



STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL MEETING MINUTES—May 11, 2022

8:30 Chairperson Chad Berg called the meeting to order and led introductions.

Members Present: Marisa Britton-Bostwick, Jennifer Schoffer Closson, Lucy Beltz (Vice Chair), Chad Berg (Chairperson), Kyla Rock, Millie Armstrong, Opal Besaw, JP Williams, Lacey Keller (Via Zoom), Christa Gabriel (via Zoom), Lindy Thomas (Via Zoom)

Members Not Present: Cindy Galbavy, Kim Anderson, Nicole Thuotte, Deva McNiven, Stephanie Brunner, Sue Runkle, Wendy Studt

Staff Present: Danni McCarthy, Ty House, Jessie Counts, John Gorton, Mandi Gibbs

Public Present: Sara Novak, Jenny Malloy, Karla Gedu, Vena Dognall, Maureen Stott

The OPI Staff introduced themselves.

Mandi Gibbs updated the Panel members on the Early Assistance Program and the services they offer such as IEP facilitation, mediation, and state complaints. The OPI website has reports available to the public outlining any state complaints. a

The Panel will be notified any time there is a ruling on a state complaint. Mandi Gibbs provided the Panel with the State's data on facilitations, mediation, and complaints over the last 11 months.

Approve the Proposed Agenda and the Changes— (Action Item)

Proposed: JP Williams

2nd: Jennifer Schoffer Closson

Approved: Yes

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

Proposed: Millie Armstrong

2nd: Kyla Rock

Approved: Yes

The Panel elected new officers.

Election of Vice Chair— (Action Item)

Nominations: Marisa Britton-Bostwick (Vice Chair)

Proposed: Jennifer Schoffer Closson

2nd: Millie Armstrong

Approved: Yes

Election of Secretary— (Action Item)

Nominations: Jennifer Schoffer Closson (Secretary)

Proposed: **Marisa Britton-Bostwick**

2nd: Opal Besaw

Approved: Yes

JP Williams was introduced as the new Special Education Director at the OPI.

Jessie Counts reviewed some of the great work being done at OPI and changes being made to certain regulations.

Danni McCarthy requested suggestions for new Panel members.

Millie Armstrong agreed to serve a 2nd 3-year term.

Chad Berg agreed to serve a 2nd 3-year term.

Opal Besaw agreed to serve on the Panel as she transitions to College life.

JP Williams discussed how having a student Panel representative transitioning to college will provide a wonderful road map for the Panel moving forward in aiding other Montana Special Education students to do the same.

Sue Runkle retired as the Panel, McKinney-Vento (Homeless), representative. Danni McCarthy requested suggestions on someone who could fulfill this role on the Panel.

Danni McCarthy asked of any other Panel members that will leaving. Kyla Rock indicated that she may not return.

10:15-10:30 Break

Chad Berg reviewed the action plans in place to address two main areas:

- Mental Health
- Recruitment/Retention

Chad Berg reviewed some of the items covered and discussed in the breakout meetings that occurred earlier in the year regarding Mental Health. The Panel discussed the difference in services offered in more rural districts and the need for more counselors.

A survey was sent to the Panel members serving on the Recruitment/Retention breakout group. No data from that survey is available currently. One area of need identified is a deaf/hard of hearing program for the state.

There are no dates set for the Panel subgroups to meet again at this time.

Danni McCarthy discussed an endorsement project, occupational therapy stipend program that is starting and the possibility of expanding that into other areas of need.

Solutions on how to properly staff Coops with Mental Health support staff throughout the state were discussed.

Danni McCarthy discussed upcoming budget allocations and the impact on retention and recruitment.

11:45 – 11:55 Public Comments were made by Karla Gedu and Sara Novak.

Motion to Adjourn— (Action Item)

Proposed: Jennifer Schoffer Closson

2nd: Marisa Britton-Bostwick

Approved: Yes

12:10 Adjourn