



Open Education Resources Advisory Committee
June 20, 2007 1:00 pm
House Room D, General Assembly Building

• **Call to order, roll call:**

Delegate Christopher Peace called the meeting to order. The members of the committee and JCOTS staff introduced themselves and shared their background and interest in open education resources within the Commonwealth.

• **Overview of the role of JCOTS advisory committees:**

Staff provided a brief introduction to the committee about the role of JCOTS in establishing science and technology policy in the Commonwealth, and how the various committees work with JCOTS in establishing this policy. Staff gave a brief introduction to Open Education Resources (OER). A copy of this presentation is available at the JCOTS website.

• **Dr. Beverly Thurston, Virginia Department of Education:**

Dr. Thurston made a presentation highlighting the K-12 textbook adoption process in the Commonwealth. A copy of this presentation is available at the JCOTS website.

Dr. Thurston explained that it generally takes the State Board of Education one and a half years to adopt textbooks statewide for a particular subject. It was also of interest to the committee how the adoption of Virginia Standards of Learning affects publishing and adoption of textbooks. Dr. Thurston explained that textbook manufacturers like to have a minimum of one year to develop a textbook which complies with the SOLs.

Following a discussion on the relationship between textbook content and the SOLs, Senator Watkins expressed interest in having textbook companies present at a future meeting. Senator Watkins also posed the question as to whether the State Board of Education needed to adopt textbooks at the state level. The advisory committee left the question unanswered but the



consensus was that adoption at both the state and local level was duplicative in effort and required a significant time investment for teachers.

- **Mark Burnet, Director, Virginia Open Education Foundation (VOEF):**

Mr. Burnet presented on the work of VOEF and open education resources. He explained the mission of VOEF is to "bring easily usable, quality open curriculum and educational content resources to all students in Virginia." He briefly explained intellectual property concerns that arise when using OER and current initiatives meant to alleviate these concerns. The advisory committee discussed the importance of educating teachers about creative commons licensing but concomitantly recognized that many teachers currently have no incentive to share materials they produce for their classes.

- **Discussion and formulation of work plan:**

Senator John Watkins opened the discussion by discussing the positive steps universities have taken towards incorporating open educational resources and stated it may be time to be less restrictive on K-12 education and allow more options for schools to adopt textbooks.

One member suggested studying which textbooks and resources are currently being used by schools that have done well on the SOLs. A consensus arose that K-12 education is not simply instructing the SOLs but also includes fostering critical thinking skills. Members generally agreed that it is important for the K-12 educational system to know what resources are achieving the best results. Senator Watkins suggested that Virginia institutions of higher learning could conduct research on this issue.

A member of the committee emphasized the need to address education resources in all communities. By addressing all communities the adoption of open education resources may bridge the gap in socio-economic status. The member also stressed the burden the textbook adoption process places on teachers, especially if each electronic supplement has to be evaluated.

The committee discussed the idea of having textbook companies present at the next meeting and was interested in hearing about options in purchasing, such as selecting specific chapters from different sources and creating a single textbook. One member of the committee stated that there

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must be some oversight or review process by the state or a neutral body if more control was given to localities in adopting textbooks.

A member suggested a book titled Being Fluent with Information Technology for committee members to familiarize themselves with the relationship between academics and information technology.¹

Members agreed that printed textbooks could be obsolete in 20 years and that the Commonwealth needs to develop policies to take advantage of this transformation. A member stated that 99% of new educational resources are digitized and that if knowledge is not on the Internet it might as well not exist.

Members discussed the \$126 million spent annually on K-12 education and the \$800-\$1000 per semester spent on textbooks at institutions of higher education.

A member stated that the adoption of open education resources also needs to address the concerns of parents who favor the ability of their children to bring home textbooks. A member stated that with any increased use of technology dependent educational resources, it would be helpful to know if schools across the state have the IT infrastructure to support those resources.

Delegate Peace mentioned the idea of having a presentation from other private businesses that have adopted and manage open educational resources, such as LexisNexis. The committee also expressed interest in learning more about the Merlot Project and the Valley of the Shadow Project.

• **Public comment:**

No public comment was received.

• **Actions for the next meeting:**

The committee identified several potential agenda items for future meetings, including:

¹ COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LITERACY, BEING FLUENT WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (NATIONAL ACADEMY PRESS 1999).

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- Presentations by textbook manufacturers about the technologies they currently use to create textbooks, the publishing process, and pricing structures;
 - Possible research by Virginia institutions of higher education on current textbook use and the success of individual texts as rated by success of each schools SOL testing success; and
 - Presentations by private entities on how to best utilize technology to educate (e.g., LexisNexis, etc.).
 - Update on the Valley of the Shadow Project and the Merlot Project.
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- **Adjournment.**