter 41 Rules will be revised, the consecutive four year terms could be added if needed.

Virtual Education District Accreditation Status

- Lori provided an update about the district accreditation status impacted by virtual education.
 - There were six school districts that needed to take corrective action on the items of concern prior to May 1.
 - This is the first year virtual education compliance has been taken into consideration for impact on accreditation.
 - The accreditation team will provide a report to the State Board of Education about the process and any issues found.

Virtual Education Program Renewals and Applications

- The virtual education application and program renewal opened in March. District have until April 26 to submit a letter of intent or renewal form to be considered for Distance Education Grant (DEG).
 - Seven districts have applied or renewed thus far.
 - Districts can continue to submit applications and syllabi for courses that haven't already been approved through July 31.
- Because most of the virtual education classes had already been approved by the start of the 2018-19 school year, there have only been about twenty-five syllabi submitted for review during the year.

Distance Education Grant Release

- The DEG applications will be available after May 1.
- Districts that are providing remote education only won't be eligible for the DEG.

Other Discussion Topics

- Angelique said they have a question about withdrawing students who aren't participating. They were told they can't withdraw students and she wondered why. Shannon said that actually withdrawing the students has to do with the learning management system (LMS) the programs use which makes it very difficult to enroll students again once they've been removed. They can be dropped from membership but remain enrolled in the LMS in case they start participating again.
- Angelique said they were told through an email from the district that this year the state said they aren't able to withdraw students. Laurel asked if Angelique could research this and provide more information so we could find out where this came from and address it. Lori said there aren't any statutes that would require a district to keep a student who isn't participating in VE enrolled. Students can be withdrawn in those instances. Withdrawal practices might be a district school board ruling but, without more information, we don't have a definitive answer.
- Representative Freeman said he remembered we were going to compare dropout rates for virtual education students. Leslie explained that this is an outdated metric that is no longer used. Instead we look at graduation rates. Graduation rates are based on students completing in four years. If they do that, even with gaps in enrollment, they are included as graduates. Students who take five years to graduate aren't included in the grad rates.
- Representative Freeman asked if there is a measure of continuation. Are kids still involved in 9th grade, in 10th grade, in 11th grade, and in 12th grade. Leslie answered that 9th grade credit completion is the only measure the state does because that is all that is required for accountability measures. A student can start and stop school but as long as they graduate in the four year period, they are included as graduates in the graduation rate.