

State Superintendent's Blind and Visual Impairment Education Advisory Council
MINUTES – Meeting #74
October 25, 2021 – 10:00 am - 2:00 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 10:02 am

Introductions

Council Members:

Nissan Bar-Lev

Jessie Grober

Julie Hapeman

Wendy Leising

Erikke Nystrom-Grothaus

Cheryl Orgas

Jennifer Ottowitz

Wanda Routier

Tracey Stanislawski

DPI/WCBVI Representatives:

Paul Manriquez, Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Learning Support

Julia Hartwig

Mandy Jordan

Zarina Mohd Shah

Jacklynne Ramirez

Dawn Soto

Dan Wenzel

Kay Rhode

Meghan Fredel

Alisha Ragainis

Stakeholder Attendees: None

Public Input and Comments: None Received

Prior Meeting Minutes Approval

NBL Moves to approve. Tracey Stanislawski second. No discussion. Passed

Review of Council Policies, including term limits - discuss at next meeting. Discussed membership and term limits. Working with DPI on the process.

Membership Committee

Julia Hartwig emphasizing the State Superintendent's Office's interest in getting individuals nominated so they can approve and appoint the members. With a focus on equity. Discussion on parent qualifications - are B-3 or post high school acceptable? Nissan Bar Lev - the Council would benefit from the perspective of a variety of parents in order to have varied input. No committee, **send nomination forms to Dan/Julie/Mandy by December 1, and they will forward to DPI for consideration and appointment.**

[Wisconsin Legislature: 15.377](#) - Statute for Council

O&M Shortage Taskforce - Julie Hapeman

Have not met yet, but have interest, so hope to have an update at the next meeting.

Council Member Updates (Council Members report on stakeholder activities and/or concerns)

Cheryl Orgas, National Federation of the Blind-Wisconsin - There is a state NFB Convention April 1-3 in LaCrosse. WI Parents of Blind Children will be doing Zoom Cooking Classes one night a month.

Nissan Bar-Lev - WCASS guide - can listen online ([WCASS Guide: How to Provide Students with IEPs Access to Their Grade Level Curriculum Through Text to Speech](#)). Two major findings are that in regular education classes you will find students with special needs are reading at a large age gap from their peers. Also that very few students with disabilities use assistive technology. See an opportunity to push harder to use AT for the students with disabilities to access grade-level materials. Also found that students whose native language is ASL do not have access.

Jessie Grober - WAER - Recently voted that they will hold their conference virtually this year. Will put out a call for presenters soon. Reviewing by-laws for consistency.

Tracey Stanislawski - Vision Forward - received grant to assist Milwaukee County to search for families with students with disabilities. Babies Count is going well - 60+% of counties trained, and looking forward to results soon. Part of a registry bill for babies who are B/VI.

10:48 Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Updates - Julia Hartwig

[October, 2021 DPI Updates, BVI Council](#) - see this document for links and further information.

Welcome Paul Manriquez to his position. Paul gave a brief introduction.

Federal Updates:

Wisconsin has once again met the requirements of IDEA. We continue to work toward better outcomes with fewer disparities. DPI is currently setting targets for their next Six-Year Plan for

Learners with IEPs. You are invited to participate as a member of the public as the State Superintendent's Council on Special Education sets targets. If you're unable to attend the sessions, we will be inviting feedback through a [website](#)

OSEP has released a [Return to School Roadmap](#), which answers many questions related to providing special education in light of COVID-19. DPI also frequently updates their FAQ document.

State Updates:

Seclusion and Restraint: DPI has revised the [Frequently Asked Questions document about the Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion in Public Schools](#) to reflect changes in state law that went into effect on March 4, 2020.

Wisconsin DPI special education team staff developed a framework to support schools and districts in ensuring special education evaluations are *"sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related service needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified."* 34 CFR 300.304 (c)(6). The framework aligns with state and federal requirements for conducting special education evaluations and provides guidance to help educators shift mindsets from a "label based" evaluation process to a "needs based" process. Looking at the "whole child"

PI-11 Rule Changes - see linked document above for specific information regarding rule changes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Speech/Language Impairment, Emotional and Behavioral Disability, Specific Learning Disabilities, and other reevaluation criteria.

Legislation in process: [SB467](#) and [AB490](#). Timelines are not available yet.

Sharing COVID-19 Mitigation Guidelines (in linked document). The DHS resources are particularly helpful.

NBL - What are some of the issues related to the SLD approval? JH - Some of the language surrounding Private and Homeschools. Discussion on how the rule is written and able to be implemented.

NBL - What are some of the conversations DPI is having with School Districts regarding masks, and some resources to assist with strategies that may help with others with these issues? Julia Hartwig - Christina Spector has been reviewing the OSEP guidance and providing updates. She will provide guidance to the mediation system.

Jessie Grober: Re: Educator Effectiveness - has another model/path for evaluation for specialized areas (like TVI, O&M, DHH professionals, who do not necessarily have a classroom). Julia H - Could explore further what that would look like specifically with the team. As of right now there is not a separate pathway. Julie Hapeman - Agrees with the system not being an effective tool for evaluating these professionals. Tracey Stanislawski - would parents be involved with that at all? Referring to the Vision Forward model with parent involvement in programming. Julia - there is not a framework for this currently.

11:14 Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Updates

- WSBVI
 - Staffing challenges. High vacancy rates in the school. Many staff covering multiple positions. Do have a new AT/IT Specialist/Instructor Hanna Martin. New College and Career Readiness Instructor Christine Zastrow. They both come with a lot of experience.
 - Recently held our first Virtual Track Meet - we held our competition and then sent in our times to the Conference. It was a lot of fun and had students who were actively engaged.
 - Had to Pivot for the last two weeks to a remote plan. Working closely with our Health Center and Rock County Health Department made that determination. Staff and students did an excellent job pivoting to the virtual environment. Students and staff (when possible) are in cohorts as well.
 - Several new nurses, still recruiting for a Nursing Supervisor.
 - Will be holding our Forensics season virtually.

- Advisory Council Roles at WCBVI - Kay Rhode will be taking over the duties as the Council Liaison for Dan. Dan will still be involved in the Council, but this role will allow Kay to implement some ideas and processes and be more involved than Dan has been able to be. Kay - I have a background in Orientation and Mobility. I value this Council, looking forward to being involved!

- Outreach - Dawn Soto
 - Allies of Native Nations Diversity Action Team of Rock County - This group donated five books in the Birch Bark series to all Rock County Schools, including WSBVI. Outreach worked with them to get these books available in braille.
 - APH EOT update about technology survey and providing more Assistive Technology to Wisconsin students on the APH Federal Quota census. The items then remain in the district. Julie Hapeman - our district has received some of these items and are very appreciative.
 - Mentoring Program is still going well, and earned a nod at the annual Council of Schools for the Blind meeting this fall.
 - New Directors trainings provided every year - is this available for current Directors? Dawn - I can record it and share with the RSN network.

Updated DOA travel guidance - moving to "job-essential" travel in January. Working on guidelines for how that will look. Virtual will still be the preferred method. Outreach moving to hybrid in February of 2022 hopefully. Recognize the value of virtual options.

- The DOA guidance for travel has changed to provide that employees should follow agency specific protocols for travel requests. We will be working to update our DPI travel guidance based on the DOA changes. The main change is moving from essential travel only to job necessary travel. We will work through this new

guidance with our supervisors and all travel must be requested in advance and approved by our DPI directors. At the Outreach level, this will be based upon staffing, stakeholder data, stakeholder outreach service requests (or OSRs), success of virtual programming and support, and feasibility. For example, we have received more requests for support at the district and CESA level for ongoing professional development and will be working with several CESAs and LEA teams on further development of this request.

- DOA and DPI still guide us that virtual attendance is still the preferred option and should be utilized whenever possible. How will this affect meetings with external stakeholders at DPI and WCBVI? All meetings with external stakeholders must be held virtually until at least January 18, 2022, unless approved by our team directors and after assuring all building safety protocols can be met. A virtual option must also be offered for in-person meetings and we will have to work through this with our IT Supervisor and teams, especially related to conferences which were traditionally in-person only events. This will take time to determine how to proceed.
- The WCBVI Outreach team is looking forward to offering a hybrid service delivery model, starting **hopefully** in February of 2022. We have learned a great deal about the value of virtual meetings and programming, and will continue to offer some programming virtually, especially if there is a great deal of travel involved for participants or if there is value in having the meeting or event recorded. It is important for you, our stakeholders, to know that while our plan is to offer in-person programming in February of 2022, while following strict COVID-19 safety protocols, including social distancing and masking, and our plans may need to change, as we must follow the guidance given to us from the DPI and the DOA. It is also important to keep in mind these programs may need to be rescheduled or cancelled, due to a variety of factors, including staffing shortages and COVID-19 protocols. We thank you for your patience and flexibility, and are proud to continue serving our Wisconsin stakeholders.
- Per current guidance, three of our programs will be offered in 2022 and with new DOA guidance, we will work to determine their format. These include the Preschool and School Age Families and Professionals Conference, the Low Vision Clinics and Short Course programming for individual IEP driven short courses. We have continued to provide ongoing and robust virtual short course programming, both groups and individuals, with tremendously successful outcomes. Our mentoring program is in its sixth year. We have 15 pairs of mentors and proteges. It was our second year offering a virtual training for mentors this past summer. We have found ways to connect with all participants virtually and we added a new networking opportunity for proteges to be together. The proteges felt it was useful and they have requested the opportunity again.

We have had 130 Outreach Service Requests since July of 2020. These include Training for Ages Birth to Three Years, Consultation for Ages Three to Six Years, School Age Consultation, Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Consultation, Transition Consultation, Assistive Technology Consultation, Virtual Mini Low Vision Clinic, Student Programming, Parent Liaison (Ages 0

through 12 years), Parent Liaison (Ages 13 through 21 years), Family Resources, Virtual Event Support (WCBVI Outreach will do our best to support virtual events based on current staffing), Professional Development Needs.

- Our preliminary data from the customer satisfaction survey, using the Universal Event Survey. Preliminary survey data indicated 100% customer satisfaction in the following areas:
 1. Response time
 2. Professionalism
 3. Communication
 4. Experience in engaging with our staff

National literary Braille competency test update:

- The requirement for the “**national literary Braille competency test**” referenced in [PI 34.051\(2\)\(g\)](#), which is now called the “[National Certification in Unified English Braille \(NCUEB\)](#)” **has been in place in the Wisconsin administrative code since 1995**. The NCUEB is managed by the National Blindness Professionals Certification Board, or [NBPCB](#). This is the statutorily required measure of braille competency and proficiency for all professionals seeking the DPI 1825 Licensure in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Braille Competency Exam (WBCE) was created and given at a time when there was concern in the field that the National exam was not readily available. At this time, we now know, from the National Blindness Professionals Certification Board, or the NBPCB, that the National Certification in Unified English Braille (NCUEB) is readily available. The NCUEB is not only readily available and can be scheduled for private individual sessions and also for large public sessions, but the NCUEB is a fully accessible Exam for any test taker who is blind and visually impaired, including those who are braille readers. Additional accommodation requests can also be made to NCUEB with medical documentation. There is a 2015 validation study from the NBPCB and the NCUEB became a valid measure of content knowledge in the Unified English Braille, or UEB, code.
- Wisconsin DPI will guide anyone who needs to take the national literary braille exam to the NCUEB. Wisconsin DPI will work with those who have taken parts of the WBCE to have the option to complete their testing requirements with the WBCE pathway until July of 2023 or they can always opt to take the NCUEB at any time. This gives two years available to those who have started taking the WBCE or four more onsite offerings of the Exam.
- Overall, it is going to be convenient and accessible for Wisconsin TVIs; accessible not only for individuals who are blind and visually impaired but accessible in terms of the Exam being locally available. DPI will need to call upon WCASS, our CESAs, LEAs and other agencies to offer the NCUEB in either a public or individual local test to support their teachers. These agencies would then work with NCUEB to collaborate on creating local proctors for the NCUEB, funded by NBPCB. The local tests would then be arranged per TVI need.

- Much like the messaging that DPI Licensing provides for applicants applying for a Wisconsin teaching license in elementary education (PK-5), special education, or reading who are required to pass the Foundations of Reading Test for Wisconsin, so too will DPI Licensing share the information about the NCUEB in their guidance and with anyone seeking the 1825 TVI certification under [PI 34.051](#).
- Messaging will be prepared to share with our HEAB grant funded in-state and adjacent state Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) with TVI training programs, so that they are fully aware. They can then offer the NCUEB to their TVI candidates who will be seeking the 1825 licensure through DPI. This will allow IHEs to ensure that their graduates arrive in Wisconsin ready to meet this statutory requirement.
- As the Outreach Director, please know that WCBVI Outreach regularly gathers stakeholder data and feedback from our families, professionals, LEAs, advocacy groups and other stakeholders. WCBVI Outreach has also been in charge of proctoring, scoring and providing results to test takers who register to take the Wisconsin Braille Competency Exam (WBCE). I want the Advisory Council to know that we have heard the voices and deep concerns of our stakeholders and WBCE test takers. Our test takers are requesting multiple testing sessions, including the opportunity to re-test immediately upon the conclusion of one WBCE exam, which is already an available option with the NCUEB. Also, our test takers have requested intense and comprehensive Braille Refresher courses in the areas of Unified English Braille (UEB), UEB with Nemeth, Braille Music, Braille Formatting and providing quality tactile graphics. Our WCBVI Braille Specialist position must fulfill these significant training requests per statute [115.525\(3\)\(b\)4](#), [115.525\(3\)\(b\)5](#), [115.525\(3\)\(b\)7](#), yet we have not been able to offer the volume of trainings which are requested. The move to the national braille exam, per statute, will also allow WCBVI Outreach to expand our options to provide multiple braille refreshers and braille trainings throughout the year and upon request. Many TVIs have shared that they are concerned about learning braille virtually or through correspondence within their IHEs. These vision professionals have requested intensive support related to braille content knowledge, refresher coursework and braille curriculum support as they enter Wisconsin as provisionally licensed TVIs. These training requests are within the statutes of what we are tasked to do as an Outreach program.
- Additionally, many other states have created work groups, task forces and, in some states, formal committees, to address braille and braille literacy collaboratively with stakeholders. As always, and per statute, DPI staff, including our WCBVI Outreach consultants and specialists, can provide research and support to any group or committee designated from an Advisory Council.
- When the December Advisory Council meeting is scheduled, I propose that the Advisory Council considers inviting Maria Morais, the NCUEB Test Coordinator, and Dr. Edward Bell, the Director of the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness at Louisiana Tech University who conducted the validation study of the NCUEB exam to join

your members at that virtual meeting. I would propose that each member ask their represented stakeholder groups to prepare any questions regarding the NCUEB by Monday, November 29th. Those questions could be shared with the NCUEB Test Coordinator and can be answered for you at the December Advisory Council meeting.

- As the WCBVI Outreach Director, I share forth our WI stakeholder concerns, mentioned previously, so that you can discuss, as Advisory Council members, whether the creation of a braille work group, task force or formal committee to discuss braille and ongoing professional development opportunities is something the Council wishes to explore for our state.
- Discussion re: Taskforce - to deal with the transition. Jennifer Ottowitz - Move to create a Subcommittee to gather input from stakeholders and advise on issues related to providing braille instruction to teachers of the blind and visually impaired in the state. Wendy Leising seconded the motion. Discussion to fine tune the statement, amended above. Approved unanimously.

12:20 - Break

12:30 Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library Updates (Zarina Mohd Shah)

WTBBL celebrated 60th anniversary, as well as Blindness Awareness Month. October 8 declared WTBBL Day by Mayor Barrett. Received commendation from Governor Evers. Had a videographer do staff and patron interviews to create a commemorative video.

Transitioned fully to the duplication on demand system, allowing to send multiple titles on a cartridge. More personalized and faster service. Up to 10 books on a cartridge, and send two at a time, so they have one while the other is being returned. Slowly transitioning to all 7,000+ patrons to this system. As part of this, will remove the physical collection - items will be returned to NLS. Collection will be all digital.

Reading disability certification - have gotten more applications than before, but not as many students as expected. Please share this information with teachers. Discussion on additional ways to share. Dawn Soto - RSNs, etc. Nissan Bar-Lev - IEP teams.

12:40 Teacher of the Visually Impaired Training Program Update Wanda Routier

First summer residency virtually in June. First group of students finish coursework in spring, and practicum in the fall. 8-9 new students are in braille course. Will be presenting a poster on using the WATI platform as a process to evaluate assistive technology for students with visual impairments.

B-3 Taskforce (Tracey Stanislawski)

DPI Taskforce Letter sent in June. Tracey summarized. Requesting response. Update the letter to be addressed to DPI rather than the Council. Dan will send to Julia.

12:50 Administrative Rule Update Presentation (Meghan Fredel)

- Link to digital text file: https://docs.google.com/document/d/17OHPNG6mhzGXA9k-8ur9IUS_ti_abvsY7cmmc5GMjNw/edit?usp=sharing
- Link to slide deck: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vyIV7QWkG9JB-xiGgHiCOzHTAgI0_j9q/view?usp=sharing

Set Upcoming Meetings

Monday, January 10

Wednesday, March 16

Tuesday, June 14

2:00 Adjourn

Move to adjourn: Jessie Grober, Erikke Nystrom-Grothaus second