

NEBRASKA UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE
103rd LEGISLATURE, FIRST SESSION

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

Education
Room 1525 - 1:30 p.m.

LB566 Karpisek Create the Educational Technology Infrastructure Grant Program

Senator Karpisek to open

Annotation: LB 566 appropriates all of the Education Innovation Fund to the Nebraska Department of Education to carry out the Educational Technology Infrastructure Grant program to local public school systems. Digital textbooks, virtual labs to conduct experiments.

Proponents:

Matt Blomstedt, ESUCC-complimented Senator Karpisek and the Education Committee for examining the needs of K-12 districts

Q: (Sullivan) In this legislation, NDE would develop the rules and regulations, with rapid changes happening, any thoughts on how you set priorities and goals with educational technology?

A: We need to think about foundational investments in infrastructure and intentional about building systems and support. Compliments to Network Nebraska and laying down a solid Internet infrastructure for schools. Strategic investment is necessary. Pivotal point in time for education.

Kirk Langer, LPS-Member of the NITC Technical Panel and member of the Network Nebraska Advisory Group. LB 452 in 1994 provided revenue to ESUs that shall provide Internet to schools. 6Mbps for Lincoln in 1994, \$210/Mbps. Now, 1000 Mbps for LPS in 2013, \$2.55/Mbps. Compliments to Walter Weir and Brenda Decker. 150X the bandwidth with 1/100th of the cost. Good stewardship is evident. Now, with that bandwidth, you want to kick the tires and take it somewhere. NeSA was a pilot and now is a mainstream service provided over the Network Nebraska infrastructure. LPS has a great wireless and wired network but does not have enough student devices. We have moved from experimentation to expectation concerning ed technology.

Q: (Haar) How can you possibly keep pace with technology today?

A: It's not a matter of staying ahead or catching up, it's more a matter of catching a wave of technology innovation. Ride the wave or be crushed by it – make sure that the foundation (infrastructure) is viable for whatever technology is used.

Q: (?) How much is LPS spending on laptops?

A: LPS spent enough (\$1.5M) for carts and laptops to achieve a ratio of 4:1 at the high school level and 5:1 at the middle and elementary level and another \$1.8M to move to 2:1 for HS and 3:1 for MS. We just spent \$8 million more to get enough for students to take the online tests. We purchase as much as we can support on a sustainable basis.

Q: (?) Is assessment the impetus or is there something else going on?

A: There are state assessments but also district formative and summative online assessments to provide data for instructional decision making. Also K-6 digital reading environment and other digital resources.

Q: (Kolowski) How often do the foundations change?

A: Network infrastructure is an iterative process that gets added to, not rip and replace. Wireless is replacing wired in the classroom.

John Habben, NRCSA- As an administrator, I like that LB 566 includes a match for schools in order to access the grant funds. Rural broadband, better networking/connectivity, more devices are needed. Staying ahead of technology, I don't know how you would ever do that. For rural schools, it's more a matter of keeping up. Implementation of technology initiatives in ESUs and schools has been very beneficial.

Opponents:

None.

Neutral Testimony:

Jay Sears, NSEA- Representing the 28,000 members of the Nebraska State Education Association. NSEA requests that LB 511 and LB 566 be held in committee until the results are heard from the interim study named in LB 497.

Senator Karpisek to close

Funding for technology is critical for rural Nebraska to get equitable educational opportunities. Rural and urban Nebraska need to work cooperatively. Understand the need for study/LB497, but need to move forward with LB566.

LB511 Scheer Change allocation provisions relating to the Education Innovation Fund

Senator Scheer to open

I wished that Kirk Langer had been here yesterday to speak to the leadership of NDE. LB 511, for fiscal year 2016-17 through fiscal year 2019-20, the Education Innovation Fund shall be allocated to the Educational Technology Center established pursuant to section 79-1303. The center shall create a plan with partners, including but not limited to, the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council, the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission, Network Nebraska, and representatives from school districts. The plan shall include the development of an educational content or learning object repository system, learning management system deployment or enhancement, professional development and educational content development, and directory services to allow common access to such systems. Systems may be sponsored by such partners and shall be hosted on Network Nebraska and made available to Network Nebraska participants. The State Department of Education shall also develop a local technology grant to enhance school district technology adoption and integration, reserving at least one-half of the funds in the Education Innovation Fund for such grants. (i) For fiscal year 2020-21 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Education Innovation Fund shall be allocated, after administrative expenses, for education purposes as provided by the Legislature.

Proponents:

Matt Blomstedt, ESUCC-I want to thank Senator Scheer for introducing LB 511. There is a history to what the Education Innovation Fund did originally, and what it could do in the future. HANDOUT: Nebraska Virtual Partnership Memorandum of Understanding. NET and ESUs both have a responsibility to provide digital media. ESUs have been discussing LoRs, LMSs, and directory services and network security, being done at scale if we work in partnership. There are opportunities for strategic investments by the State, especially to link student assessment data with instructional decision-making.

Q (Sullivan): With the Nebraska Virtual Partnership, is there actual coordination with the partnerships?

A: ESUs are working with NET, Independent Study High School.

Q (Sullivan): With only 3% involvement with ISHS from Nebraska, do you think this will increase?

A: Yes, I think it will. With the NVIS Clearinghouse, we have over 540 courses that help address student needs and we have the ability to use a web portal to broker additional courses.

Brent Gaswick, NDE- Read a letter from Patricia Timm, President of the State Board of Ed. Asks that virtual education be part of future legislative action.

Opponents:

None.

Neutral Testimony:

None.

Senator Scheer waives closing.

LB495 Sullivan Change provisions relating to the Education Innovation Fund and early childhood grant reporting

Senator Sullivan to open.

The next one million seven hundred fifty thousand dollars shall be allocated to early childhood education grants awarded by the State Department of Education pursuant to section 79-1103 for ages 3-5; (v) the next one million dollars shall be transferred to the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund for children ages birth to age 3, and allowing other Education Innovation-funded programs to be returned to the General Fund.

Proponents:

Melody Hobson, NDE: read letter from State Board supporting early childhood provisions.

Jay Sears, NSEA: Representing the 28,000 members of the Nebraska State Education Association. NSEA supports LB 495 since it is reallocating existing funds rather than new uses of lottery funds. NSEA also supports the revised reporting requirements.

Jen Gottemoller, Early Childhood: We urge your support of LB 495.

Opponents:

None.

Neutral Testimony:

None

Senator Sullivan waives closing.

LB496 Sullivan Change provisions relating to school reorganization incentive payments

Senator Sullivan to open.

LB 496 transfers \$1 million per year for 3 years from the lottery to the School District Consolidation Fund. It allows up to \$125,000 for each consolidation, with half in the first and half in the second year of consolidation.

Q (Kowolski): What would this money be used for?

A: It could be used for infrastructure, contract buy-out, early termination agreements, etc...

Q (Davis): Would this enlarge the discussions around school consolidation issues?

A: The consolidation report would have to show that efficiencies would be achieved and student learning opportunities would be enhanced.

Proponents:

John Habben, NRCSA-LB 496 is very important to rural school districts to assist in the consolidation process.. Would provide funding to offset the costs associated with consolidations to include transfer of staff, etc. These costs can be significant and are not covered by state aid or TEOOSA.

Opponents:

None.

Neutral Testimony:

Jay Sears, NSEA: Representing the 28,000 members of the Nebraska State Education Association. NSEA is testifying in the neutral capacity for any purposes that are not continuation funds and would encourage the committee to withhold LB 496 until at which time the interim study report is submitted.

Senator Sullivan waives closing.

LB497 Sullivan Change distribution and provide for a study of the Education Innovation Fund

Senator Sullivan to open.

The Education Committee of the Legislature shall conduct a study of potential uses of the funds dedicated to education from proceeds of the lottery conducted pursuant to the State Lottery Act. The committee shall submit a report on the findings and any recommendations to the Clerk of the Legislature on or before December 31, 2013. Factors the study shall consider, but not be limited to, include: (1) The educational priorities of the state; (2) What types of educational activities are suited to being funded by state lottery funds as opposed to state general funds; (3) Whether state lottery funds should be used for significant projects requiring temporary funding or to sustain ongoing activities; and (4) Whether periodic reviews of the use of lottery funds for education should be scheduled. Recommends a retitling of the Nebraska Opportunity Grant program and Education Innovation Fund to be renamed the Nebraska Education Improvement Fund.

Proponents:

John Bonaiuto, NASB, NCSA: The NASB and NCSA support LB 497 and the amendment to LB 497. Develop priorities so the money isn't tossed around as a way to fund pet projects.

John Habben, NRCSA: NRCSA compliments Senator Sullivan for getting out ahead of the curve to do this study to get back to a long-term view of the use of education innovation fund dollars.

Matt Blomstedt, ESUCC: I want to compliment Senator Sullivan and the committee for requesting a study of the use of lottery funds and how education can be improved. Asked that they look at "systems" overall.

Jen Gottemoller, First Fight Nebraska: LB 497 gives us a chance to take a look at funding early childhood within the program.

Jay Sears, NSEA: Representing the 28,010 members of the Nebraska State Education Association. NSEA supports LB 497 and the amendment to rename the fund. This is the right time to complete a study of how the lottery fund is used to support education.

Opponents:

None.

Neutral Testimony:

Tip O'Neill, AICUN: Nebraska rates 40th in the country in the provisioning of need-based scholarships. Nebraska Opportunity Grant program provides support for 14,000 students, \$14 million per year. With the private colleges, this is the only state source for students who attend private colleges. With the possibility of the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program sunseting, we were filled with consternation at that aspect.

Ron Withem, U of Nebraska: LB 849 was heard 22 years ago on March 11, 1991. Dennis Baack of the Nebraska Community College Association asked that his organization join the University with support of the study.

Marshall Hill, CCPE: The Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education had early concerns about the bill, but support the \$8.8 million of lottery and \$6 million of General Fund for scholarship for needy students. It serves about 14,000 students per year with about \$1,000 per year. It is appropriate for the State to re-examine what the State does with the lottery funds.

Jan McKenzie, Nebraska Association for the Gifted: The NAG was excited about the \$3.2 million per year coming out of the lottery fund for grants for schools to offer high ability learners. NAG has 348 members. Moving from general funds to this fund seems appropriate for them. Supports differentiated learning for students.

Q (Kowloski): What summer programming does the NAG offer?

A: The NAG does not offer direct programming, but the Minden-area summer camp and other school districts offer similar programs.

Q (Kowloski): Does it involve the Nebraska Scholars Institute?

A: I'm not sure.

Q (Davis): Where do your statistics come from and why do they differ so much from Iowa's? Some of the statistics just don't add up.

A: The state NAG Coordinator provided the statistics.

Senator Sullivan to close.

Senator Sullivan looks forward to the study to : 1) set priorities for the lottery; 2) set direction; and 3) set continuity for the fund over time.