

STEM Action Center Board | 2013

STEM Action Center Board Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2013 • 3:00pm
CONFERENCE CALL

Members Present:	Spencer Eccles, Robert Brems, Blair Carruth, Stan Lockhart, Bert VanderHeiden, Martell Menlove, Gene Levinson
Members Absent:	Jeff Nelson, Brad Rencher, Christine Kearn, Mark Openshaw
Staff:	Sophia DiCaro, Vince Mikolay, Meredith Mannebach, Sue Redington, Brian Farr
Visitors:	Diana Suddreth, Mitchell Jorgensen

Welcome & Approval of Minutes

Spencer Eccles, in place of the STEM Action Center Board Chairman, Jeff Nelson (who was unable to attend), did a roll call, called the meeting to order, welcomed the group and asked the board members to approve the minutes from the meeting.

I. Approve Minutes

MOTION: ROBERT BREMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES, SECONDED BY BLAIR CARRUTH. THE MOTION WAS UNANAMOUSLY APPROVED.

II. Project Update

a) Introduction

Meredith Mannebach, STEM Action Center Program Manager, introduced the new Utah State Office of Education STEM Liaison, Mitchell Jorgensen.

b) Pilot Update

Meredith Mannebach discussed how the STEM Action Center is currently in the process of gathering data from evaluations completed by students and teachers. Utah State University (USU) is gathering the data and will generate a succinct report for the Utah Legislature. Initial feedback has been positive. Schools will have the option to continue using the software if they feel it has been successful; otherwise they can switch to a different one. Vince Mikolay, GOED Managing Director, noted that the schools who have participated in the pilot will receive priority in helping to make the decisions regarding which math technology software will be implemented in their schools.

According to the data USU has gathered thus far, teachers expressed concerns about three of the nine technologies involved in the RFP. Teachers gave a 0% approval rating for one specific software and chose not to use that program, mostly because it did not align

with the Utah Common Core. USU is waiting for more teachers to respond and the data is still in its draft form.

Spencer Eccles, Board Vice-Chair, asked for ideas from the board to help motivate teachers to respond to the surveys. Stan Lockhart suggests we tie the teachers' ability to use the technology to their willingness to respond to the surveys. Spencer likes the idea and suggests that we present Stan's idea to the principals at the end of the year. Meredith Mannebach says USU also suggests incentivizing teachers to respond to surveys with monetary rewards like gift cards. The STEM Action Center opted not to do this. Spencer Eccles asked Meredith and her team to review the budget in case that is something the board would like to do.

Martell Menlove says he can possibly have some influence on this problem, and expresses his willingness to make contacts. Meredith offers to email him a list of principals and superintendents. Spencer expresses his support for this course of action.

c) RFP Update

The RFP is now closed. The STEM Action Center is waiting for two more evaluators to submit scores before the final evaluation can be completed. The RFP winners will be announced in December. By the end of December, the STEM Action Center plans to be in the process of signing contracts with vendors.

Stan Lockhart asks Spencer Eccles to discuss the rumor about the \$4.5 million the Governor has placed in his budget. Spencer says \$3 million one-time money was put aside for the STEM Action Center, in addition to the ongoing \$1.5 million. Stan Lockhart expressed his concerns about the sustainability of the ongoing expenses for the technologies.

Spencer Eccles says he cannot speak to that concern with complete certainty at this point. He continues and says that although the funds are encumbered, the money for the STEM Action Center will need to last through FY 2015 into FY 2016, which will allow time to evaluate the programs. At that point Spencer says the STEM Action Center will know what to request from the legislature in the future.

Martell Menlove addressed the issue of schools not applying for the math pilot (back in August). Many of our Utah schools lack the hardware and infrastructure necessary to implement the programs for the pilot or the platform to use the software in the schools. Spencer Eccles suggests enlisting the Fundraising Committee to help get hardware into schools. Meredith responded saying the STEM Action Center didn't initially track that data, but we could do a principal survey. Mitchell Jorgensen, USOE STEM Liaison, was then asked to be the lead on this project. Mitchell will work with other staff members at USOE and the STEM Action Center to evaluate the barriers (like the lack of hardware) that may prevent schools from participating and implementing math technology software into their curriculum.

d) Competition Grants

Sue Redington, STEM Action Center Program Coordinator, said the grant application deadline closed on November 15, 2013. The grants will hopefully be handed out at the end of December. They had 124 applicants - 45 were individual students and 78 were team applications, which totaled to a request of \$170,000. The size of the grants was up to \$2,500 for teams and up to \$500 for an individual. Students had to describe the project and discuss their need for the funding. It is designed to be a post-performance grant, so the student will need to submit original receipts for reimbursement.

A grant review committee of 15 people was created and that committee has helped to create a grading rubric for the applications. Currently, no money has been awarded because the applications are still under review by the committee. Unfortunately, a rubric was not provided with the application this year. Next year the application and rubric will be provided to applicants at the beginning of the process. Winners can be posted on the website by the names of their schools.

e) Working Group Reports

Fundraising and Media Campaign:

Stan Lockhart spent the past couple weeks meeting with companies requesting contributions. The STEM Action Center's 18-month media campaign will kick off January 29 and Stan would like the STEM Action Center Board and the Governor to be involved. Monetary commitments from companies are coming in as the campaign solidifies. The campaign elicits an emotional response. Lane Beattie of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce expressed his support and willingness to help with the fundraising campaign.

Spencer Eccles says there are two phases of fundraising, the "build phase" and the "sustainability phase" (where they want to see results before they give more). Spencer suggested that it be a project-oriented fundraiser, so results are visible. Stan committed to organize the fundraiser into specific subsets and expresses his gratitude for how supportive the STEM Action Center staff has been. The overall response from businesses and non-profit organizations toward the fundraiser has been positive.

Spencer Eccles noted that in the governor's budget for the STEM Action Center, there is a charitable contributions section which totals \$1 million. Sophia DiCaro, GOED Deputy Director, explains that the money can't be accepted unless and until it is appropriated by the legislature. This money is in addition to the \$3 million one-time state dollars.

Professional Development:

Meredith Mannebach gave a brief update on the professional development pilot. Three vendors (all vendors who approached the STEM Action Center) have created a program in which teachers from four districts will be participate (Alpine, Jordan, Weber and Davis

Districts will be involved). The development will occur over the next three months with an evaluation at the end.

Meredith Mannebach proposed the idea to create a STEM certificate or endorsement for teachers. A meeting will be set with Senator Howard Stephenson and other education and business leaders for further discussion in early January.

The Professional Development Pilot is at a good place and it continues to move forward as we have 3 day-long trainings scheduled with the teachers in the pilot. The pilot is comprised of a small group, which will ideally result in students wanting to take more math classes, thus overcoming a barrier to continuing onto STEM-related classes and careers. Currently, the Governor has not carved out a piece of the budget for professional development. Stan Lockhart and Martell Menlove would like to request money from the legislature for professional development programs.

Spencer Eccles spoke about the importance of allocating the \$3 million given by the Governor prudently. The STEM initiative is an extension of the State School Board of Education and Utah State Office of Education, and the intent language in the budget for the current year is focused around that – specifically the K-12 years. Spencer suggested the STEM Action Center team should collaborate with the three other organizations to create one-pagers that discuss and clarifies the STEM budget priorities.

Spencer reiterates the aforementioned governor's budget, including anticipated donations. Spencer requests that Stan Lockhart bring a report of his fundraising committee's priorities and progress to help the board understand the specific needs and uses for the funds, so budgeting and fundraising can be specific and project-centered. Spencer requests further discussion on how to fund the winners of competitions as they need more funds to continue to compete at the next levels.

Vince Mikolay, GOED Managing Director, closed the meeting by discussing the status of the vacant Executive Director position. Vince assured the board that they have some candidates in the pipeline and are continuing to collect resumes from external candidates to fill the executive director position.

MOTION: SPENCER ECCLES MOTIONS TO ADJORN THE MEETING. THE MOTION IS SECONDED BY ROB BREMS. THE MOTION IS UNANAMOUSLY APPROVED.