

Special Education Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes

Comfort Suites of Helena

September 12-13, 2019

Members in Attendance: JP Williams, Millie Armstrong, Darrel Hannum, Ron Ream, Jody Bartz, Mandy Countryman, Chad Berg, Tina Blair, Shawn Sonsteng (Thursday only), David Richards, Wendy Studd (Thursday morning only) and Heather Denny

Excused Members: Kyla Rock, Robin Farrell

Non-Members in Attendance: Frank Podobnik, Dick Trerise, John Copenhaver, Jule Walker, Anne Rainey, Danni McCarthy, Jenifer Cline, Allyson Alexander, Jennifer Nettleton, Annette Young, Kelley Brown

Thursday, September 13, 2018

Welcome:

Heather Denny, incoming Chair, was excused for the beginning of the meeting. No other executive team members were present. In absence of an executive team member, Frank Podobnik called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. The Panel members and guests introduced themselves. Dick Trerise explained that we needed to hold elections immediately in order to have a presiding officer. He asked them to change the draft agenda to reflect moving the elections to immediately after the Call to Order and Introductions.

The Panel reviewed the Proposed Agenda. Dave Richards moved to accept the Proposed Agenda with the change of moving elections, Darrel Hannum seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Elections:

Dick gave a brief overview of the positions that needed to be elected. Jody Bartz noted that she is not interested in serving in a position right now. Dave Richards nominated JP Williams for Vice Chair, Jody Bartz seconded the motion, and the motion passed. Darrel Hannum nominated Tina Blair for Secretary, Jody Bartz seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

JP Williams, as the newly elected Vice Chair, began presiding over the meeting.

Welcome cont.

The Panel reviewed the minutes of the May 2-3, 2019, meeting. Tina Blair noted that she was listed as both present and excused, she asked that she only be listed as present as the excusal was for the January meeting. Dave Richards moved to accept the minutes with that change, Jody Bartz seconded the motion and the motion passed. The minutes were approved with the change of removing Tina Blair from the list of excused members.

Dick explained that normally the elections happen in June, but because of Marlene being out sick, and his surgery, the June meeting didn't happen.

Review of Office Functions/Activities

Frank Podobnik informed the Panel that there is an ongoing change within the office, which includes some reorganization. He explained that what used to be the Special Education Division is now the Student Support Services Division, and encompasses Special Education, Gifted and Talented, and the newly created Early Childhood Division.

Frank and Dick gave a background on the office, and distributed a handout of Student Support Services Activities.

The List of Division Activities is included with the minutes.

Advisory Panel Orientation

John Copenhaver, Executive Director, Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE), Utah State University, conducted the Montana State Special Education Advisory Panel Annual Orientation.

John reviewed the agenda and materials for the orientation with the Panel members. Following are the items included in the orientation:

- Purpose for the Advisory Panel under IDEA
- IDEA Regulations Regarding the Advisory Panel
- Required Membership of the Panel
- Working as an Advisory Panel, not an Advocacy Group
- Major Functions of the Panel under IDEA
- Panel Meeting Procedures—Open Meeting Requirements
- Engaging Members Who Are Participating Virtually
- The Panel's Role Regarding SPP, APR and SSIP, and Results Driven Accountability
- The Relationship between Part C of IDEA and Part B of IDEA
- Hot Topics in Special Education and their Possible Impact on the Advisory Panel
- Establishing Annual Panel Priorities and Strategic Planning

At the close of the orientation, the meeting closed for the day.

Friday, September 14, 2019

Heather Denny, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The Panel members and guests introduced themselves.

Announcements

Dick Trerise told the Panel that Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK) has permanently closed. The Parent Center from South Dakota will begin providing services to Montana families in October, and a new grant will be issued sometime in the spring.

OPI Up-Date

Jule Walker, Deputy Superintendent for Operations, presented an OPI Up-Date for the Panel. Frank gave a brief introduction of Jule, mentioning that she is his direct boss, and that we are blessed to have her on our team as she is a terrific ally.

Jule thanked Frank for his service, and the Panel for their commitment to education and students with special needs.

Jule said that the district/school SBAC Reports will be released at the end of the month, and ESSA Report Cards should be out in December.

She mentioned that Title is having an Audit by the US Dept of Education – the first one in seven years.

Perkins V will be rolling out next fall, which will have implications for CTE.

Jule discussed HB 351 – Transformational and Personalized Learning and HB 387 – Advanced Opportunities.

She talked about the DPHHS Rules about Lead in the water for schools, and mentioned that the OPI had put out a survey to schools. The OPI is working closely with DPHHS on how to move forward.

She mentioned that there was discussion at the Interim Committee about the “opt out” option for Statewide Testing. She made it clear that in Montana, we do not have the option to opt out, except for a medical emergency.

Chad Berg asked her about HB 640 – reporting Child Sex Abuse. He mentioned that it is now a felony not to report, and asked Jule if OPI was going to be issuing any guidance or statements about it. Jule did not have any information to provide at the time, but would find out and let the Panel know when she had any information.

Special Education Division Report

Frank Podobnik gave an update on the CTE and Social Studies standards that are being written – he encouraged the Panel to be a part of the groups that are reviewing those. He discussed the Transformational Learning bill, and that it initially removed the ability to monitor Charter Schools (which we do not have currently in Montana), but said that language did not make it into the Transformational Learning Plan.

Frank said the Dyslexia bill is in effect. Special Education is working jointly with the CSI division to ensure information about screening tools is getting disseminated.

The Division has multiple new staff. Chris McCrea is a School Improvement Specialist, Allyson Alexander is working on MTSS and is our Gifted and Talented Specialist, and Jennifer Nettleton is a Special Education Content Specialist. It was announced that Marlene Wallis is retiring in October. Frank also announced that he is leaving at the end of September. His position was advertised and closes on September 17.

Call for Public Comments

Heather Denny, Chairperson, made the Call for Public Comments. There were no public comments.

Level of Determination, Differentiated Monitoring Report, State Systemic Improvement Plan

The Annual Performance Report (APR) is submitted in February of every year. It will be discussed at the January meeting. Based on the data reported in the APR, and various other data points, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) makes a determination on whether the state is meeting the requirements of IDEA. Montana met requirements. The letter is included in the packet.

Dick gave a brief overview of the Differentiated Monitoring Report, which is included in the packet.

Dick discussed the current State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and talked to the Panel about Montana's Student Identified Measurable Result (SiMR). Currently, Montana's SiMR is to improve the high school completion rate for Native American students. That has become an integral part of the ESSA plan as well, and is now an office wide initiative. He talked about the fact that OSEP is proposing to start including the SSIP in their determinations. If they do that, Montana may look at changing their SiMR. Frank mentioned he would like to see the focus shift to Early Childhood Education. He would like the panel to think about what they would like to focus on. Dick asked for a motion to encourage the office to explore changing the SiMR. Darrel Hannum made the motion, and Chad Berg seconded. The vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Frank mentioned that Montana is really well thought of by OSEP.

Meeting Dates

The next meeting is scheduled for January 23-24, 2020.

Adjourn

Chad Berg moved to adjourn the meeting, Tina Blair seconded the motion and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.