



STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MEETING NOTES—January 20, 2021

Welcome: Call the Meeting to Order—Chairperson JP Williams

Introductions of Members, Staff and Visitors were made.

Members Present: JP Williams, Mandy Countryman, Kyla Rock, Millie Armstrong, Chad Berg, Opal Besaw, Darrel Hannum, Dave Richards, Wendy Studt, Jody Bartz, Shawn Sonsteng, Heather Denny, Nicole Thuotte, Robin Farrell,

Staff Present: Kristie Sears, Anne Rainey, Jenifer Cline, Ty House, Danni McCarthy, Dale Kimmet, Chris McCrea, Annette Young, Colet Bartow, Julie Murgel, Jessie Counts, Yvonne Fields, Jennifer Nettleton

Public Member: Ally Seneczko

Opal Besaw, the new student representative was introduced. She stated she was excited to give her input as a student for herself and her friends to help make the education system better.

Review/Approve the Proposed Agenda— (Action Item)

Proposed: Darrel Hannum

2nd: Jody Bartz

Approved: Approved

Review/Approve Minutes of September Meeting— (Action Item)

Proposed: Chad Berg

2nd: Robin Farrell

Approved: Approved

Old business was reviewed. Acknowledged that Opal Besaw was added as the requested Student Panel member and the Panel Bi Laws allow the continuation of virtual meetings.

Jenifer Cline gave an overview of what to expect during the discussion of the APR Review and how the Power Point presentation relates to the APR Report. The role of the panel is to give feedback on how the State is doing so it can be reported to the Superintendent.

Anne Rainey presented the APR Power Point to the Panel.

Panel Comment about the APR Report: JP Williams commented that he liked the new look of the APR presentation.

Slide 7A.1 and 7A.2 and 7B.1 and 7B.2 numbers and graph were wrong and needs to be corrected. Anne will correct the slide and send out the Power Point with the correction.

10:30-10:45 BREAK

Anne Rainey continued a review of the APR data with the Panel.

Darrel Hannum asked if there was a way to get away from so many surveys. Anne stated that getting different systems to converge would be a barrier.

Darrel Hannum stated that a concern with Native American students is they tend to be a transient population. Concerned at how this impacts different indicators.

Heather Denny stated that transient students can be caused by a difference in services offered by districts, specifically services for homeless.

Dave Richards asked how many homeless in MT.

Opal Besaw asked if Heather Denny would look over some of her work reporting on homelessness in the Flathead Valley.

Dave Richards asked who is helping kids get out of homelessness. Yes. There is fear that the numbers will increase during the pandemic.

Anne Rainey discussed with the Panel the different indicators that are being changed and how they will change.

Concerns about students struggling with online learning were raised. Opal Besaw, the student representative said, it has actually been very helpful for her. The Panel also discussed the mental health challenges of remote learning.

Letter of Support for APR Submittal -Jenifer Cline– Action Item

Proposed: Dave Richards

2nd: Chad Berg

Approved: Approved

Call was made for public comment-no comments were made.

12:00 Lunch Break

Another call for public comment was made: Ally Seneczko spoke regarding her position as a student and family advocate that works with multiple agencies across MT.

New visitors not attending the morning session were introduced.

Colet Bartow discussed November adoption of 5 new standards by the board of education. That means July 1, 2021 is the new implementation. Colet showed the panel where to locate the new content standards. JP expressed excitement for the new computer science requirements.

School Innovation & Improvement – Julie Murgel, Senior Manager at OPI spoke about her role at OPI with School Innovation & Improvement. Julie discussed innovations and new online procedures that were developed to be able to serve families, students and educators in this new virtual environment.

Student Support Services – Jessie Counts, Senior Manager discussed the activities of her department.

Jenifer Cline discussed staffing updates, looking at restructuring duties and realigning work to increase efficiencies. Jenifer stated that Dale Kimmet will be retiring soon, and Dick Trerise retired in December leaving two open managerial positions.

Monitoring staff has been looking for a new system to use to store the data and will bring recommendations to the superintendent.

Dave Richards requested a copy of the organizational chart for OPI.

OSEP Monitoring discussed.

Ashley McGrath discussed MT strategic waivers that the state is seeking. The US Dept. of Education must make the decision to approve.

Dave Richards asked if the waivers are to avoid State testing and if so, are we missing out on data that can show the impact of remote learning. Because of the variable of Covid there really is no standard condition of learning right now so OPI is seeking to provide schools more flexibility.

Opal shared her personal experience with testing and the ACT during a pandemic.

Yvonne Fields discussed ESSA and alternate assessments and the 1% cap. Even if accommodations were given there is still a population that needs a modified curriculum.

Opal asked if the State goes over the 1% Cap can the State say no to a student request for accommodations. The answer was no. The state would apply for a waiver.

Proposed an additional meeting for budget only ½ day before March 1, 2021.

Discussed the Panel agenda items for April/May meeting.

Panel members were encouraged to reach out to Ty House for Certificate of Renewal Units.

Proposed Adjourn: Darrel Hannum

2nd: Jody Bartz

Approved: Approved

Adjourned