

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
March 11, 2010
Montana State Capitol - Helena, Montana

The March 11, 2010 meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by Governor Brian Schweitzer.

ROLL CALL

Members present were: Regents Stephen Barrett, Lynn Morrison-Hamilton, Angela McLean and Board of Public Education members Patty Myers, Cal Gilbert, Sharon Carroll, and John Edwards. Ex-officio members present were: Governor Brian Schweitzer, Superintendent Denise Juneau, and Commissioner Sheila Stearns.

MINUTES

Upon motion made and seconded, the minutes from the November 12, 2009 Board of Education meeting were unanimously approved as written.

INTRODUCTIONS

Governor Schweitzer introduced Angela McLean as a new member of the Board of Regents and Erin Williams as a new member of the Board of Public Education.

OPENING COMMENTS

Governor Schweitzer opened with comments on the challenging budget times the state of Montana is going through. He stated his budget office was challenging every expense, asking state employees to do more with less and at the same time trying to keep the level of services the same. Montana is still in the black and trying to stay there.

State government's function is about 85% educate, medicate, and incarcerate. These are the critical functions of state government. Education is the most critical portion. The opportunities available are not achievable without education. Montana is competing nationally as well as globally. Our task is to continue to deliver an education system that is second to none.

Patty Myers, chairperson of the Board of Public Education thanked Angela McLean for her service on the Board and stated that she will be missed.

Angela McLean thanked the governor for considering her for membership on the Board of Regents. She stated it was a blessing to work with the Board of Public Education members and make policies that impact the kids they serve.

Patty Myers reported that the Board of Public Education has a major job in front of them. She and Dennis Parman are co-chairing the Chapter 55 task force. They are looking at the accreditation standards for K-12 schools. They have always looked at input standards for accreditation and now are looking at outcome standards. What should students be provided to get an adequate education? They will be looking at the requirements of teacher education programs and teacher licensure issues. OCHE will be contacted and

become part of the group. Higher education is working with them on the virtual high school academy.

Superintendent Juneau reported that the OPI is working on realignment of the OPI structure for more efficiency. The OPI is partnering with people across the state, making connections, and working on a seamless education system. They are having discussions about teacher evaluations, turn around school efforts and working to make sure efforts are coordinated at the state level.

Governor Schweitzer introduced Steve Barrett, chairman of the Board of Regents and acknowledged that they had just hired a new president at MSU in Bozeman, and now will need new presidents at MSU-Billings and the University of Montana in Missoula.

Regent Barrett thanked the Governor for sending Angela McLean to the Board of Regents. He stated that in the past three years there had been little or no tuition increases in the university system and Montana is lucky to have administrators that care about education.

Regent Barrett directed the board to a slide on young adult degree attainment, which showed Montana at 35%, the USA at 39% and leading nations at 55%. Enrollment in the Montana University system is the highest in history with an increase of 15% since 1999. Montana has to stay on this path if we want to raise degree attainment. Distance learning is one way to increase enrollment. Currently 17% of MUS enrollment is in distance learning. The Board of Regents is looking more toward increasing college degrees not college loans.

RECOGNITION

Governor Schweitzer recognized Steve Meloy for his 30 years of service to the state of Montana with the award of his 30 year pin. This is Mr. Meloy's 10th year as executive secretary of the Board of Public Education.

Mr. Meloy thanked the Governor for the service pin and stated that he had worked for hundreds of boards and commission members over the years, but had never worked with a better bunch of people.

AGENDA ITEM #1: RACE TO THE TOP

Dan Villa, the Governor's education advisor stated that Montana did not apply for Race to the Top funds in the first round. He reported that the Superintendent Juneau and the Governor's office had been working on finding the means and content to move forward. They have been considering how we look at accreditation, input versus output, licensing and other education issues. The specifics of the grant are daunting.

Governor Schweitzer discussed the next steps starting with how to invest in the best education system in the world. Every state uses a different model. Most states have sales taxes, income taxes, and property taxes. Colorado was a finalist in the first Race to the Top application process. The grant is a difficult competitive challenge. He stated Secretary Duncan needs to understand we do business differently and have different challenges. One size does not fit all. Governor Schweitzer expressed his hope that this time we have the opportunity to get one time dollars for one time fixes. Our quest is to find funds for education. Montana's future, in part, is based on natural resources, in part based on technology to store CO2. The largest coal producer in Wyoming is proposing to move a portion of its operation to Montana. If it goes through, in about seven years the legislature will have more dollars to start with.

All of those occupations will need a great education. Montana needs a Board of Education that is prepared for the future and the resources to pay for it. Race for the Top dollars would be nice but not permanent. Governor Schweitzer announced that Montana is applying for Race to the Top funding. We will raise the money privately to make the application. It's expensive and time consuming to make the application. We don't know if or how much money we would get, but will make a shot at it.

Superintendent Juneau stated that because of four year cycles in state elected offices, she feels a sense of urgency to create policy in an aggressive manner. Schools are initiating innovative programs and looking for ways to do more. Montanans need to work collaboratively to support teachers. No other profession is asked to do so much for so little and we need to support teachers in the classroom. The OPI is working on turning around the lowest performing schools in the state.

Superintendent Juneau reported that she is engaging in difficult and challenging discussions with school districts and other education partners. They have a good idea of where and how they need to go and now need to get the funds to pursue change more aggressively. The OPI will continue its work with or without success of the Race to the Top application. Superintendent Juneau stated that she is looking forward to working with the education partners on the application and a reminder that they need to keep students in the schools as the focus.

AGENDA ITEM #2: COLLEGE!NOW

Mary Moe provided an update on College!Now. Ms. Moe stated that Montana needs to catch up with the nation and nation needs to catch up with the world in higher education degrees. Montana received funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education and an investment by HB 645. Both have invested approximately 2 million dollars each in the two-year education initiative. Montana has three community colleges, five colleges of technology and seven tribal colleges, plus UM Northern and UM Western which also have two-year degrees.

In Montana 25% attend two-year colleges. In other western states 50% attend. Less than 2.5% of Montana high school students are engaged in dual enrollment. This is the lowest percentage in the western states.

Montana cannot afford to keep doing business as usual in higher education. Montana needs two- year and four-year programs to think of themselves as part of the same system. They need to learn how to work and share better so they can operate as efficiently as possible. Montana needs to coordinate curriculum, share technological resources, and align business practices.

Ms. Moe outlined four strategies that College!Now is going to focus on:

Strategy 1: Bring the community college mission to all two-year colleges to improve access, especially for target populations.

Strategy 2: Deploy Montana's two-year colleges as regional hubs for adult access, high school to college transitions and work workforce responsiveness.

In connection with Strategy 2, transition from high school to college has three main goals:

- Communicating clearly about college readiness

- Providing pathways for successful transition from high school to college
- Create a more equitable, affordable, high-quality dual enrollment landscape

Strategy 3: Coordinate curriculum and technology to expand access, promote readiness and completion, and improve efficiencies.

Strategy 4: Develop performance-based funding strategies.

The main focus of College!Now’s communication strategy is to promote two-year education.

They also want to offer basic two-year college services on all two-year campuses, designate each two-year college as the regional hub for dual enrollment, workforce development, adult access, and affordable beginnings to four-year degrees. College!Now intends to use technology to expand access for students and create savings for two-year colleges. They would like to see funding based on student progress and success, not just enrollment.

Commissioner Stearns commented that common course numbering is being addressed, but there are still disagreements on related instruction. The campuses need to get together on what is needed for the courses. They know what they need to do, but it’s not easy.

Ms. Moe stated that each individual campus was responding to the needs of their community, but when we try a systemic approach state wide we need to think about students from a statewide perspective. Montana also needs programs transitioning students from high school to college with standard practices for advanced placement (AP), technology preparation, and dual enrollment. In order for students to figure out what they need to take in high school, they need to know what’s ahead of them in college.

AP courses are an excellent way to get college credit while in high school. Some students are able to get most of their first year college credits while still in high school. We need to work together to create a more equitable, affordable, high quality, dual enrollment landscape with consistent pricing, quality controls, online access, policies and practices to support student success.

The virtual community college focuses on the adult population and high school students. They are currently preparing for Montana’s digital campus for next fall. They also want high school students to be aware of Montana digital academy. There are AP courses that students can take through that venue. They are promoting course-sharing and resource-sharing through a consortium approach to the “virtual community college” featuring adult friendly programming and dual enrollment opportunities.

They are also working on letting students enrolled at one campus take on-line courses through a different campus without going outside their campus structure. Common course numbering has simplified this process.

Mr. Meloy asked if Ms. Moe had mentioned common core. The latest draft of the math and language arts standards are out and he wondered if she was optimistic that the common core initiative will fold in with the college readiness piece.

Ms. Moe replied that she was taken aback by the common core. It was coming out in volumes and at great speed. She recognizes the need to identify those standards that are unique for Montana.

Commissioner Stearns stated that the national common core standards are being led by the chief state school officers organization and the governor's association. They had a chance last fall with first draft to make suggestions on math and writing, some of which were picked up on the national level.

Mr. Meloy stated that the expectation is high that Montana adopt the standards. It is being advertised as a part of college readiness and is tied to Race to the Top.

Governor Schweitzer stated that these were the challenges facing the Board of Public Education and Board of Regents. The administration in Washington DC is committed to reforming education. His office will keep an eye on Washington DC and help where they can.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Governor Schweitzer opened the meeting up for public comment.

Norma Bixby, representing the Montana American Indian Education Association reported that on a conference call with the US Department of Education, good ideas were shared for improving Indian Education, however they are still taking about the same things 30 years ago.

She stated that this is our window of opportunity. Montana needs to put policies and laws in place that make sure American Indian children have comparable educational opportunities. Montana is making changes and involving communities and parents in the discussions. We need to involve and communicate with Indian leaders and Indian educators and have them part of the process. She invited Ms. Moe to come to a MACIE meeting to share her comments with Indian leadership.

MIEA and MACIE want to listen and hear from Indian parents and students. Ms. Bixby invited the board to listening session on April 8 and 11th. She thanked Superintendent Juneau for going out and listening to the Indian communities.

Eric Feaver, representing MEA-MFT assured the board that MEA-MFT was determined to make Race to the Top work. He stated his hope that Secretary Duncan would understand we're not an urban area and need to do it our way with our people on the ground in education in Montana. He is hopeful that Montana's application will have a positive impact on their criteria. One size doesn't fit all. We may be moving toward adopting the national standards, but can't surrender what we hold near and dear.

Superintendent Juneau commented that what OPI was already doing with school improvement grants is a basis in the application. Class 8 licensure took a long time to get together and provides a positive step forward. The role of K-12 education cannot just be to send kids off to college. First they have to graduate from high school. We have to recognize that there are careers and lifestyles that don't require college and keep in mind that not every one will go to college.

With no further public comment Patty Myers moved to adjourn and Regent Barrett seconded the motion. Upon motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

/s/ Denise Juneau

Denise Juneau, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Secretary to the Board of Education