

MEMORANDUM

TO: ANDY CHERULLO
FROM: SARAH B. YOUNG
SUBJECT: TASK FORCE UPDATE
DATE: MARCH 12, 2009

Technology Task Force

Technology and the integration of technology in schools is an important issue facing public K-12 educators. When collaborating with a district on designing a new school or substantial renovation, it is important for the MSBA to consider the appropriate level of investment in technology infrastructure. While most districts have a technology plan, it will be important for the MSBA to understand how (and how well) the district has provided leadership, training and resources to implement the plan. The MSBA will convene a Technology Task Force in the near future in order to solicit guidance on recommendations on issues related to integrating technology into education. Potential topics for Task Force input include:

- Discuss ways to maximize district's use of grants (e.g. e-rate grants)
- Measures for evaluating a district's technology plan and its implementation
- Specification standards for infrastructure needed to support basic technology for a "21st century school"
- The efficacy of computer labs, wireless networks, one-to-one computing, interactive white boards, etc.
- Cost effective approaches to incorporate and maintain systems
- Appropriate standards for professional development for technology

Vocational Technical Education Task Force

- Received and reviewing a proposal from Northeastern University to apply the Labor Market Assessment Tool (LMAT) to determine whether the current curriculum at Vocational Technical schools is aligned with the projected future job market to produce graduates that will have the appropriate industry-specific skills to meet the needs of the MA employers in those industries. Other items for discussion may include research methods to measure the return on investment in a vocational school or other strategies that could assist the MSBA's assessment of and appropriate investment in vocational technical schools.

Science Lab Task Force

- Task Force met on October 21, 2008 and December 3, 2008.
- It was generally agreed that it is not necessary to have labs separate from lecture rooms and that science rooms should have a generic layout, with utilities on the perimeter and moveable furniture and equipment in the middle. It was also agreed that a combined lab/lecture room is

preferred in order to integrate laboratory investigation with all aspects of science instruction. The issue of properly sized rooms and the research that correlates lab safety with room size and enrollment will be discussed at a future task force meeting.

- The Dec 3 meeting was held at the offices of Apple Computer. The meeting focused on integration of technology in science education. Demonstrations included iPod based computing environment, a simulated dissection and electronic probe technology. Students from the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester discussed how they use technology in their school which uses a "1 to 1" computing model.
- Future agenda items may include: standards for infrastructure to support learning technology; alternative facilities for teaching science (MA Math Academy and Science, Mass BioTech Council's BioTeach mobile lab) and exploring ways to bulk purchase FF&E or access purchasing consortiums like the one at Mass BioTech.

Regionalization Task Force

- Task Force met on October 29, 2008. Accomplishments of the Regionalization Task Force to date:
 - identified barriers to regionalization and potential solutions to those barriers
 - identified cost savings, cost avoidance, educational enhancements and other efficiencies that occur when districts regionalize (done by EOE)
 - recommended additional reimbursement incentive points that would encourage the formation of regional school districts (approved by MSBA BoD)

As a result of the Task Forces discussion, the MSBA Board has created a new incentive for districts to combine resources and form regional districts. The MSBA can now grant up to 6 additional reimbursement points for districts that band together to form new regional districts.

The MSBA will soon schedule another meeting to continue looking at ways to create efficiencies and save costs for school districts.

Update on issues related to regionalization:

- DESE Regional Planning Grants: The DESE awarded planning grants to twelve communities from Western MA and Cape Cod in order for them to explore ways in which their schools could benefit from forming regional partnerships with neighboring cities and towns. Three of the grants that were awarded, involve six of the nine communities that have SOI in the MSBA regional assessment category (Ayer, Harwich, Holland, Lunenburg, Shirley and Wales).
- Harwich & Chatham: The MSBA and DESE have been invited by Harwich and Chatham to meet with them to discuss the implications of forming a regional district.
- Berkley & Somerset: The MSBA and DESE held five meetings over the past eight months with Berkley and Somerset to discuss the opportunity to regionalize. Berkley has had a tuitioning agreement with Somerset for 20 years and is interested in forming a regional agreement. After exploring the financial and educational issues, Somerset concluded that it is more interested in continuing the tuitioning agreement.
- Ayer, Lunenburg and Shirley: These three towns have been working to form regional agreement for the past two years. They received a planning grant for \$20,000 from the DESE to assist in the regionalization campaign prior to the fall town meeting vote, to create a regional district identity and to support first year professional development. There are several

factors that the districts feel are important to have in order to move forward, including funding for transition costs and MSBA input on optimal facility utilization taking into consideration building condition and future enrollment.

- The Executive Office of Education has put out for public comment proposed amendments to clarify the regulations governing regional school districts. The Board of Education is expected to vote on them at their April meeting.

Maintenance Task Force

The Maintenance Task Force met on November 25, 2008 and February 19, 2009. At the February 19 meeting, the task force was asked for ideas on developing objective metrics that would allow the MSBA to:

- Assess and encourage good maintenance practices of school buildings
- Determine if capital needs are a result of poor maintenance
- Encourage and support the implementation of capital plans
- Assemble existing resources for best practices
- Identify financial or other industry benchmarks that could be used for evaluating the level and quality of maintenance practices

The task force discussed the minimum standards for good maintenance practices and suggested that the MSBA explore the potential of holding back some amount of maintenance incentive points pending the results of a re-commissioning after 5 years.

Special Education Task Force

- This task force was proposed at the November MSBA Board meeting. MSBA staff has begun the development of goals for this task force and is compiling a list of potential invitees.