

State Superintendent's Blind and Visual Impairment Education Advisory Council

MINUTES – Meeting #72

February 15, 2021 – 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Zoom Virtual Meeting

The State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment Education:

- *advises the state superintendent on statewide activities to benefit students who are blind or visually impaired;*
- *makes recommendations for improvements in services provided by the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI);*
- *and proposes ways to improve the preparation of teachers and staff and coordination between the department and other agencies that offer services to the visually impaired.*

Call to Order: 10:00

- Public Input and Comments - move to after updates for a more
- Introductions - roll call
- 10:13 Prior Meeting Minutes Approval - table vote due to lack of quorum. Will schedule a meeting in the future to approve the minutes from the last two meetings as well as this one. 10:50 - Return to this, now with meeting quorum.
 - June 3 - Motion to approve: Jennifer Ottowitz, approve as corrected. Second: Tracey Stanislawski. Unanimous approval.
 - November 16 - Motion to approve: Jessie Grober. Second: Erikke Nystrom-Grothaus. Unanimous approval.
- Council Member Updates (Council Members report on stakeholder activities and/or concerns)
- Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Updates
- WCBVI Updates
- Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library Updates
- Teacher of the Visually Impaired Training Program Update
- Adjourn

Introductions

Council Members:

Julie Hapeman

Erikke Nystrom-Grothaus- CESA5/WCASS

Tracey Stanislawski

Colleen Kickbush - TVI Rep
Cheryl Orgas - ABLE and NFB
Wanda Routier
Jessie Grober
Jennifer Ottowitz
Wendy Leising (11:45)

Stakeholder Attendee:
Linda Bailey

DPI/WCBVI Representatives:
Dan Wenzel
Julia Hartwig
Martha Berninger
Julie Piper
Jacky Ramirez
Dawn Soto
Mandy Jordan
Rhonda Mulligan
Zarina Mohd Shah

Council Member Updates

Colleen Kickbush - B-3 Task Force: The B-3 Task Force has been meeting monthly. WCBVI Outreach has supported the task force by gathering requested information and researching topics of interest, such as licensure, work force training, etc. Now, the task force will move forward without WCBVI to start drafting their letter of recommendations for this Advisory Council.

Babies Count: Babies Count is here in Wisconsin and your partnership is critical to our success! [Babies Count Agency Announcement.pdf](#)

Babies Count is a national registry of children ages birth to 36 months with visual impairments that collaborates with public and private agencies to gather information regarding children, their vision conditions, and programs that support them and their families. This data is critically needed in the State of Wisconsin to aid in the identification of children with vision conditions, improve our early intervention programs, and forecast the number of children who may require specialized education services under the criteria for visual impairment once they are school aged.

If you or your agency work with a child who is visually impaired and birth to 36 months, please fill out this brief contact form with your information, so we can get you started: <https://forms.gle/WP5ES5Qbt9gcraQE7>. If you don't currently work with this age group, but want to have another resource for families of children who are visually impaired, please check out the Babies Count website www.BabiesCount.org. Feel free to share this email or attached flyer with your schools, agencies, and families. For questions or additional information please contact the WI Babies Count Coordinator, Colleen Kickbush at BabiesCountWI@gmail.com or 414-403-8683.

Jessie Grober - WAER Virtual conference Saturday April 24. Registration to open this week. If can't attend, still register, and they will record the sessions and send to you. There will be a scholarship fundraiser trivia gathering following the conference as well.

Cheryl Orgas - NFB - State Convention last week of March, will also be virtual. March 26-28.

DPI Update - Julia Hartwig - 10:26

New stimulus package, approximately 4x the size of the last. Administered similar to the last package, in which funds will go through DPI to districts. New guidelines for equitable participation. Joint finance has approved the DPI with some modifications that are being worked out now.

- President Biden's pick for the next Secretary of Education: Miguel Cardona, Connecticut. David Cantrell is the acting OSEP Director.
- There remains no waiver of statewide testing, and none expected. Districts and the state schools working very hard to figure out how to provide. Some adjustments have been made, such as in the testing window and some testing items.
- There remains no waivers for the provision of FAPE
 - Continue to work to provide services to the greatest extent possible. Looking at what compensatory services might look like.
- The department has recently posted several IDEA State Complaint decisions (Nos. 20-064 through 20-051) about COVID-19's impact on special education. Topics include evaluations, IEP development, and shortening a student's school day. Please see this link if you are interested in reviewing these published decisions.
- New resource on moving between hybrid or virtual learning environments: [Guide to Implementing IEPs and Monitoring IEP Goal Progress when Moving between In-Person and Virtual or Hybrid Learning Environments.](#)
- Assistive Technology Forward: [website](#)
- Universal Design for Learning Forward: [website](#)
- [PI 11 impairment area criteria changes:](#)
 - Blind and Visually Impaired Criteria
 - No public comments were submitted during the hearing or public comment period.
 - Before the Governor for approval; and then will go the legislature
 - No substantive changes from the draft developed by DPI with stakeholder input.

No anticipated implementation date, but will keep the Council updated.

- Deaf/Blind Criteria
 - No public comments were submitted during the hearing or public comment period.
 - This new proposed criteria area is also before the Governor for approval; and then will go the legislature.
 - There were no substantive changes from the draft shared with Council
- Emotional Behavioral Disability criteria. Public comments responded to/incorporated. Governor has signed, and the next step is legislature approval.
- Speech and Language Impairment. Public comments responded to/incorporated. Next steps: governor signature and legislature approval.
- Specific Learning Disability criteria: **Public hearing on Friday, February 19 9:30-11:00, or submitted electronically.**
- PI 9 Administrative Rule Change
 - Pupil Nondiscrimination - public comment session held
- Licensure Flexibility emergency administrative rule - This does not apply to special education teachers.
 - Those holding a substitute license are able to teach beyond the typical 45 day maximum assignment. They can teach through the end of this school year.
 - Licensed teachers are able to teach a subject outside of their certification area beyond the typical 45 day maximum. They can teach through the end of this school year.
 - HOWEVER, IDEA requires special education teachers to hold at least a bachelor's degree and does not permit licensure requirements to be waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis. Therefore, an individual must hold a provisional, lifetime, master educator, or a one- or three-year license with stipulations in special education in the grade or developmental level they are assigned to in order to teach special education for more than 45 consecutive days.
 - Julie Hapeman: Question re: Cross Categorical License and teaching VI - Dawn Soto - our understanding is that as long as they are accepted into an approved TVI training program, but always direct folks to licensing.
- Mini Virtual Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership Conference:
On Tuesday, February 16, 2021, we will provide a half-day legal update. The event will be from 8:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Our Federal Legal Updates will be from Julie Weatherly. Our State Legal Updates will be from Paul Sherman and Patricia Williams, including a live question and answer event. [For updated information, please visit our conference website.](#)

- Transition memo released in collaboration with DWD and DHS, emphasizing the provision of FAPE related to transition services, and that additional or compensatory services may need to be considered and provided.
- Joint Federal Notifications: On March 9, DPI will upload final joint federal notification packets in SAFE for all districts. The data is intended to assist districts in their continuous improvement to close gaps for students of color and students with IEPs. The reports also include required action, if any, under federal laws.

Jessie Grober - last meeting brought up O&M, who is responsible for identifying a shortage area. Dawn - reached out to Anita to look at the types of data DPI collects, to get at how an LEA or CESA director would report this information. Right now not a vehicle for reporting this information. Dawn does work closely with directors, especially with Babies Count, so districts can be prepared. Julia - Dawn and I will continue to work on this. Would like to set up a meeting to further dig into this. Meghan Fredel, WCBVI Consultant, did a national search of other states' processes for this, and discovered Nevada was really the only state that has one.

WCBVI Updates - 10:53

Dan Wenzel - without website from mid-November until last week. Due to data breach. Increased security and improvements to website and network. Also aligning what we do with DPI and WESP-DHH as much as possible and share resources and make improvements. Continuous improvements in security, which may mean additional and increased safety protocols. These sometimes result in decreased convenience, but we take PII security very seriously. Emphasize that even with these challenges, we did not lose any instructional time. Working with DPI regarding our schedule for the rest of the year. Also starting to plan for summer programming. Will be doing a virtual Adult Summer Program to meet our legislative mandate to hold an adult program. The program last year was successful, so we are looking forward to building upon those skills. Many positions we are going to be hiring for. Please share. Attend Rock County Superintendents meeting each week, and Rock County Public Health also attends. Help us to make informed decisions, and to be working closely with RCPH, who will be providing us with a nurse liaison once we have students return to campus.

Rhonda Mulligan - WCBVI Nursing Supervisor - nursing staff has been working on preparedness for student/staff return. Trying to procure vaccination slots for our staff. At least for the staff who will be traveling to administer the required student assessments.

Julie Piper - WSBVI Principal - continue to focus on student connections (staff to students, and students to students). Have had to think creatively about how to do this during the data breach, and updating email system. These challenges made us stronger, and more creative, and there was no disruption to learning for students! Were able to do virtual Holiday Program event. Watching student progress very closely, and holding many IEP team meetings to keep teams aware of student progress, and discuss if there is a need to pivot instruction/environments. Discussions on working collaboratively with LEAs - three students are currently attending school partially at their LEA. Also watching the need for additional services very closely, and will be holding additional IEPs to address. Have been spending a great deal of time looking at assessments and how to administer. We will be sending a team to each

student to provide this. A lot of problem solving involved in location for testing (at LEA, or other community location). A lot of collaboration with DPI consultants, IEP teams, teaching staff, and families. Hopeful to get good data out of this work. Braille Fest - since we cannot offer this activity on-site, we are looking at doing a virtual Braille Fest this year, following the model of the preschool conference, in having multiple evening events once a week during April, offering opportunities for students to participate from around the state. Will be sending out kits with materials also. Registration information should go out this week or next.

Dawn Soto, WCBVI Outreach Director - The 3Rs presentation we have created for stakeholders has been a highlight. Have had great feedback. Two presentations of Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships - one for WCBVI State, and one for National. To show the WHY of the work. Has helped to clarify WCBVI's role. Staff still working remotely, with limited time on campus. Planning programming calendar for the next school year. Will be offering virtual EmployAbility again this year, but adding work experience in. Surveys: Library media survey. Short Course survey. CVI Survey. We use this data to determine how we program. APH Census Federal Quota - all digital this year. Using Kiteworks to securely transmit files. Virtual Short Courses very successful. Using APH Curriculum and sending learning kits. This has been a very well received program. Book clubs have been successful and students are excited to be in meets with students from throughout the state. Great Program Support Team (PST) and Family Support Team (FST) events.

Braille Competency exam changes? (Julie Hapeman) - Dawn - discussion on accessibility. Dan - put resources into preparing individuals to take the tests rather than proctoring exams. Want to make sure it is available, but mostly providing support and professional development/training. Julie - feels like a change in this is something the Council should discuss. Linda Bailey - teaching the braille courses for Concordia. Dawn - we will still provide the refresher course. Still working on how/if to offer to in-person exam. Not planning to end the WBCE, looking at phasing out as an option. National exam is also an option. Linda - concern that National Exam isn't offered in WI, and the course at Concordia was developed with the WBCE in mind, so if it is going away, will need to modify the coursework. Cheryl Orgas - request clarification. Discussion. Julie - encouraging transparency to build trust. Linda Bailey - perhaps Concordia could take that on. Jennifer Ottowitz - Dawn mentioned accessibility. Dawn - meaning access to taking the exam (traveling) not in regards to reasonable accommodations. None that we know of. Julie - reiterating that change is acceptable but wanting to make sure input is given. Linda - National exam is costly. Traveling to have to take it also adds cost. Dan - if we would go to this, we would make sure the National exam was offered in Wisconsin. Colleen - are there requirements for the National exam location? Dan - we would explore that if we moved to this. Dawn - just beginning to research this in order to be able to support.

WTBBL Updates - 11:47

Zarina Mohd-Shah - The staff at WTBBL has been working on site since mid-May. Grateful to be able to continue operations, especially for the patrons who have been quarantined this whole time. WTBBL Outreach program has been the most affected, but they have taken advantage of technology to do webinars, and have also done mass mailings. 40 participants in their virtual book club. Preparing for Summer Reading Club. Circulation down 17.5% in 2020 due to closure, as well as quarantine returned materials for 3 days, and delivery issues. 804 new applications, only a 1% decrease. More patrons used BARD, and digital downloads increased 11.9%. All staff were able to participate in the virtual National

Libraries Conference. Acknowledge Cheryl Orgas and ABLE's support of WTBBL. They recorded almost 50 titles for WTBBL. Cheryl Orgas - WTBBL and ABLE are continuing book group with MPS. Starting again in March. Also making available a new book in audio - Our Bodies Stay Home, Our Imaginations Run Free - being read in the studio by the author, received a grant to make this available to 135 children throughout the state in print and braille.

Concordia - Wanda Routier - As an online accelerated program, has continued to operate normally. Several students in the 2nd braille course. A number of new students accepted into the program as well as other inquiries, including inquiries from LEAs/CESAs about training. One of the requirements for the program is a summer residency at Concordia. Last year was cancelled. This summer it will occur, but be virtual. June 21-25. Students take courses April/May and May/June, and then finish the competencies during the residency. New students will start in March. 3 students in the first cohort. 3 accepted. Others in various points in the application/inquiry process. Rolling admissions and enrollment. Can apply at any time and start the next 8-week session that begins.

Next meeting -

June 7

Adjourn

Motion - Cheryl Orgas, Second - Jessie Grober - unanimously approved