



# WAPSD

Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities

## **April 6, 2022, Meeting, Best Western Sheridan, Sheridan, Wyoming**

**Attendance:** Christine Bullinger, Jennifer Figenser, Erin Swilling, Deana Smith, Rebecca Bullinger, Nikki Baldwin, Shannon Cranmore, Danielle Wondercheck, Tricia Whynott, Ragen Latham, TJ Mechem, Jennifer Neely, Halyey Speiser, Dallas Myers, Margee Robertson, Jennifer Duncan, Shelley Hamel

**Guests:** Marsha Riley, Director, Sheridan CDC; Rebecca Velikaney, WDE; Jennifer Hiler, BHD; Laurel Main, SPED Director, Sheridan County School District #1; Michelle Heinen, Uplift

## **MOTIONS**

### **Administrative:**

It was moved by Ragen Latham and seconded by Deana Smith that the minutes of the January 2022 meeting be approved as written. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Policy:**

**Welcome/Opening:** Chairman Erin Swilling called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. She opened the meeting for public comment. There was no public comment.

### **Secretary Announcements**

Jennifer Duncan asked members to confirm their contact information on the Panel contact list.

### **Chair Report – Old and New Business**

Erin Swilling updated the panel on the visit to the Wyoming Girl's School the previous day. Panel members shared that their perceptions of the school changed, that they were surprised there was no lockdown and that it appeared the students were relaxed and seemed to enjoy being where they were. The therapeutic model seems to have been fully embraced.

Swilling asked Panel members to review the available Committees and to join one if they want to. She encouraged Committee chairs to meet in the interim so that some Committee work can be done the day prior to the WAPSD business meeting then report out during that business meeting. The Panel had expressed during the June 2021 meeting the desire for more in person meetings with more time in the community and to also move around the state for meeting locations.

### **SPED Director Update, Margee Robertson**

Margee Robertson provided an update on the activities of the Special Education Programs Division for the Panel. The Vision Outreach section is in the process of doing their Next Steps Clinics, which allow them to go into districts and communities the provide screening for vision impairments or blindness.

This allows the VOS to provide services to children and adults statewide through various grants that have been given to the section.

Robertson updated the Panel on the upcoming State Performance Program with regard to IDEA. She reviewed the Indicators that are set forth by IDEA and how the WDE provides feedback to districts on how they are meeting or need to do more within each of these Indicators. Districts are then provided a report card on their status and the monitoring and professional development/technical assistance team provides assistance and guidance as necessary.

Robertson invited the Panel to attend the Statewide Data Drill Downs that occur throughout the state each year, the upcoming in person WAVE Conference at the end of July in Riverton as well as the virtual WAVES sessions that are available to view on the WINWEb or live throughout the school year. The primary focus for this summer and the upcoming year is mental health of students, teachers, administrators, all educational providers and parents. Of secondary focus is staff retention, which is a statewide issue in all educational positions.

### **Uplift, Michelle Heinen**

Michelle Heinen, the Executive Director, provided an update to the Panel regarding Uplift. They have been scaled down in recent years, but still provide services for students and families of students with significant mental challenges. They currently have 8 counties with cases currently. They are a two-prong organization, one portion that is federally funded that provides services for families with children from birth to age 26 who have any kind of mental health challenge. The other part is Wyoming Family Voices, they have a contract with the maternal child health division with representatives throughout the state. They review materials for parent readability and they also attend various trainings.

### **Nikki Baldwin Pilot Project Update**

Federal preschool development grant program update with 4 childcare programs in the state. Wyoming Inclusion Model Program Grant is the title, University of Wyoming has partnered with the Fordham Institute for this program. The purpose is to create some pockets that focus on the best practices in inclusion based on a coaching model that focuses on classrooms in child development centers around the state. Gillette, Teton, Lincoln Uinta and Natrona counties all applied and were accepted. Each had to identify a teacher, a coach and a have member on the leadership team. There will be a meeting on May 13 for all to attend for training.

### **Proposed Draft By Laws Changes**

The minutes with proposed changes were reviewed by the Panel. With the structure of future meetings possibly changing and potential changes to attendance policy, approval of the minutes was tabled until the July meeting.

### **MTSS/DBI/WAVE/WAVES Update, Deana Smith**

Deana Smith reviewed the new early kindergarten rules that were put in place and how it applies to special education students. If a school determines that a child that is receiving special education services is not ready to attend kindergarten if they are 5 by August 15, that may trigger Child Find obligations set forth by IDEA.

Multi-Tier Systems of Support and Data Based Intervention coaching is being provided by Thom Jones a consultant at the WDE. MTSS provides a tiered level of support for districts with students with disabilities and DBI provides data-based interventions for behavioral and educational issues.

The Week of Academic Vision for Excellence (WAVE) conference will occur in person July 26-28, 2022 at Central Wyoming College in Riverton. The focus will be on social emotional and mental health. So far 63 sessions have been offered via the Web Based Vision for Excellence Sessions (WAVES), which are virtual presentations that replaced the WAVE conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **McKinney Vento Overview, Shannon Cranmore**

Shannon Cranmore talked about her role with the WDE with regard to McKinney Vento funds, which provides assistance for homeless students. The definition of homeless is not living in a regular, full-time home. Every school district is required to have a district level liaison that works with WDE on assuring that services and appropriate funding is applied. McKinney Vento is funded a couple of different ways. Title 1 schools need to set aside a portion of their Title 1 funds based on the proportion of homeless students in the district. There is also a sub-grant that districts can apply for, varying numbers of districts apply each year. There is also a third funding stream currently from the emergency funds given to each state due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding can be used to assure that homeless students are fully able to attend and complete school.

### **Legislative Report, Shelley Hamel**

Key legislative pieces that impacted the WDE and the WAPSD panel were as follows: General Government appropriations for K-12 contained an external cost adjustment that needed to be applied in specific ways, putting toward utilities and educational materials, it was not to go to teacher salaries. Also included were funds for district nature maintenance. The Absenteeism and Truancy Bill required school boards to define the phrase habitual truant and willful absenteeism and establish rules for enforcement. Also clarifies the duties of the attendance officer, specifically their reporting practices. The School Finance increasing the cash reserve allows school districts to carry over 30% of their savings for future use through 2026. The Child Care Facility Certification Exemption bill provides an exemption for after school programs typically housed at schools. A World Language Proficiency seal will be added to the high school diploma. K-3 reading assessment intervention statute outlines what the responsibilities of the school districts and the WDE are in 2019 and pushed harder on district literacy plans. The act requires that districts assess students no less than 3 times a year for reading difficulties and to progress monitor. The WDE is required to form a stakeholder group to identify the best criteria for screeners and the progress monitoring tools that districts use.

### **Working Lunch Committee Reports**

Committees did not meet regularly in the interim. Committee descriptions were given and the opportunity for members to join committees was offered.

### **BHD Update, Ragen Latham and Jennifer Hiler**

Ragen Latham updated the Panel on the Behavioral Health Division within the Department of Health, who has oversight over Wyoming Child Development Centers and pre schools in the state. BHD is undergoing monitoring for IDEA compliance with the WDE and it has allowed for opportunities to grow the relationship between the two agencies and to assure that CDC's are in compliance with the indicators that are monitored per IDEA.

### **PIC Update, Jennifer Figenser**

Jennifer Figenser updated the Panel on activities at PIC. They have some new staff, Jennifer Blaylock and Janel Moore, which will expand with their ability to assist parents and families throughout the state. They have had an increase in referrals from different sources to provide assistance and guidance.

## **Next Meeting Planning**

The next meeting will be held in Saratoga at the Saratoga Inn July 13-14, 2022. This is the meeting where the Panel receives Panel member training with John Copenhaver as well as setting the next year's meeting dates. Due to limited connectivity, there will not be an option to attend the meeting virtually and only having a phone line open for the first 15 minutes of the meeting for public comment.

Erin Swilling asked the Panel to please contact her about future meetings and how they would like them to happen, all in person except for December, which is usually Zoom due to weather concerns, or some all Zoom and some all in person, it was agreed that a hybrid of in person and Zoom is not productive. The Panel decided at the June 2021 meeting that they wanted more visibility around the state and to meet in person in varying locations around the state, visit local education facilities and providers of services to students with disabilities and host a community reception and invite local stakeholders, parents and education and service providers to build rapport in communities.

## **Advice Recommendations and Action Steps**

By-laws are tabled for the time being to update language on meeting setup and attendance.

Committees – encourage chairs to work in the interim

Updated Committee lists

Resource List – who distributes

Tentative Upcoming Dates/Locations – **May change due to COVID-19 Health Guidelines**

July 13-14, 2022 in Saratoga, Saratoga Inn

\*All meetings will be from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.