

To: Michigan Senate Education Committee
From: Bob Wise
President, Alliance for Excellent Education
Date: June 6, 2012
Re: Follow-up to May 23, 2012 Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with your committee a few weeks ago. I greatly appreciated the chance to hear from policymakers and other Michigan leaders about the state's progress in improving outcomes for all of its students.

As mentioned in my testimony, there are three "Ts" that policymakers should consider: teaching, time, and technology. Michigan has been a leader in the area of use of time with the development of the seat-time waiver policy, which represents a major step forward in the ongoing progress required to have all students achieving at high levels. If students are to achieve the common core state standards plus be fluent in twenty-first-century, deeper learning skills, time must become the variable, not the constant. At the same time, it's important to remember that seat time was originally established to ensure equity so that all students get the same amount of instruction. It is the responsibility of policymakers to continue to ensure that equity.

As Michigan moves forward to make its efforts more systemic, please consider the following to ensure a comprehensive approach:

- 1. Focus on the outcomes the state wishes to achieve for districts and programs that are seeking to utilize digital tools—successful course completion and attainment of standards—rather than the development of specific, prescriptive requirements.** For example:
 - Legislation that requires districts or programs that seek to provide online courses that are exempt from the 1,098 hour/165 days minimums to provide a computer for every student. This rules out bring-your-own-device initiatives that would allow districts to keep costs down.
 - Legislation that requires such districts or programs to provide broadband internet too specifically may limit the opportunity for schools or districts to use programs that do not rely on internet providers, such as software applications that can be purchased and used onsite.
 - Legislation that requires programs to demonstrate the number of full-time students via logins and other activity reports limits the types of learning that can take place digitally. In fact, a review of other state policies on this issue indicates that student logins are not used to determine program eligibility for state funding; instead, there are provisions to ensure that students who do not log in for a certain number of days are contacted by the teacher or the program.
- 2. Require districts or programs to be paid upon successful course completion and/or results of end-of-course assessments.** For example, in Florida, funding for online courses is directly linked to course completion and performance. The North Carolina Virtual Public School is paid based on

A useful model for performance-based learning uses Susan Patrick's and Chris Sturgis's working definition of performance-based learning, where

- students advance to a next subject upon mastery of it;
- competencies include explicit, measureable, transferable learning objectives that empower students;
- assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students;
- students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; and
- learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions.

Some state policies that might help implement these principles would be to:

- Redefine the Carnegie unit as competencies, thereby removing funding based on seat-time.
- Incentivize high-quality, competency-based learning models by rewarding schools and districts that are most effectively serving traditionally underserved students.
- Streamline funding within the K–20 system so that students can advance to higher-level courses, even while remaining in their school.
- Modularize courses so that schools serving highly mobile students can receive proportional funding for student progress, and so that students can receive proportional credit for modules they have mastered.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this issue with you. Michigan is already a leader in the field of innovating for better student learning, and focusing on a comprehensive, strategic approach will help ensure the best possible outcomes for every student in Michigan.

Further Resources:

Education Technology: State Policy Overview <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/educ/education-technology-state-policy-overview.aspx>
Learning Time in America: <http://www.ecs.org/docs/LearningTimeinAmerica.pdf>
Virtual High Schools: Are There Other Requirements/Limitations? <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=1388>
Oregon Proficiency Project <http://www.k-12leadership.org/professional-development/proficiency-project>
iNACOL: Cracking the Code: Synchronizing Policy and Practice for Performance-Based Learning
http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_CrackingCode_full_report.pdf

