



# INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

## INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS

August 1, 2018

1:00 PM (ET)

Indiana Government Center South

Conference Room C

302 West Washington St.

Indianapolis, IN 46204.

**Members Present:** Mr. Gordon Hendry (Chair), Dr. Maryanne McMahon, and Ms. Cari Whicker.

- I. Call to Order**
  - a. Committee members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II. Approval of Agenda**
  - a. The agenda was approved by a voice vote.
- III. Presentation: Follow-Up on Questions from Previous Meeting**
  - a. Brenda Erbse, Assistant Director of Accountability for the Department, provided data regarding virtual charter schools that answered questions from the previous meeting.
    - i. The first question was what percentage of students participate in the ISTEP exam and what percentage of those who we expect to participate are being used in the accountability calculation. This information was put into graphs for all Indiana virtual charter schools to better understand these numbers.
    - ii. There were questions about cohort, which Ms. Erbse clarified is determine by using the 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupil enrollment to create a cohort, which is expected to graduate three (3) school years after grade 9. She used this information to show the percent of 5<sup>th</sup> year graduates who are graduated by their cohort school versus graduated by a different school.
    - iii. There was also a question about enrollment and exits so this information was broken down to see when and where students are leaving or enrolling in the virtual charters.
      1. Ms. Whicker clarified that when students transfer in-state this could be to another virtual charter school and mentioned she was interested in learning more about this data to see from where these students were transferring.
  - b. Discussion starts at [0:55](#).
- IV. Presentation: Indiana Charter School Authorizers**
  - a. Overview of Standards and Quality School Authorizing
    - i. Application Process & Decision Making
      1. Dr. Robert Marra, Executive Director of the Office of Charter Schools for Ball State University, shared that Ball State worked with other authorizers around the country to set standards to

evaluate their schools. He also presented information regarding the required application process for the virtual charter schools Ball State authorizes.

- ii. School-wide Performance Goals
  - 1. Dr. Jamie Garwood, Academic Performance Coordinator for the Office of Charter Schools for Ball State University, shared information regarding the academic frameworks used in virtual charter schools, which generally end up being customized to schools based on the data they choose to include.
- iii. Ongoing Oversight & Evaluation
  - 1. Dr. Garwood explained that they use an internal assessment regularly and also have an external review team that comes in midway through the year to ensure charter schools are meeting their performance goals.
  - 2. Mr. Hendry asked if any of the data points looked at during evaluations were actually stated within the actual charter school agreements. Dr. Garwood responded that these goals change so the school improvement plan is really where the schools go through their set goals.
  - 3. Dr. McMahon asked when this review took place. Dr. Garwood responded that one type of review takes place half-way through a charter term and the end-of-term renewal reviews occurs in the fall.
- iv. Revocation & Renewal Decision Making
  - 1. Dr. Garwood explained that there has been a big shift in the renewal process and have started to think about it as a process of continuous improvement as opposed to an event.
- b. Unique Aspects of Authorizing & Oversight of Virtual Charter Schools
  - i. Dr. Garwood shared that there is a learning curve for anyone who is evaluating virtual charter schools due to things such as the complexity of the student population.
    - 1. Dr. McMahon asked how the teaching staff was evaluated. Dr. Garwood responded that this came out in a number of ways such as interviews and professional development plans. Ms. Whicker asked if there were evaluations of teachers based on their performance. Dr. Garwood responded that they did not do teacher performance evaluations, but instead did teacher engagement evaluations.
  - ii. Dr. Marra shared the unique aspects of virtual charter schools as they pertain to the financials.
- c. Gaps or Constraints in Existing Indiana Law Related to Virtual Charter School
  - i. Dr. Marra mentioned the need to make one (1) cohesive plan for these schools. He also mentioned that there is a need to create a definition for virtual learning and a need to ensure the students coming to virtual charters will be successful because the virtual setting is not conducive for all students to be successful.

1. Dr. McMahon asked if there was a family involvement contract in these schools and what occurs if the family doesn't uphold their end. Dr. Marra responded that he believed the school intervened after a student was not in attendance for multiple days.
2. Mr. Hendry shared that authorizers have received scrutiny and proceeded to ask what the lessons learned have been as an authorizer and what they would like to see change in state law or regulations, or both, to help authorizers. Dr. Marra responded an overall definition of virtual learning and better access to data would be very helpful. Ms. Whicker asked why they weren't able to receive this data. Dr. Marra shared that some of the numbers did not match and he was unable to obtain others. Ms. Whicker responded that this was the case in all schools and this data needed to be recorded by the schools.
3. Discussion starts at [18:25](#).

V. **Presentation: Virtual Charter School Operators**

a. Enrollment and Withdrawal

- i. Paul Garrison, Superintendent of Daleville Schools, gave a presentation regarding the history of Daleville becoming an authorizer for virtual charter schools and the growth this virtual school has seen since its origination. He also shared that virtual charter schools accept all students and students are choosing to go to these schools because they haven't seen success in traditional schools, but are finding success in this environment.
  1. Mr. Hendry asked if he believed that the notion of accepting all students should change. Mr. Garrison responded that he did not believe this should change and that he has had conversations about capping their enrollment, but that would force some students to be unable to receive education.
  2. Mr. Hendry asked how he defined success in a virtual charter. Mr. Garrison responded they need to look at success on an improvement basis and see what the school can do effectively. Mr. Hendry followed-up by asking where he wanted to see virtual charter schools in five (5) years. Mr. Garrison responded that he would like to see these schools with pass rates comparable to traditional public schools and for all students to pass the ISTEP test.
  3. Mr. Hendry asked for more information about their authorizing fee. Mr. Garrison responded that they currently take a 1-2% fee, which will give them a share of nearly one (1) million dollars this year. This money is spent on allowing Daleville students to take these virtual courses and providing technology to participate in these courses. Mr. Hendry asked if it was realistic to believe the authorizer would close a virtual charter due to poor performance if they are making this much money from the venture. Mr. Garrison responded that it would be a difficult decision, but ultimately they care about kids and need to see progress.

4. Mr. Hendry asked how Mr. Garrison believed the state should hold authorizers accountable for the schools it authorizes. Mr. Garrison responded that the virtual charter school student body is different, so in regard to academic achievement, virtual charter schools need to be assessed differently or there will be an end to virtual charters. Ms. Whicker responded that there is a need for accountability, so what are the different tools that should be used. Mr. Garrison responded one thing he would look at is credits earned per semester prior to coming and while they are attending the virtual charter.
  5. Ms. Whicker asked how he felt about having one authorizer for the whole state. Mr. Garrison responded that he did not know it was necessary, but it is an option that should be considered if a more effective system could be put in place.
- ii. Dr. Percy Clark, Superintendent of Indiana Virtual School, shared the importance of virtual charter schools and their effect on those students who have not been able to achieve success within traditional schools. He also shared the difficulties virtual charters encounter and how they are working through these areas to best achieve success.
    1. Mr. Hendry asked how Dr. Clark believed virtual charter schools should be held accountable. Dr. Clark responded that he believed they should be held accountable in more than just the academic arena, such as credit attainment and the governance structure.
    2. Mr. Hendry asked what the goal of students who come to these schools was. Mr. Garrison responded the goal was to graduate. Mr. Hendry responded that the graduation rate was not good, so how are they working on this. Dr. Clark responded that he had the lowest graduation rate in the state because when these students come to him they are not in his cohort so this improves a different school's cohort instead of his.
  - iii. Melissa Brown, Executive Director for Indiana Connections Academy, gave a presentation regarding Indiana Connections Academy.
- b. Process & Procedures
    - i. Ms. Brown shared more information about the enrollment process and expressed a need to talk to families more in depth to see if this is a good fit for them. She also mentioned the new engagement legislation has helped the school avoid expulsions for truancy.
    - ii. Ms. Brown gave more information surrounding procedures at Connections including teacher evaluations, family contracts and onboarding.
      1. Dr. McMahon asked about Ms. Brown's opinion on teacher preparation programs and what role they may play in making teachers successful. Ms. Brown shared that this is very important and she would love to work with universities to better prepare teachers for virtual teaching.
      2. Dr. McMahon expressed concern over placing children who are not successful in traditional schools in virtual schools which

require even more attention and asked if Ms. Brown had any insight on how to make these children successful. Ms. Brown responded that the engagement piece is a unique piece that helps these children.

3. Mr. Hendry asked how she plans to improve the graduation rates. Ms. Brown responded it's difficult with the cohort issue, but they also need to work on advising students before they begin to ensure it's a good place for them.

c. Student Enrollment & Withdrawal

- i. A representative from K12, an organization that powers Hoosier Academy and Insight School of Indiana, gave a presentation regarding the reasons for and timing of student enrollment. She also shared the impact of late enrollment on these students.

1. The representative also shared reasons for withdrawal and the impact it has, but mentioned the new engagement policy has helped with these withdrawal numbers.

- d. Discussion starts at [1:06:31](#).

**VI. Adjournment**

- a. The meeting was adjourned.