

**Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind**  
**Board of Public Education Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**March 27, 2013**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Myers at 4:10 pm with Board members Carroll, and Olson present. Also present were Pete Donovan, Donna Schmidt, Kim Schwabe, Donna Sorenson, Jim Kelly and Steve Gettel.

1. Student Enrollment/Evaluation

Steve Gettel reported that in the past month one student returned to his home school district and there were no new enrollments. There are currently 18 students in the VI department (-1), 30 in the D/HH department, 18 (-1) residential students and there have been 4 evaluations for placement to date.

2. Human Resources

Steve Gettel reported there were no resignations, terminations, or hires during the past month. Two employees, one from the Education program and one from the Student Services program have indicated they plan to retire at the end of the school year.

3. Education Program – Campus

Kim Schwabe reported that Amanda Taylor, our IEFA staff person attended the IEFA conference in Helena in Feb. She brought back many ideas and a survey will be going out to staff.

On March 7, 2013, the students were invited to attend the state capital to meet the legislative body. The students from the department for the blind and visually impaired brought along their technology to demonstrate their skills. The students proudly demonstrated to the representatives and senators how to use screen readers, electronic magnifiers, Braille notetakers, digital book players and iPads. Beyond sharing their love of technology, the students had a tour of the Montana capitol building and were able to utilize a tactile map and their awesome orientation and mobility skills to navigate the grand building. One of our students even made friends with a legislature and was invited to sit with him at his desk on the floor of the Senate! Our deaf and hard of hearing students involved in EOS also performed for the House and the Senate.

For two days in March, students participated in a PE Ski day at Showdown. The kids did a marvelous job and we only had one injury!

The Easter Egg Hunt was enjoyed by the elementary students. Sponsors and middle school assistants had fun setting up and helping. Many thanks to the Telephone Pioneers for their continued support.

The interpreting group of MSDB has welcomed a new sub and an intern from ISU. Things are going well with lots of mentoring and educating for our new members. We are learning from them too - whether it's current trends being taught in training programs or questions about why we do what we do, we are happy to expand our knowledge in our approach and our work.

Steve Gettel reported that a Corrective Action Plan must be filed with the OPI by June 1<sup>st</sup> to address deviations noted in the final determination of accreditation status which includes the 5<sup>th</sup> occurrence of assignment deviation for “special education teacher not sole provider at both the elementary and secondary level,” and the 3<sup>rd</sup> occurrence of Counselor FTE requirements not met Counseling Staff – No services.” Kim Schwabe reported that four applicants for the counselor position are being considered after the resignation by Sally Tilleman in January. These applicants meet the requirement for licensure. Committee member Myers said she would provide this information to committee member Taylor.

Steve Gettel also reported that the school is moving forward with an application for a Rural Utility Services grant with the Bitterroot Valley Educational Cooperative and the OPI as partners. Vision Net and One Vision Solutions is providing technical support. There are 20 school districts interested in participating in the project with the purpose of providing top quality audio and video communications including the ability to record and archive educational content to special need students.

Some of the specific services planned include: Direct student services in a face-to-face manner via videoconference, training for those providing direct student services, such as teachers, specialists and parents, and archives for later viewing on demand of any training provided over videoconference. The target audience included students and staff who are associated with students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Visually Impaired, deaf-blind, or students with Mental Health Disorders or Autism

#### 4. Education Program – Outreach

Donna Sorenson reported that 24 students attended the recent Focus/Enrichment weekend for visually impaired students. To date the total contacts with staff, parents and professionals by the consultants for the Visually Impaired and consultants for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are 3,700 and 2,800 respectively. DHH consultants have attended 190 training sessions and student meetings and VI consultants have attended 150 training sessions and student related meetings.

#### 5. Student Services Program

Jim Kelly reported that the month of March has been busy for the students in the residential program. March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup> was the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Enrichment weekend. The outreach and cottage staff worked hard to provide the students with an enjoyable weekend. All the cottage students who are deaf or hard of hearing participated in this event.

March 8<sup>th</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup> students traveled to and from their homes. The travel was uneventful and all made it safely to their destinations.

On Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup> the cottage kids watched the St. Patrick's Day parade in downtown Great Falls. They seemed to enjoy the outing. Then on Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> the kids and staff had a pot-luck BBQ (shi-ka-bob), watched movies and socialized in the activity room.

The Goal ball Enrichment Weekend and Braille Focus program was held March 21-23. This was well attended and the kids had a great time. All the cottage students with visual impairments participated in this event.

The MSU-COT Health Fair was held on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Cottage Student Council had a table set up to share information about MSDB. The students enjoyed the opportunity to showcase their school and the cottage program. Comments from their participation in this event have been nothing but positive.

March 24<sup>th</sup> the Easter formal dinner was held in our main dining room. Ham was the main course and as always the meal and conversations were just wonderful.

Students will travel home on Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup> for the Easter/Spring break and will return on Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Due to the Department of Transportation shutting down Rimrock Trailways on Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> – our means of transportation for students living in Helena, West Yellowstone, Missoula and points west of Missoula we will be chartering school buses for the upcoming travel. This will increase our travel cost per travel by about \$1650 per travel. While we have had significant savings using Rimrock Trailways safety is our main concern with the students travelling home.

The Cottage Student Council is planning a day long outing in May (May 18<sup>th</sup>). This will be a fishing trip to Holter Lake (weather permitting).

6. Safety and Facilities

Donna Schmidt reported on the most recent Safety Committee meeting and possible future training with law enforcement as more integrated approaches and plans for community safety are developed.

Donna received a bid from Simplex Grinnell to upgrade to fire detection system to include different colored lights for emergency alerts other than just fire. The estimate to add one amber light to each enunciator is \$97,000. Donna said for the immediate future we are implementing “low-tech” options to improve communication among staff to alert to emergencies. These include email on the school network and text messages to the personal cell phones of staff members.

7. Budget and Finance

Donna Schmidt reported that the budget is expended at about 65% which is on track for this point in the fiscal year. Contracting with Big Sky Bus for the remaining travel weekends will cost about \$5000 more than what we had budgeted for student travel.

8. Legislative Session

Steve Gettel reported that with the hard work and an amendment to HB 2 by Representative Bob Mehlhoff the Appropriations Committee voted to approve an additional \$125,000 in each year to the biennium to the personal services budget for the Education Program. The amendment states that the money is intended to be used to bring compensation for the education professionals at the school into parity with education professionals in the Great Falls Public Schools.

The money allocated in HB 13 to the executive branch agencies is 70.4% of the 5% for FY14 and 77% of the 5% for FY15. This would equate to a 3.5% raise the first year and a 3.85% the second year. If the funds are appropriated at that rate the new money for salaries in the 2015 biennium will be \$416,604. Our target to achieve market parity requires \$816,000 in new dollars. If HB13 and HB2 remain unchanged during the session we will be able to meet this target by using \$149,396 of the \$227,000 vacancy savings adjusted into Present Law from FY13 budget.

9. School Calendar of Events

April 17 – 22 Expressions of Silence perform at the American Musical Salute: American Civil War Sesquicentennial in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC.

April 25 – Spring Program and Arbor Day Graduate and Retiree Program – 1 pm in the Mustang Center

April 27 – Expressions of Silence Program and Fundraiser – 5pm in the Mustang Center

May 25 – Graduation – 2 Pm in the Mustang Center

10. There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.

Committee Meeting Dates for 2013

All meetings begin at 4:00 PM

April 24

May 29

June 26

July 31

August 28

September 25

October 30

Authorized Representative

Sent via email to: [sgettel@msdb.mt.gov](mailto:sgettel@msdb.mt.gov)

9371	MT Sch For Deaf & Blind HS
9368	MT Sch For Deaf & Blind EI

As a result of the above school's 2012-13 accreditation status (refer to final accreditation letter dated 3/14/2013 which should have been received via US Mail) a Corrective Plan is required by the Board of Public Education (BPE). Plans are due to the Office of Public Instruction by June 1, 2013 in order to be presented to the BPE at their July meeting.

Please use the Corrective Plan form that can be found at <http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/Accred/13CorrectivePlan.doc> and mail your completed plan, with the Chair of the Board of Trustees' signature, as soon as possible.

Cordially,

Teri Wing