

Joint Committee on Joint Education

Minutes of Meeting
2017 Second Extraordinary Session
August 16, 2017

I. CALL TO ORDER

Senator Dan W. "Blade" Morrish, chairman of the Joint Committee on Joint Education, called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. in Room 1, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Nancy Landry, chairman
Representative Beryl A. Amedée
Representative Chris Broadwater
Representative Stephen F. Carter
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Julie Emerson
Representative Reid Falconer
Representative Jeffrey "Jeff" Hall
Representative Stephanie Hilferty
Representative Patricia Haynes Smith
Representative Polly Thomas
Senator Dan W. "Blade" Morrish, chairman
Senator Conrad Appel
Senator Gerald Boudreaux
Senator Beth Mizell
Senator Michael A. Walsworth

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Joseph Bouie, Jr.
Representative Walt Leger, III
Representative Scott M. Simon
Senator John Milkovich, co-chairman

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nancy Y. Jolly, senior analyst
Elizabeth L. Borne, legislative analyst

Jacqueline Snowden, secretary
Cheryl M. Serrett, legislative analyst
Jeanne C. Johnston, senior researcher

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Joshua Marcelle, senate sergeant at arms
Danny Leming, house sergeant at arms

III. BUSINESS

To receive information on the status of internet access in Louisiana's public schools from representatives of Education Superhighway and others and provide for discussion by committee members.

Senator Morrish stated that the meeting had been called to review and hear presentations about the availability, affordability, and reliability of high-speed internet access in every classroom across the state.

Donald Songy, education policy advisor to Governor John Bel Edwards, State Capitol, 6th Floor, gave a background, history, and overview of the work group. He expounded on the focus of the initiative, which is to provide internet access across the state to students. Mr. Songy introduced the witnesses.

Education Superhighway

Michael Turzanski, state engagement manager, Education Superhighway, 433 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94104, (650) 743-5454, narrated "Education Superhighway: Louisiana K-12 Connectivity", a PowerPoint presentation, a paper copy of which is labeled Exhibit 1 and included in the records of this meeting. He gave an overview of the function of Education Superhighway and how the organization partnered with states and supporting districts to ensure that schools have access to high-speed internet access to support digital learning. He presented data on the current state of broadband access in Louisiana and compared Louisiana's accessibility to that of other states.

Brad Weiger, senior consultant, Education Superhighway, 433 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94104, (415) 738-8674, spoke for information only.

Grace Ting, Education, state engagement manager, Education Superhighway, 433 California Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94104, (415) 509-3162, spoke for information only.

Louisiana Department of Education

Carol Mosley, Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), Claiborne Building, 1201 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA, gave an overview of the LDOE in a PowerPoint presentation, "Louisiana Believes: Statewide Educational Technology Plan", which is labeled Exhibit 2 and included in the records of this meeting. Ms. Mosley spoke on the goals of the state's Connect & Learn Initiative and explained how it related to the LDOE state technology plan.

Division of Administration

Neal Underwood, Office of Technology Services, Division of Administration, Claiborne Building, 1201 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7105, spoke for information only.

Local School Districts

David Hooper, Allen Parish School Board, P.O. Drawer C, Oberlin, LA 70655, (337) 224-8834, commended his district's superintendents and described the relationship between funding and broadband access.

Karen Guidry, technology coordinator, Jefferson Davis Parish school system, 1628 South Thibodeaux Road, Jennings, LA, (337) 802-3908, said she was in her 33rd year with the district and discussed the need for autonomy with funding rather than receiving unfunded mandates. She said as prices have gone down for cellphones and residential internet, the district has renegotiated its pricing for broadband.

Ben Gautreaux, IT manager, Lafourche Parish school district, 801 East 7th Street, Thibodaux, LA 70301, (985) 435-4641, described the status of school connectivity in the parish. He said his parish has gone from 400 megabytes to 10 gigabytes of data availability for students. His focus for the parish is on infrastructure and plans are to replace up to 200 miles of cable at a cost of \$2.5 million. He noted that successful procurement of a bond issue provided the funds for the cable replacement project.

Cable Companies

Jason Hunt, Uniti Fiber, senior vice president, 106 Metairie Lawn Drive, Metairie, LA 70001, (985) 515-9910, gave information to the committee relative to broadband availability in the state. He corrected a per-megabyte data cost given by Education Superhighway in its presentation from \$15 per megabyte to \$0.98 in St. Tammany Parish. He said Louisiana's 2015 average cost per megabyte was \$4.72, which was below the \$7 national average.

Travis Franks, DETEL, 2028 Highway 115, Mansura, LA 71350, (318) 597-0303, said competition decreases the cost of high-speed data. He noted that many schools do not have adequate funding for devices, such as PCs and notebooks, and that keeps demand for internet access at lower levels.

School Boards Association

Scott Richard, Louisiana School Boards Association, 7912 Summa Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (337) 278-5398, noted that the discussions at today's meeting were complicated and were undergirded by funding inadequacies in school districts rather than availability of service. He expressed a desire to work with Education Superhighway and congressional legislators on the E-rate program, which provides discounts on certain services and products that are essential for classrooms and libraries to receive internet connections.

Senator Morrish asked LDOE to continue to work with Education Superhighway, the governor's administration, school districts, and providers to achieve enhanced internet capability throughout Louisiana.

Representative Falconer commended LDOE and others on the good work they have done on this issue.

Senator Appel noted that a technology bill he authored several years prior was the genesis of today's productive discussion. He expressed that long-term planning and strategies were necessary to get today's public schools up to speed with the technology of the century.

Witness cards submitted by individuals who did not speak are as follows: 1 for information only. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

There were no other matters to consider.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Dan W. "Blade" Morrish
Joint Committee on Joint Education

Vice Chairman Nancy Landry
Joint Committee on Joint Education

Date adopted: