

Interim Study Committee on Education Matters
September 10, 2008
House Chambers
11:00 AM – 2:15 PM

1. Terry Spradlin, CEEP presented a PowerPoint on “Promises and Pitfalls of Virtual Education in the United States and Indiana.” Some of the center’s findings include:
 - Polling data shows opposition to virtual charters and funding for online home schools. “75% of Hoosiers oppose the establishment of a virtual charter school. 26% of Americans favor public funding (of) online courses for homeschooled children.”
 - Promises of virtual education include: filling achievement gaps, providing AP courses, providing opportunities to make up missed credits.
 - Pitfalls of virtual education include: proper training and certification for online teachers, program quality and oversight, student accountability, student socialization, and a lack of explicit rules in Indiana.
 - Two types of virtual learning were noted: asynchronous, the student and teacher work at different times; and synchronous, both work at the same time.
2. Representative Terry Goodin stated that he believed that all virtual charter students should take the same tests as public school students. There seems to be an assumption among some that this requirement already exists.
3. Representative Terry Austin, who authored a virtual learning bill during the 2008 session, expressed a need to place the emphasis on course completion, not seat time. Noted that virtual learning exists in 42 states. She mentioned the Central Indiana Service Center’s virtual online high school. Noted also that virtual learning was not virtual schooling. Stated that Florida had the most established program, with 52,000 students enrolled in 2006.
4. The Federal consulting firm for Online Policy Issues out of Colorado testified that: Florida’s Tax Watch group reported on the effectiveness and efficiency of virtual schools, including full time virtual elementary schools; teacher quality is high. Online teachers need broader experiences than classroom teachers, and undergo intensive professional development. They believe there should be a different licensing requirement for online instructors. They have a 35 hour virtual training program. Programs are publically funded in 10 states.
5. The Hoosier Academy supported Charter Schools that mix tradition/virtual delivery systems. They called for “proper funding” because “costs are on par with traditional public schools.” A funding model should fund as regular ed schools. They have 350 students over two schools; 300 in Indianapolis and 50 in Muncie. Called for an “assurance of state funding” in the future of \$7500/student. Current students travel to the two available locations from around the area, such as Seymour, Terre Haute, and Lafayette.
6. Compass Learning discussed their program, which is linked to Indiana standards, has an assessment process built in, is browser based, and focuses on working with traditional school districts with certified teachers.

7. ISTA proposed an organization of virtual learning that could operate similar to special ed and vocational ed cooperatives. They called for auditing and licensing requirements, qualified monitors in subject areas if specialized teachers were not available, if the school and parent agree 100% of ADM dollars would follow the student to the program.
8. Testimony by John Ellis on the behalf of IAPSS and ISBA:
 The Indiana Virtual Academy recommended to the Indiana State Board of Education that virtual learning should adhere to state academic standards delivered by highly trained teachers in the subject areas being presented. As of one year ago, “42 states had developed significant supplemental online learning programs, significant full-time programs, or both.”
A downside discussed was that explosive growth in virtual programming has created several services with “virtually no standards or regulations as to what provides quality.”
 There are few established guidelines. An examination of virtual course work *should be based on Indiana standards.* Another significant question is “how to exert quality control.” We do not need “one size fits all programming.”
 We would not support the recommendation (from ISTA) that ADM dollars follow the student who transfers to a virtual learning program. Staffing and salaries are established based upon enrollment needs at the beginning of a year, and even if a district would lose significant enrollment, PL 217 does not provide a means for reducing staff proportionately.
 Equity Questions - Harvard Graduate School of Learning Technologies
 Three Fundamental Issues of Equity:
 - Access and literacy: Do students at large have the appropriate devices at hand and the basic knowledge to use them?
 - What do you have access to? Many of the materials available on the web are not designed for a wide range of learning styles or backgrounds. If a textbook took this approach, it would be widely criticized as one-dimensional.
 - The nature of the internet – who owns it and who feels empowered to create material for it? Much misinformation is spread out among much information.
9. Mellissa Brown discussed the IPS supplemental virtual school, in its first year. Noted that they were still investigating several questions about the delivery of virtual programming.
10. IFT testified that they hoped to gain some answers regarding virtual learning, put were leaving with more questions and concerns.

Pension and Management Oversight Commission
 September 11, 2008 (from Frank Bush)

1. Concerns were discussed concerning Sudan divestment details. TRF divested \$44.3 million, or .5% of total assets.
2. TRF divested 100% of scrutinized companies on or before June 30, 2008.
3. Fiscal impact for TRF immediate vesting – key assumptions: applies only to 30,000 current non-vested members; 7.5% average investment return assumption; 1.5% annual COLA.
4. \$8.9 million increase in present value of future benefits.
5. Pre-96 unfunded liability projections were discussed (attached).