



**STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes—January 8-9, 2024**  
**Zoom Meeting both days**

- **Members In Attendance:** Jennifer Schoffer-Closson, Marisa Britton-Bostwick, Lisa Fant, Christa Gabriel, Norah Barney, Michael Peck, Cindy Galbavy, Deva McNiven, Christina Petersen, Sandy Cade, Theresa Baldry, Brandi Loch, Mildred Armstrong, Vena Dagnell, Rebekah Serrine
- **Members Absent:** Chad Berg
- **Guests Present:** Anne Rainey (OPI), Danni McCarthy (OPI), Kelley Brown (OPI), Patrick Cates (OPI)

**Meeting was called to order at 9:00a.m.**

**Welcome: Call the Meeting to Order – Jennifer Schoffer-Closson, Chair**

- Introductions: Members and guests
- Establish Quorum
- ♦ Quorum established.
- Review the Proposed Agenda (**Action Item**)
- ♦ Motion to approve: Theresa Baldry
- ♦ Second: Lisa Fant
- ♦ Motion Carried
- Review and Approve Minutes of October 11 and 12, 2023 with Changes (**Action Item**)
- ♦ Motion to approve with changes: Norah Barney
- ♦ Second: Marisa Britton-Bostwick
- ♦ Motion Carried
- Announcements (if needed)
- Opal Besaw won the 2023 Linda Gonzales Award. Link can be found on the agenda

**2022 Annual Performance Report (APR) – Anne Rainey**

- Anne discussed 17 Indicators - It is important the Panel understand the report.

Questions regarding the APR can be addressed to Danni McCarthy at [dmccarthy@mt.gov](mailto:dmccarthy@mt.gov) or (406) 444-0452

**Break – 10:50 – 11:05**



Continued discussing Indicators upon return from break.

Indicator 14 – Two questions were changed on the survey. New targets need to be set. Panel is to suggest targets.

<u>Targets</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
A (Enrolled in Higher Education)	13.08	13.18	13.28
B (A + Competitive Employment)	63.76	63.86	63.96
C (A + B + other post-secondary Education or employment)	79.03	79.50	80.00

*\*Please see the attached Part B FFY2020-2025 SPP/APR Indicator for exact wording on Indicator 14.*

Jennifer Schoffer Closson wants to see growth in Target C - post secondary education or employment.

Danni McCarthy- Working with the agencies secondary transition specialist to increase the knowledge in this area.

**Motion needed on Targets (Action Item)**

Deva McNiven made a motion.

Sandy Cade 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion

Motion carried.

The Letter of Support is directed to Danni McCarthy as our Director and signed by the Panel Chair stating that the Panel met, reviewed, and discussed the Part B State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (APR) for FFY2022.

**Motion needed for Jennifer Schoffer Closson, Panel Chair to sign Letter of Support (Action Item)**

Mildred Armstrong made motion.

Lisa Fant 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion.

Motion carried.

**Break – skipped**

**By-Law Discussion**

Are there any changes wanted, or can we make a motion to approve?



Jennifer Schoffer Closson wants to know if the Panel has the flexibility to have Zoom meetings and if the Superintendent has to approve. Anne assumes the Superintendent approves the type of meeting when she approves the agenda.

Jennifer Schoffer Closson asked if the Secretary position had been removed from the By-Laws. The answer was no. It was left in case the Chair and Vice-Chair could not be there, as happened last year. The Secretary can then run the meeting.

The Panel was going to reach out to Rebecca Richardson to see if she wanted to appoint someone under Number 1 (Individuals with Disabilities) and Number 3 (Parents of children with disabilities). Add either or both.

Number 9 is Vocational, community or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities. Anne and Danni talked about Theresa Baldry being in that position as she is with the Rural Institute. However, Patrick wants a business owner in that position. Theresa raised her hand and said she is a business owner. She owns a company called See Able. It was not specified. She provides vocational rehabilitation services. Theresa will move into this position.

### **Marisa made a motion for By-Law changes**

#### **Cindy 2<sup>nd</sup> motion**

#### **Motion carried**

### **Break until 12:15 when Parick is scheduled**

Patrick discussed Workgroups and Priority Discussion

Group 1: HB233: Funding and services for students through age 21

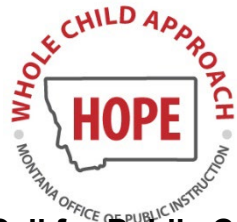
Theresa Baldry – Chair  
Jennifer Schoffer Closson  
Deva McNiven  
Rebekah Serrine  
Mildred Armstrong

Group 2: HB352: Targeted interventions to support 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency

Michael Peck – Chair  
Norah Barney  
Cindy Galbavy  
Vena Dagnell  
Sandy Cade

Group 3: Shortened school day and alternatives to suspension

Lisa Fant – Chair  
Marisa Britton-Bostwick  
Chad Berg  
Christina Petersen  
Christa Gabriel  
Brandi Loch



**Call for Public Comments (The chair of the panel may, at their discretion, allow public comment during the course of the meeting.)**

Deva McNiven asked if the Panel can comment or if it is just meant for people outside the Panel. Danni said outside, but Patrick said we could, and Danni said as long as it is understood that the Panel does not comment, and the Public Comment is put in the notes.

In the October 2023 meeting Deva said it was stated that there are very few lawsuits against the state or districts which she applauds, and thinks is wonderful. The thing she wanted to bring to attention is that many of the things that could be prosecuted, for lack of a better word, are either being placated or condescended or outright intimidated and parents don't feel like they will be heard or that they have that avenue or that there will be repercussions to them doing that and, "while I wish that wasn't the avenue parents had to take I believe those concerns should not be shoved under the table just because we don't have a million lawsuits coming to our state." Deva has been told by many different people that she should have sued her district many times over the years because her IEP's have not been fulfilled. She has chosen not to do that because she believes the people she has worked with at her local level are working hard for her students. She has a hard time prosecuting people who she believes are working for the best interests of her students. That does not change the fact they have not been receiving student services that they should have been receiving. "This is a problem with our educational system. It is not a people problem or an administrative problem. It is a problem from the very top of our country's educational system that needs to be changed and I don't think parents need to file lawsuits to be heard." If that is the only way to be heard she is going to tell people to do it. She doesn't want to be unjust, but she is afraid she will have to file a lawsuit in the next few years or even this year. That is the end of Deva McNiven's Public Comment.

All Action Items were covered.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30pm.

Meeting will resume tomorrow at 9:00a.m.



## STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

January 9, 2024

Zoom Meeting

**Members In Attendance:** Jennifer Schoffer-Closson, Marisa Britton-Bostwick, Lisa Fant, Christa Gabriel, Norah Barney, Michael Peck, Cindy Galbavy, Deva McNiven, Christina Petersen, Sandy Cade, Theresa Baldry, Brandi Loch, Rebekah Serrine, Vena Dagnell, Mildred Armstrong

**Members Absent:** Chad Berg

**Guests in Attendance:** Anne Rainey (OPI), Patrick Cates (OPI), Danni McCarthy (OPI), Kelley Brown (OPI)

**Welcome: Call the Meeting to Order—Jennifer Schoffer-Closson, Chair**

- Meeting called to order at 9:00a.m.

### Updates

**HB 619** – Expanding on through Grade 3

Lucy Beltz is working on the committee. Contract finalizing in the next week or so. Making outreach documents for parents.

**HB233** – up to districts to extend their policy to choose to educate students.

**HB352** – Early Literacy – jump start program-does not focus on Special Ed. Every student can take part in the program if they qualify.

**HB393** – Savings Account -parent steering committee. What services count, what don't. Person to hire to oversee this. They will be paid with A&B money.

### SPED Unit Updates

#### **3 Vacant Positions**

Gifted & Talented – Jenny Jarvis was hired.

Parent Liaison – Point of contact to talk with parents. Will help Mandi with Dispute Resolution.

IDEA Fiscal position – Hope to have position in place by July 1.

Montana Autism Education Project (MAEP) Position. Doug Doty's last day is March 28<sup>th</sup>.

All positions can be telework.

DMS letter from OSEP. Montana has not received their letter. Danni is hopeful to receive letter in a month, but it can be a year.

Fiscal Monitoring – OSEP wants MT to have more robust fiscal monitoring. The hope is to have it in place by August 1.



## **Agenda Items for March meeting**

State Annual application and the Interactive Spreadsheet. It could take 2 or more hours as Danni needs to get stakeholder feedback.

Critical Shortage Report can be on the agenda if it comes out.

Jennifer Schoffer Closson asked if Billie Taylor, SAM State Recruiter, would like to come and speak to Panel for 45 minutes about what she is doing for recruitment. Danni McCarthy said yes.

Went over Work Groups.

MCEC Conference – April 3-5, 2024.

**Discussion on having a hybrid meeting** - Seven panel members said they can come to Helena for the March meeting. Jennifer Schoffer Closson and Mildred Armstrong can come weather permitting.

**Kelley will get Renewal Unit Forms out.**

The Joint Stakeholder Meeting will be held April 24 and Advisory Panel meeting will be held April 25 at the same location. Weather permitting, both will be held in person.

Theresa Baldry made a motion to adjourn the meeting.  
Deva McNiven 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion  
Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am

Panel took a break until 10:05 am and returned to break out in work groups on their own.