

WDE-Meeting  
Tuesday, March 12, 2019

**Welcome/Opening:** Anedra kicked off the meeting and went around the room for welcome introductions. We moved on to read the mission/vision statements, reviewed the December Minutes then opened the floor for any public comment. We did not receive any public comment.

**Mike Schumacher – Eye to Eye Presentation**

Mike talked about Eye to Eye and the services they provide, and provided some background about his struggles with dyslexia and going through school with a learning disability, which inspired him to become a part of this program. It is a community network of different thinkers who know what it means to have a learning disability. A main service provided is mentoring; college and high school students are paired up with other students who are similarly labeled. ADHD, dyslexia, etc. Each mentoring/learning session has a learning objective to it.

Also available is a young leadership training at Brown University in RI. Two people are flown out for a five day conference and train people how to run a chapter, how to share their story, how to recruit mentors and find a community of LD thinkers. They also send a staff member out to the chapters to train the mentors and make sure they are ready to help and share their stories and represent us well.

There's an 18 week social emotional curriculum with the objective to build the LD community on campus to help students avoid feeling isolated and become part of a like-minded community. These are the program objectives. Metacognition, self-advocacy, etc. These are objectives that are necessary for students with an LD or ADHD. They need these to be successful in their lives.

The average cost is \$15,000, which we want to reduce. It includes supplies and materials. We have been approached by a foundation who wants to partner with us to keep our work going. Some things we'll take on. We can offer discounted rates on speakers so they can stay involved and speak to more students. Better student tracking. We continue to track progress. I want to track students all the way from middle school to high school to see their change.

**KARI EAKINS – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

There are over 500 bills filed in this legislative session. There were about 15-20 that we followed as an agency. The education budget deficit is in the 300 million dollar range. We did not sustain any cuts to education for school funding during this session. Section 205 - It was a 9% increase. But it is in specific budget areas. Professional labor will see an increase. Non-professional labor gets a small increase. Educational materials, it's 3.35%. Energy will see a 10.8% increase.

Section 344 – Directs the Department of Health to work with the Governor on the state's Medicaid. So these will get reimbursed. They should be billed in the 2020-2021 school year. It's a process to alter the Medicaid plan in the state. So the language in the footnotes says, the modifications would allow some school based services to be provided by a school psychologist.

HB308 - Modernizing and balancing Wyoming's school funding streams. This takes some of the flow to some other funds and puts them into a state school land fund that the legislature can appropriate. They have not decided how to spend the money that has gone into this pot. But they might have at least one more pot of available for school construction, or the foundation program. They wanted it to go into a pot without having to assign it to something specific. The School Foundation Fund is funded from several sources - mineral rWyALTies. They used to go into permanent funds. Now they are going into a different account. It's a bunch of taking money from one bucket and into another. But they used to go into buckets that were not previously available. The other good thing this bill does is lift the cap on transportation and lifts the moratorium on bus leasing. We have a new bus schedule we're going to want to extend. It puts it more in line with national averages. When this bill was introduced, it lifted the cap on funding, but that was removed from the bill. So the spending cap is still in place. So we'll be promulgating rules for the \$2 million in each biennium. One million each year will be available to districts with an increase in special education funding and out of district uses.

HB297 - Reading assessment. This was a statute that was well-intentioned but caused much confusion among everyone. We have to screen for reading disabilities in K-3. It codifies the five components of reading. This is the introduction:

“Each school district should have a reading assessment that screens for dyslexia and implements an evidence based intervention program.” The third grade reading is an important benchmark. We have had folks monitoring this and schools are not really screening properly. It should be done as early as possible so any reading disorders can be recognized early and interventions can be put in place. We know also that this is going to be a shock to some districts. It will be overwhelming to some schools because they have not been doing it the way we want them to. Chief Hamel will be helping with that. People from special assessment and our data team, etc. will help. School districts will have to report information to the state. Now they actually have to report on components that we just listed.

HB 22 - teacher accountability. Had it not passed, then teacher evaluations would have to be tied to standard test scores. There will be some updates to Chapter 29 rules. We don't see this requiring any big changes in teacher evaluations. From what we can tell, school districts should be able to keep doing it the way they have been doing it. Additionally, law enforcement can ticket a person who passes a school bus.

**COMMITTEE WORK - ANEDRA SELLEY**

There are several panel position categories; the requirement is one person in each of these categories. 50% of this panel should be students or parents with disabilities. So what we want to do is recruit and have these people ready to go through the training together to lay a strong foundation. Right now I have on here, four people that represent parents of children with disabilities, one person with a disability. We have no teacher currently on the panel.

We can have people represent more than one category, however, then we need to consider if we take a vote, would there be one you'd lean towards. I'm a mother of three kids. I may have one role, but that's the one I would pick. So we have to ask for your primary role. The bylaws state the following: A term of three years with the option of serving two consecutive terms. It doesn't say who initiates that In the event that there is only one individual to represent a constituency, we may extend this to three terms. Upon a 2/3 vote of the executive and membership committees. As we rotate individuals off, we retain at least 2/3 so we have that consistency. It does go on to say, if anyone is not able to be in attendance for a regular meeting, he may send a substitute. You can send someone in your place and voting privileges will be allowed. The substitute will represent the same constituency. All terms expire at the last meeting of the year. At one point a past chair was looking at getting a Native American representative. We have not been successful at finding that. It's not a requirement, but it is an option. There are four additional categories. Custodial guardian, non-parent guardian. With the geographic representation, we're doing well.

The appointment process is as follows: Application goes to the panel secretary, then to the chair, then the members, then the program director. Then it's reviewed within two weeks. There were a list of committees that were required. An executive committee to provide oversight, help develop agendas, review the bylaws each September, etc.; a membership committee to recruit new members, look at bylaws and welcome new members, monitor attendance and note concern to the panel chair.

## **SHELLEY HAMEL – STAFFING SHORTAGES**

Apparently many years ago, the state legislative body mandated that the WDE create staffing guidelines. Last year during the session, we were re-mandated to make sure these guidelines would be created pursuant to the initial statute by January 2019. Also embedded in the work that was directed was special education. So I think that the first work that got tackled was efficiencies. What types could we achieve in the area of special education?

When I became responsible for moving the work forward, much of this work had been done, but the staffing guidelines had only been mentioned. No work had been started. Last December, 2017, there was a survey that rolled out.

I got a lot of feedback. The task force changed their position multiple times through the process. We did have all district size categories represented. The middle, small and large. We made sure we geographically covered the state and made sure we had

superintendents, business managers, etc. And they would understand how creating these guidelines would bear down on the system and delivery of services at a district level.

Part of the work was to collect a survey. It went to all districts to the special education directors. Sometimes we included business managers. We asked that they work together. We were able to pull all those together, 47 of the 48 districts responded. We almost never get that. We were pleased. It was a cross between qualitative and quantitative. We got so much information!

So we also worked with the REL, out of Denver to help. When they came on board we had completed the survey. We worked with the task force. We decided to take a look at what other states or large districts had done on this topic. We identified our role as a state agency. So what the compliance requirements were. We wanted to recognize the obligations of the school districts as far as providing services. We recognize that duh! It was a big deal. We can't place our districts in conflict with federal rules. Not all legislators understand this. We approached our task as trying to be compliant with our marching orders.

We want the best for students with disabilities. That was the voice of the directors. Business managers wanted to make sure we protected funding, even though that was not the topic of our work. As we tried to accomplish all this, we had to create a document, that if read by a legislator, would provide a basis for educating them on the federal guidelines.

We'll roll through this. We did make it by our deadline. It didn't seem to be on the radar and we wanted to format it as best we could before rolling it out. We could stand in front of any legislative body and say we did establish these guidelines.

We chose not to roll this out until the second week of February. It wasn't a hot topic item for the legislature. We didn't want a lot of attention. We were not sure how things would go with the cap. We didn't want negative attention. So we'll walk through the guideline. If you have questions as I'm going, get it out there.

We started with an executive summary. It is more concise. We created context for this work and explained what I just shared. I can scroll down to the philosophy.

The task force felt it was important to create a foundation, a philosophy, for how we approach this. Part of the philosophy was gained through our discussion, part was from looking at other states or large districts to see what they did.

We took a look at Wisconsin, Minnesota, Virginia, and Texas. We looked at a couple of those states. They used more 'work load' approach. This many hours, etc. We tried to build out from there. Others took a staffing ratio approach. Some districts in the state had implemented this process. Natrona is one of them.

We looked at as many different models as we could to capture what we liked and didn't like about each. And we wanted to know what will work best from Wyoming. Special education directors did not want to burden their districts.

And so we ultimately went with a ratio basis. But the philosophy, I wanted to point out these things. The first goal is there must be compliance with federal and states. Serving students in the least restrictive environment. Well, duh. But important to get there. Because sometimes people forget when the dollar is driving.

Some peers across the state said districts are trying to be efficient with the funds they have. The last one, the differences in opinion regarding caseloads should be determined locally. The WDE is not staffed or empowered, nor do we want to come into a district and say, we need to bear down on your decision making process. That's not our role and we recognize that.

The IEP team includes administrators, providers and the family and they should best make decisions about the child. That was the philosophy and the approach we took when trying to decide what we're going to do.

So at the top of each board, you can scroll down. This is where we tucked in the federal requirements. We wanted to do a walkthrough history. We hope we hit the highlights. Many of our legislators come from different walks of life and they have not engaged in special education, other than grappling with the funding. It's unfair to expect them to understand.

So this is a snapshot of where we are. I have heard this comment many times. We'll tell the feds we don't want your \$25 million and we'll do whatever we want. We have to do the stuff anyway and the government is trying to help us meet the requirement. They are shocked when the idea is posed to them. We don't have a choice. We must provide those services and we do want to keep the money coming in.

In evaluating these staffing standards, it almost feels like it contradicts what I said about the WDE not telling people what to do. The state statute says we do have oversight. When we consider "adequacy" we may find districts that are understaffed. We do not want to tell districts what to do. Oversight can be interpreted many different ways. We are supportive to the "least restrictive" concept. We go back to deferring to the IEP team. They are the most educated about that child's needs. But we also know there are some students that have needs that require that they not be with the general students all day. Sometimes general education settings are too much for some students.

Staffing guidelines were built from what is called the WDE 401 report. That's a data collection that school districts provide twice a year. It identifies who they use to staff, to meet the needs of their district. The state has been providing 100% reimbursement. We assume most districts are staffing as they need, unless there are hard to fill

positions. Some districts use contracting systems. We recognize the 401 captured all the full-time employees. We built from that.

The LRE, we use their definitions of mild, moderate and severe. These are the categories that most special educators are familiar with. They are from the IEP process. We did discuss different ways, and some students might be considered severe. It doesn't capture perfectly the situation. The task force will continue to explore this. We want to find a better way to quantify those needs and those students. Least restrictive environment is our goal. We created a range for that. One teacher for 12-15 students. And one paraprofessional for ten students.

Instead of sticking with the four size districts, small, small medium, large medium and large, we used five categories to include all the students. But you can see a district with 1500 students and some with 3000.

We know that through collecting information and having conversations, not everyone knew what the language meant. Someone might say, I have a case manager and this is what they do. Someone else might say, I have a support team member.

So we know that internally we have a lot of work to do to clean up the categories. And form the definitions. We must make sure we are comparing apples to apples.

This year we created an FAQ. They will then have something to go back to. There has to be a minimum of three years before major changes have to be put into place. We have see how districts felt a new change was working.

The taskholder group will meet minimally annually. We'll meet again in the spring to talk about how we refine the data collection process.

The general gist in all of this, we met our statutory requirements. We feel we created something that is not flippant to the state legislators. We have an obligation of oversight, and we will do that. That may mean having these conversations with the districts.

We're hoping that through this relatively distasteful process, that we might be able to find some amazing service delivery models that are really effective for different populations of students, and then we can share with the rest of the state.

We're hoping we can find the silver lining in this. We wanted to make sure we don't put our districts in jeopardy of not meeting federal guidelines.

I have had a few individuals call me in a panic because they said "my superintendent said I had to cut these positions!" We feel like we tried to find a middle ground that will

>> Teams will have the opportunity to discuss what is working for a student and discuss the challenges. So they would always have the option. We don't tell them to consider a more restrictive environment.

>> They have to support some students who have destructive behaviors. They may need to staff at a higher ratio than the staffing guidelines recommend. In those extreme situations, we want to err on the side of safety. And of course documentation must be used here.

Another question. If we have families who are curious about staffing for special education, like we got a lot of calls on that, parents call and say, how do I talk to the school and ask about staffing? What would you recommend?

I don't think that changes the next steps from what they are already. I encourage parents to start with the teacher. If they are not happy with what is being offered, you continue through the next steps. This doesn't change that.

The local district will make that decision. These are guidelines. We had special education directors on the task force that wanted to protect that local decision.

There are so many pieces in this. We could have thrown out guidelines. Wyoming provides the best special education. It's been based on our 100% reimbursement. Maybe my role is not to protect that, but to be neutral.

>> The cap had just been put on. There was a hope that we could get it removed this year. In many people's perspective, this was an olive branch. We are being responsible. We're trying to be as consistent as we can. There were discussions about how we're good at knowing when we need to add staff, but when a child leaves, we just fold them in to create a system where we provide better services for all kids.

>> I do feel like we have the best system in the United States. We have done the best for our students, general and special education. We have a lot of legislators saying, we put all this money in. But what are we getting out? What is the threshold above which we don't get any more return for our money?

We tried to keep this away from being tied to funding. With the cap in place, most districts won't be able to go crazy. But some districts, because of the caps, they are looking at where to tighten their belts. Will they have to release a staff member?

>> That's a document that should be created at the district level. I believe almost all districts can speak about this is how we approach deciding if we need additional staff. Or which service provider to use.

Most districts' special education directors have an idea of how to do that and what they look at. For those that haven't formalized it in writing, we hope that process happens. It creates a lot of intentional discussion.

### **Sarah Hancock and Ashton Killinger – Sensory Room Experiences and the positive impact it has on students and education**

So the different sensory systems are tactile, just touch, proprioceptive, which tells you where you are in space. Then the vestibular system, for movement. So if you're in a car, or on a boat. Your auditory system. And your visual system. We try to achieve this, to get our kids to be able to modulate themselves. It's their ability to receive the input and regulate themselves throughout the school day.

The sensory loop, it's the sights, the sounds, all that. Most of us just process it. In the next step your brain knows what to do with this input. Most of us do those automatic functions in our brain. So most of us automatically do the things we need to do. So many of our students have learning difficulties and struggle filtering out this stuff. Many students have sensory difficulties that make learning difficult. For some of those students, they can use headphones to block extra noises. A few students have a microphone sync'd to their hearing aid. So they can focus. And they don't spend all their energy just trying to sit still.

So a big part of our role is being able to identify these students and help and accommodate them and get them what they need. A lot of what we do is play with the environment. We do sensory stuff where we consult with the teachers and the staff. Specifically we have had an opportunity in Riverton to develop multi-sensory environments. It's a great opportunity we have. It's a piece of what we do as OTs. It was in 2011 that Dallas came across some grant money. So we had some extra space. He approached us to come up with a design. How can we use this room? A sensory room is a dedicated room that's nothing but a sensory environment. You can control the space, the temperature, the lighting. You can manipulate the room for the kids. They look cool. Have you seen any of this? They have bubble tubes. It's a cool space.

So we tried to set it up with the students can go in there and you manipulate the environment to cause changes on the neurophysical level. You can change the neural plasticity in the brain. You can change that. You can change permanently the student's response to stimuli and their ability to process it. There's research showing that these rooms can relieve stress or pain. It's a calming atmosphere. Students like to get away from the regular classroom. The aim of the room helps the person's focus.

in addition to the sensory room, we have expanded to where we have a sensory environment in four of the buildings in our district. So we have five. We don't have all the equipment you'd have in a medical setting, but we did the best we could with our budget. The students enjoy going to use the rooms.



Some of the changes that happen in our society affect these kids. They use technology from a young age. Because of that, they don't do a lot of tactile work, or go outside. So we'll continue to see a rise of sensory processing issues. It affects many kids now. Another study looked at sensory processing disorder. A lot of the data shows that addressing this changes on a biological level. In one study they did brain imaging. They could actually see changes in the brain on MRI. Then you can see as they did some therapy things, there were new connections in the brain. The connections between the two sides of their brains actually changed. That was visible via these tests. It was neurological.

That data shows you how much the sensory interventions can help with so many other things, not just with academic skills. It helps them function in the environment and act better with their peers. That's an important piece of why we do these sensory things we do. All the research shows that by having the sensory needs addressed, children have fewer problematic behaviors.

In that building with our behavior room, we have zones of regulation. Have you heard of this? The social worker and I use that and the sensory diet. In their coping tool box, they have the sensory option. So they can learn how to self-regulate and how to be as independent as possible. So as they grow into adulthood, if they need an extra break they take it.

As OTs we believe the opportunities for sensory development allow students to improve and focus their attention. We feel that is a key piece of their education. As our students age, they should become aware of how to regulate their own bodies. That's our ultimate goal with all our sensory programming.

### **Kascinda Fleming – 1% Cap Update**

I just moved here. (So much noise in the room, moving of the camera, etc.). My position here in Wyoming is I am in the special education department. I'm involved with standards and assessment teams, focused on the accommodations for the wide-top and if needed for the ACT. Do you know what these state assessments are?

Walt are you familiar with the Y Top? Do you know about PAWS? Let me start with this. It's the old statewide assessment for most students that take that. Then a few years ago, the PAWS turned into the WYTOPP< our new state wide assessment. The majority of students take this.

The WyALT is designed for a small group of students, the 1%. Students that have cognitive disabilities. That need specialized instruction and are taught to the extended standards. Those are based on the general education standards, but they are trickled out so special education teachers can focus on what part of the curriculum the student will work on and master.

The WYALT is the new state assessment. I wanted to talk about the WYALT. The federal government says that 1% of your student population should take this. It's for the most significantly cognitively challenged. They may have multiple disabilities. Wyoming is just really close to going over that 1%. We are trying to find out why. If the right kids take the right assessment, we have to go through a waiver process with the federal government. Before we get into the waiver process, we want to make sure the right kids are taking the right assessment.

So we recently had a group of folks from around the state. Administration, teachers and service providers and parents. We worked on the participation guidance document. That's used by IEP teams to determine which state assessment is best for the student. We made it a stronger tool. We added a glossary. We are putting in a guidance document for special educators.

So we have this document, it's in draft. We're going to put it out sometime soon. I don't know what that means. A couple weeks, a couple months. For feedback on that.

So if anyone is interested, I'd be happy for you to give us feedback. I have some cards I can pass out. I wanted to let people know about the WYALT and the 1% CAP. Now when you hear this language, you'll know what it means. The federal government has in the "no child left behind" act, determined that number. When every student succeeds act rolled out, the government said no more than 1%. How they got that number is a mystery. The federal government wants to make sure the right kids take the right assessment. The waiver process is done on an annual basis.

My role is really to bring the special education lens into the assessment world and make sure we bridge between special education and the standards and assessments team. We will set standards for the WYALT this summer in Cheyenne. If anyone wants to work on it, go to the WDE assessment portal and there's an assessment newsletter. We provide a stipend that covers your travel, transportation and food during the time.

I'm in Wyoming working for five months. I have limited exposure to the state. But I did go out and do cognitive labs in the state. We had students take some of the test items and we video recorded them and asked them follow up questions. So during that process, some of the observations showed us that sometimes kids might have to get a certificate. They are taught to extended standards which leads them to the WYALT. What we are trained to work with is determining graduation. Placement should not determine what assessment the student takes. Students are sometimes taught extended standards, but not at their grade level. It doesn't align with the assessment. So we have to make sure students are taught at grade level. We also want to make sure that once a student takes the WYALT, they can move to the WYTOPP. We want to make sure that IEP teams are looking at that and addressing it every year. They can move between the tests.

When we talking about the 1% and identifying the right kids for the right assessment, it seems that there are some kids on the line. There are clearly students that need

specialized instruction. They are appropriate for the Y-ALT. But students may have a crisis at home that affects their cognitive abilities. The team decides, let's do the WYALT this year. But maybe there's a medical issue. Then they could move back. It's not necessarily comparing how individual students do to their grade level. That information can be used for IEP teams to plan.

### **Margee Robertson – WAVE Update**

WADE will happen again on July 29-31. It's in Laramie. We are partnering with the University of Wyoming. The facilities are fantastic.

So let's see. The 2019 topic suggestions. What we're looking for . . . what topics are you interested in? Or that need to be addressed? We're working to have an early childhood track. There has been some talk about exploring a transition track. We're covering both ends and the middle. So it looks like with David Richards, he comes annually. And he's full of knowledge. He is expert on creating the 504 plan. Many of us can clearly see the distinction between a 504 and an IEP. The special education director gets the responsibility for both and must understand the difference. We always try to have at least one session on that.

It looks like compliance requires a relationship with the parent. Jose Martin will talk about legal issues. There's always a lot of talk nationwide about abandoning the discrepancy model and going to something else. Methods for understanding discipline, removal rules, special offenses. It surprises me how many times I hear "the parents wanted to take the child home." We didn't ask the parent to come and get him. We must address ideas about discipline.

Specialized topics. There's that whole list. On the last page, Selene on measuring progress under the Endrew F. ; FBAs and BIPs and discipline. To give you a picture, we're partnering with UW in Laramie. The kick off starts with the president speaking. The keynote will be Donald Deshler. We'll have various break outs in the afternoon. On Tuesday, the keynote is Lindsay Jones, then the superintendent of public instruction. There will be two panel discussions with attorneys.

Meeting Adjourned