



Department of Education

Mike DeWine, Governor
Dr. Stephanie Siddens, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ohio STEM Committee Meeting Minutes

July 24, 2023

9:00am-12:00pm

The PAST Foundation

1003 Kinnear Road, Columbus, OH 43212

Committee Members Present:

Dr. Tom Schwieterman, VP of Clinical Affairs and Chief Medical Officer at Midmark Corporation, STEM Committee Chair, appointed by the Ohio State Senate

Andrew L. Aichele, Senior Director of Engagement & Education at COSI, appointed by the Governor

Dr. Julia Simmerer, Ed.D., Senior Executive Director of the Center for Teaching, Leading, and Learning at The Ohio Department of Education, Designee for the Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Krista Maxson, Ph.D., Associate Vice Chancellor, P-16 Initiatives, Ohio Department of Higher Education, Designee for the Chancellor of the Department of Higher Education

Committee Members Absent:

Jeff Polesovsky, Vice President of Public Policy, Columbus Partnership, appointed by the Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives

Eric Leach, Executive Director of the Ohio Third Frontier, Ohio Development Services Agency, Designee for the Director of Development, Deputy Director, Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation

Ohio Department of Education Present:

Mary Ellen Dobransky, Associate Director of Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning (STEM Office)

Jennifer Russell, STEM Program Administrator 1

Madison Williams, STEM Intern

Ohio STEM Learning Network (OSLN) Present:

Kelly Gaier Evans, Director

Dr. Sandra Wilder, Ph.D., STEM Relationship Manager

Others Present:

Mary Schneider, PAST Foundation

Kathy Wright, PAST Foundation

Ellen Marrison, Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM (TIES)

Christa Krohn, TIES

Jamie Gibson, Horizon Science Academy Middle

Kyle Hicks, Strategic Public Partners

Sarah Redick

Ohio Department of Education Staff Recording Meeting Minutes:

Jennifer Russell, STEM Program Administrator 1

Madison Williams, STEM Intern

Opening:

Dr. Tom Schwieterman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.



Welcome and Introductions

The PAST foundation CEO, Dr. Annalies Corbin, welcomed the STEM committee and gave an overview of their origin story and their collaborators. She listed their achievements and those whom they have directly impacted. Attendees then took a tour of the PAST Foundation building. After the tour, Kathy Wright discussed how PAST implements resources and expertise in schools throughout Ohio.

Dr. Tom is wondering if we can organize a hub in more rural areas of the state.

Andrew Aichele enjoys the leadership lessons and how that transcribes to the supportive teachers that are establishing these leaders. Kathy commented that while it can be difficult for teachers to release control, the results are worth it. Rural schools have had to reconstruct prejudices that come along with rural schools.

Kelly Gaier Evans spoke about how OSLN partners with PAST as a network to create and sustain hubs throughout the state. There has been a lot of trial and error to play on the strengths and challenges of these different hubs.

Mary Schneider explained how the ODE and OSLN expanding workforce team has been a large support for the PAST Foundation and shows how Ohio is dedicated to STEM education.

Approval of Agenda

Motion made to approve July 24 meeting agenda made by Andrew L. Aichele, seconded by Dr. Julia Simmerer.

None opposed. Motion approved.

Affirmative Votes: All

Approval of May 10 Meeting Minutes

Motion made to approve May 10 STEM Committee meeting minutes by Dr. Krista Maxson, seconded by Andrew L. Aichele.

None opposed. Motion approved.

Affirmative Votes: All

Discussion Items:

Policy Updates

Mary Ellen Dobransky discussed how we have one school that remains on a growth plan; ODE is collaborating closely with ODHE and their legal team to figure out how to help the school move forward. Growth plan expiring in October – STEM Committee needs to vote by October 19.

Schools Updates

Dr. Sandra Wilder discussed the new application cycle for STEM school designation; it's been moved to a little earlier this year. Aspiring schools can begin putting artifacts in Slide Room beginning September 1. Applications are due February 1, two weeks earlier than previous years due to the high number of schools applying for redesignation this year. ODE and OSLN teams are getting bigger, but are still small so it will take them some time to get through them all.

Dr. Tom asked if resources are adequate to get through the tours. Sandra answered that OSLN and ODE are being creative.

Dr. Wilder talked about Deep Dives (for schools who want to seek designation – she said they are usually held in Columbus because it's a central location, but a session was held in northeast region (Cleveland). There are lots of aspirational schools; even though we saw a lower number of schools actually applying for designation, many more attended the Deep Dives. This is good because we want aspiring schools learning about the process far in advance.

Dr. Krista Maxson asked if there is a way to target Deep Dive sessions to locations where we need more STEM schools/have few STEM schools.

Kelly Gaier Evans replied that the session in Cleveland was a pilot for doing a Deep Dive in each regional hub; OSLN also considering an online Deep Dive next year so it will be more accessible to people who can't get to an in-person location – they can still attend and ask questions. Sandra spoke about possibly doing an asynchronous Deep Dive with a live question and answer session.

Dr. Wilder stated that the next Deep Dive session (OSLN Technical Support Workshop) is October 4, 2023 in Columbus. Mary Schneider (central regional hub director) is collaborating with OSLN on this. The goal is to be responsive. They are recommending that all schools interested in applying next year attend the October 4 session so they can get ready for their application/reapplication next year (prepare a year ahead of time).

Dr. Wilder moved into a discussion of quality monitoring. All schools needing quality monitoring this school year have attended a Deep Dive session. The first quality monitoring site visit is in October and visits go through March (when initial application site visits begin).

Thirty-six schools submitted compliance applications in 2022 (Kelly Gaier Evans confirmed this is only schools who were designated in May 2017 or earlier). Six schools were redesignated in the 2022-2023 school year. Twenty-six schools will be undergoing quality monitoring in the 2023-2024 school year.

Dr. Wilder told the committee that the remaining four schools submitted applications for redesignation but then decided not to go through quality monitoring. They can change their mind – the application isn't due until December 31 – technically still in compliance until then. The schools are DECA Prep/Middle, Stebbins High School, Mad River Middle School, and St. Gabriel.

Dr. Tom asked if there is any wind-down programming for this. Mary Ellen Dobransky explained that we want to give these schools ample opportunity to change their minds and undergo quality monitoring but added that if the schools don't feel comfortable at this point, there may not be much that we can do. The Department is working on a communications plan. A letter will be sent 90 days out summarizing why they're out of compliance and what they can do to get back into compliance, followed up by a phone call 60 days out to give it that personal touch and assure the schools that there are supports to help them. If we're still not successful, we will send an email message confirming that designation revocation is happening.

Kelly Gaier Evans said that OSLN has already had conversations with these schools, and if they choose not to pursue quality monitoring, OSLN will do a formal exit interview. Sandra pointed out that when the law was passed, there was no provision for schools that were already out of compliance (per the new law at the time it went into effect).

Dr. Julia Simmerer asked what this means for the students that are currently attending the STEM schools that will have their designation revoked. Will that happen in the middle of the school year?

Dr. Krista Maxson asked what does it mean to be in compliance but not go through quality monitoring? Dr. Wilder answered that you are on track to be redesignated but you are supposed to go through these procedures. This is the first time this has happened. Mary Ellen Dobransky added that these schools are probably not following the STEM rubric currently anyway, so they don't want to go through the process of quality monitoring.

Mary Ellen Dobransky said that we will let these schools know that they will no longer be able to call themselves a STEM school (change name, letterhead, signage, etc.). Dr. Tom confirmed they should explicitly be made aware of this.

Dr. Julia Simmerer was concerned that if the school loses its STEM designation mid-year and the parents won't know anything about it ahead of time. Dr. Tom asked if we as a committee can add something that says schools are mandated to communicate with parents about losing designation. Mary Ellen Dobransky confirmed that we will add this point to the letter and speak to them about it on the phone call.

Dr. Tom said this seems to be a temporary issue. But if a school signs a compliance reapplication, schools should be told that they have to sign something to leave the designation process.

Mary Ellen Dobransky reiterated that these schools still have a lot of time – they can still change their minds. Sandra confirmed that they can still request a site visit.

Dr. Tom suggested that instead of pulling a school's designation mid-year, we should give them a chance to schedule a site visit, and then, if necessary, revoke their designation at May meeting so they would not lose it until the end of the school year.

Dr. Julia Simmerer also brought up funding – how would that affect funding if designation is revoked in the middle of the school year? The budget goes by fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to June 30. Mary Ellen Dobransky explained that only the seven independent STEM schools get any kind of special funding.

Dr. Julia Simmerer discussed her concern about schools not telling families and the impact this will have on students. If they've been attending a STEM school for 3 years, do they know that their diploma won't say that they graduated from a STEM school? This could result in a community uproar if parents feel like the schools are pulling a fast one. Andrew Aichele confirmed that schools need to know all consequences of revoking their designation.

Dr. Tom asked Mary Ellen Dobransky to tell these schools that the committee met, and the decision was that we need some kind of affirmation from them that parents of students entering this school year know that the school will not be renewing their designation. The committee needs some knowledge that parents are aware of this decision.

Dr. Sandra Wilder let the committee know that she hasn't been able to get in touch with St. Gabriel (they are not responding) in Northeast Ohio.

Dr. Krista Maxson asked if the superintendents are fully aware of the schools' situation. Mary Ellen Dobransky replied that the districts signed off on quality monitoring, but we didn't expect schools to say they would participate and then back out. Should there be some sort of official document districts should sign off on (signed and stamped by legal)? Mary Ellen Dobransky said that her team will work on putting that together.

Kelly Gaier Evans let the committee know that the majority of schools are waiting until their second year to go through quality monitoring.

Kelly Gaier Evans also said that we do expect many more schools to go on growth plans than in the past, for two main reasons – there are now elevated expectations for STEM schools (the rubric and application process have shifted over the past 15 years) and there have been tons of changes (district/school/classroom shifts in culture) inside buildings over the past 15 years. She wants to remind the committee that growth plans are set up to support schools through the reapplication process. OSLN and ODE will meet with the school to create and implement a growth plan centered on specific attributes that require growth after the committee votes to put the school on a growth plan. (During the Deep Dive sessions, OSLN goes through every single attribute.) Dr. Tom confirmed that those Deep Dives make sure everyone is aware of expectations.

Mary Ellen Dobransky pointed out that although "corrective action plan" is the language used in statute, we use the term "growth plan" because it's not meant to be punitive. Most school leaders are aware that they're struggling and having trouble with meeting certain attributes.

Dr. Tom expressed concern about the heavy workload a lot of growth plans will place on small ODE and OSLN teams.

Kelly Gaier Evans replied that OSLN is working to expand the review team and is thinking about requiring hubs to be reviewers as part of their contract with OSLN.

Partnership Updates

Department of Education Updates

Mary Ellen Dobransky gave a report on the new biennial budget. Not a lot in this budget that really supports STEM education. There is funding for nonpublic schools to support STEM but what about public schools? What about professional development and implementation? She did give feedback on the budget before it was passed. There will be grants for nonpublic schools for STEM equipment, STEM programs, and coding robots. And there will be additional funds for Independent STEM Schools who are designated Independent STEM Schools of Quality (designated if they meet the qualifications in the bill). Our seven Independent STEM Schools do a lot with a little – incredible work with students – and they have been needing and wanting support, so we're glad they're now going to get it.

Dr. Tom asked if this is an official law – Mary Ellen confirmed that the budget was passed and signed by the governor in the first week in July.

Dr. Krista Maxson asked how these funds will be awarded. Mary Ellen Dobransky replied that it is a part of the funding formula and she can confirm the details with the Department.

Dr. Tom asked about the creation of the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) - does this change our budgetary opportunities?

Dr. Julia Simmerer answered that this is still all to be determined. The agency is in the reorganization process. The new department will be split into two divisions – a K-12 division and a workforce division. She sees STEM potential on the workforce side of things but is unsure of when that will be in new budget cycle.

Dr. Tom mentioned that STEM education could be an interesting bridge concept to workforce development - interest in schools partnering with organizations like PAST and nonprofits as opportunities for workforce development. Mary Schneider told him that The PAST Foundation would be open to that (there are no boundaries).

Dr. Julia Simmerer said that there is a huge allocation in this budget for workforce development, and beginning October 3 there will be grants available to expand programming on the workforce side. There should be opportunities for multiple entities (not just Career and Technical Education).

Dr. Tom wondered if the STEM Committee is the right legal entity to pursue some of the grants for regional hubs. As this matures, can we circle back to this?

Dr. Julia Simmerer said that ODE is connecting with Career Tech Planning Institutes because the funding will be funneled through them. The Department is trying really hard to approach it from a different path since only a small percentage of Ohio students are involved in CTE. Dr. Tom pointed out that something like this could energize rural districts very quickly.

Mary Ellen Dobransky moved into a discussion about STEM convenings. All regional STEM convenings have been held with the help of hubs and ecosystems. Cross-sector partners participated by invitation only and discussed what the STEM landscape looks like in the region, where the gaps are and how we can fill them in, and how to best prepare students for STEM jobs.

The Department got a lot of useful feedback from the convenings that gave us an idea of how to focus our efforts. Some of the attendees revealed that they live in siloes and don't know who to reach out. ODE has an ESSER grant with TIES to create more ecosystems throughout the state, but we want to be thoughtful with that and not duplicate efforts. TIES has done listening tours and we will be getting more information from them. Kelly Gaier Evans reiterated that we want to make sure everyone is working in tandem and not establishing ecosystems for the sake of it, but to bolster ecosystems that are already there.

Dr. Tom asked who gets invited to the STEM convenings and how they are chosen. Mary Ellen said we looked at the landscape of the region and wanted the invitations to reflect local communities. The invitees were necessarily current partners, but those who would be instrumental in helping us learn about the strengths and needs of each region..

At the convenings, industry partners also talked about needing guidance in how to support schools best. Most don't have much experience with students and teachers.

Ohio STEM Learning Network Updates

Kelly Gaier Evans told the committee that we want to increase funding for regional hubs. What does the work look like now? What does it need to look like? Hubs and STEM schools might do an analysis of who they're partnering with. Even schools who are not interested in going through designation can benefit through shared resources. OSLN is working to introduce stakeholders to its programming. They are also working to make sure they are deepening communication between hubs and also with OSLN because knowing everyone's partners could help schools with specific attributes on their growth plans. They are "recompeting" the Southeast regional hub and proposals (by nonprofits only) are due August 15. The remaining regional hubs will also be submitting proposals for work to be accomplished throughout the year.

Dr. Julia Simmerer asked what it means to be a regional hub. Kelly Gaier Evans answered that the sponsoring organization has to be a nonprofit and have an outline of the budget and key staff.

Kelly Gaier Evans added that getting feedback from the community and listening tours can be helpful in how to best engage regional hubs.

Kelly Gaier Evans highlighted the first OSLN statewide STEM innovation Summit. It was a huge success in pulling everyone across Ohio together. Lessons were learned about what to do differently going into the second summit. They are trying to figure out if they should grow exhibitors, possibly through a competitive process. For the first year of doing it, they are really pleased with the outcomes.

Kelly Gaier Evans said that summer is a busy time for launching cohorts for the next school year. This summer they launched the (reimagined) Innovative Leaders Institute (now in its tenth year) and the Rural Innovators Institute. All the spots in the cohort were filled very quickly – there are 15 rural schools and 16 in the original ILI. OSLN also launched a Teacher Academy and ODE's STEM intern Madison Williams, who earned her teaching degree this spring, participated in the K-5 Computer Science Cohort.

Dr. Krista Maxson asked for more information about the Computer Science Cohort – is this made up of teachers who want to teach computer science? Kelly Gaier Evans confirmed that and said that OSLN has partnered with Kent State University to offer course credit for supplemental licensure and added that we need to support those teachers in order to make sure Ohio has enough computer science teachers. She said they want courses to be accessible to all students in Ohio. Dr. Julia Simmerer strongly encouraged OSLN to select some teachers with five years of experience to participate in creating the exam, as they will know better what a first-year teacher needs to know. While teachers with, say, thirty years' experience might not. She encouraged OSLN to figure out who produces the exam and work with those vendors.

Kelly Gaier Evans let the committee know that there is \$4 million in funding in the new biennial budget specifically to support teachers of computer science. The two-year waiver was extended while the new grade-band licensure is updated (the law specifically says funding for "coursework, materials, exams").

Dr. Tom thanked Batelle for their contributions to the state to increase STEM education and asked that with regional hubs taking hold (advocacy grant applications), how are we weaving hubs, ecosystem, workforce together? Mary Ellen replied that the STEM convenings help us see where we overlap.

The TIES briefing on the STEM convenings will be publicly shared at the end of August; draft provided to STEM Committee members today.

Dr. Tom said that he is still woefully undereducated on what kind of funding is available in the state and from Battelle. He would love to understand where the funding is coming from for the STEM Committee's work, because it seems very vague to him. STEM education is an important part of Ohio's economy, and he believes that if you say that, you should stand behind it. The state is not advocating for funding.

Dr. Julia Simmerer said that she thinks this new department [ODEW] is a good start. Right now STEM education is running parallel to CTE and they really need to be integrated. This is an opportunity to make purposeful connections between the two and work collaboratively to start looking at cross-sections from the workforce standpoint. It would be good to get a study going to really closely look at that curriculum because there are a lot of opportunities for students.

Mary Ellen Dobransky added that ODE is finally getting the CTE STEM Programs of Excellence going (this recognizes pathways within schools and career centers so a program can be designated without the whole school or career center having to be designated). Dr. Tom told her that he's only an hour away and would love to be a part of this.

Andrew Aichele asked how we communicate the value of education/workforce partnerships. Do we have the capacity and bandwidth to do all this?

We have the STEM designation rubric, the TIES Virtual Resource Table, and other information out there. It was mentioned that Campbell Schools in Lowellville has a facility sort of like PAST and is a great rural model of how they have changed the culture and setting outside the suburbs and big cities.

Dr. Tom asked Dr. Julia Simmerer if any other state governments have done this merging of departments of education and workforce. She was not sure.

Mary Ellen Dobransky spoke about the upcoming STEM Committee meeting schedule. The next two meetings are at schools so the committee can see the work in person. The November 15 meeting will be held at a school that is yet to be determined, the February 12 meeting will be at a school that is yet to be determined, and the May 6 meeting will be at the Department of Education (the committee will be voting on designation and redesignation of STEM schools at this time).

Dr. Tom thanked the PAST Foundation for hosting today's meeting.

Public comments:

Christa Krohn from TIES reminded the committee members that TIES provided a draft of the STEM convenings briefing and hopes to have it done by the end of August.

Ellen Marrison, previous STEM committee member (for over 5 years) who now works with TIES, commented that after seeing previous efforts and new opportunities, where education will sit at the state level is still unknown, but she's hoping that we can bring that to a better place and have more of a workforce focus.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the STEM Committee meeting made by Dr. Krista Maxson, seconded by Andrew L. Aichele.

No opposed. Motion approved.

Affirmative Votes: All

Dr. Tom Schwieterman adjourned the meeting at 10:55am.

The next STEM Committee Meeting will be Wednesday, November 15, at a location yet to be determined.
