

UTAH SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

Institutional Council Minutes

Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
250 North 1950 West, Ste B
Salt Lake City, Utah

Training Rooms 218 & 219

Date: April 23, 2009

4:30 p.m. - General Session

Attending: Von Hortin, Chair
Gwyneth Kenner, Vice-chair
Marilyn Call, Voting Member
Leslie Castle, Non-Voting Member
Ron Gardner, Voting Member
Bill Gibson, Voting Member
Jodi Kinner, Voting Member

Excused: Linda Braithwaite, Voting Member
Shelly Bridgewaters Voting Member
Scot Ferre, Voting Member
Kye Miner, Voting Member
Linda Otte, Voting Member
Michelle Tanner, Non-Voting Member

Also Attending:

Tim Smith, Superintendent
Betty Hall, Administrative Assistant

Interpreters: Crystal Cutler
Julie Loder

Administrative Staff Present:

Melanie Austin, Assistant Superintendent
Jennifer Howell, Director of Curriculum & Assessment
Marilyn Madsen, Program Director of Deaf South Region
Kim Morris, Director, Parent Infant Program
Liz Parker, Program Director of Deaf Central Region
Leah Voorhies, Director of Related Services

Others Attending:

Jan Carter, UIB
Jan Ferre', LCPD
Leslie Buchanan, USDB Deafblind
David Rodemack, USOE/DHRM
Christine Timothy, USOE
Karl Wilson, USOE

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Von Hortin called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m. and led the Institutional Council in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Public Comments

1. Mrs. Jan Carter explained that Utah Work Introduction Network (UWIN) has been an equal partnership with the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI), the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB), and Utah Industries for the Blind (UIB) since 2002. Eleven students are already enrolled in the program this summer and will go to work for seven weeks. They will participate in activities to strengthen independent skills. USDB is committed to supply computer equipment, transportation, etc. The funding UWIN had asked for at the last meeting would provide funding for the administrative position and an O&M Specialist. She thanked USDB for prior support and indicated many have benefited. The other two organizations have stepped forward to cover costs.

2. Mr. Ron Gardner asked for a point of personal privilege to announce the release of the bicentennial Louis Braille coin commemorating 200 years. It has tactile Braille on the coin. If an organization earns money themselves, the government will give \$10.00 of each coin purchased toward that cause. The Federation for the Blind is selling proof coins for \$39 and uncirculated coins for \$34.

3. Mrs. Leslie Castle announced that the Utah State Board of Education will officially announce the USDB superintendent's position open at their next meeting. They will conduct a national search. A selection committee will be put together. Mrs. Castle handed out a questionnaire to be filled out and returned. She encouraged Council to pass copies to other interested persons to fill out. Mr. Bill Gibson asked how she and the state board sees Institutional Council being involved. She explained that it is planned to have two members of the Council on the first tier of that committee.

CONSENT CALENDAR APPROVAL

Mr. Gardner made a motion to accept the Institutional Council Minutes of March 26, 2009, the Personnel Actions and the Donated Account Summary for March 2009. Mrs. Marilyn Call seconded. Motion carried.

Request for Funds for UWIN Program

Superintendent Tim Smith explained that Mr. Michael Sears searched diligently to find money for the UWIN program. Computer equipment, transportation, etc., are being provided. Because of our \$2.25M budget cut we have had to eliminate our own summer programs. If there are more cuts it would be personnel. Superintendent Smith recommended that we do not approve the request this year. Several Council members commented that the state has taken serious cuts which were imposed by the legislature. Even though this is a worthwhile program they concurred with the Superintendent's recommendation. Mrs. Gwyneth Kenner made a motion that we deny funding to UWIN this year. Mrs. Call seconded. The motion carried with Jodi Kinner opposing.

Budget

Mr. Bill Gibson asked if we are currently covering programs. In Mr. Sear's absence, Superintendent Smith answered that we are, at least until June 30, 2009. We have received information that there is an additional \$611,000 cut added to our budget cut so it has gone from \$2.25M to \$2.86M. Chairman Hortin expressed appreciation for the fiscal restraints placed so we can at least cover this year within budget. That has not been easy and some of the determinations for next year are not easily made either. Mrs. Call indicated the seriousness of budget cuts statewide and that how the future looks even more bleak.

Mr Karl Wilson shared that Superintendent Patti Harrington and the State Board of Education really went to bat for USDB which gave less of a cut to USDB and more cut to USOE; this will mean a 25% cut for them. USOE knew if they stood up for USDB they would have to sacrifice. Mr. Gardner asked if Mr. Wilson knew the percentage cut comparison. Mr. Wilson will get that information and send it on to Institutional Council. Mrs. Leslie Castle commented that Utah is 51 in the nation; it has the lowest amount of expenditure per student and yet USOE was still willing to take a hit. Mrs. Jodi Kinner appreciated that concern but feels USDB has it backwards and is protecting personnel rather than students. Mr. Wilson said positions vacated through retirement and cuts will equal 40 positions. Mr. Gardner commented that Council truly appreciates them fighting for our kids. He asked Mrs. Castle to thank Superintendent Harrington for her leadership.

Chairman Hortin expressed concern for next year if the economy does not turn around soon. Next year's cuts will be significantly higher. We need to watch and plan carefully. The Governor warned us not to use cliff mentality and use the stimulus too fast and then have massive cuts. It is a worry.

Progress Report on the Braille Standards Committee

Ms. Chris Timothy announced the formation of the Utah State Braille Standards and Effective Braille Practices Task Force. There are three committees within that group (1) the Braille Standards Advisory Committee, (2) the State Braille Standards Committee and (3) the Effective Braille Practices Committee. There will be a facilitator from Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center. The overall purpose is to align the

Utah Braille standards and practices with the Utah core curriculum and with generally accepted best practices using some of the states across the nation as our pattern. She cited the purpose of each committee and anticipated products. The committee is forming nicely; they are still waiting for a few responses. The first meeting will be held May 27, 2009. It is planned to be finished by Thanksgiving. Mr. Gardner indicated that he is on advisory committee and would appreciate having an opportunity to help choose dates for the meetings so he can be available.

Examples in Literacy

Mr. Gibson gave an interesting history of his educational background. He noted he began at the School for the Blind as a day student at 6 years of age. He added that his parents were always involved in things; they were natural advocates and were instrumental in obtaining the first legislative money for transportation. His first grade teacher had one way and only one way. If the child couldn't do it, there was something wrong; he couldn't do Braille. In second and third grade, the teacher had heart condition so had little energy to teach 8 to 10 students. Mr. Gibson made little progress. His parents were told he would never learn Braille. Then that teacher passed away. He got a new teacher and she made all the difference in his life. The teacher asked his mom to bring him to her home every day and he learned Braille. The expectation was a major factor. She made it fun; they used material that was personally interesting. She taught him for three years.

Mr. Gibson commented that in those days there was no PIP or parent advisor. He felt it important to note that had he begun with touch techniques at age 3 or 4 and had high expectations and had that been presented positively to his parents, he would be much further ahead today. He noted that he reads Braille well but had he learned earlier he would have had better success. Braille needs to be presented up front and with positive expectations.

Mr. Gibson indicated that when DSBVI sees students in adult services, those who are taught Braille earlier in life are more like to succeed in post secondary training and employment later on but folks who do not read it fast enough will not succeed. He strongly advocates slate and stylus. Even new technology does not replace the slate and stylus. He noted that we have a tendency to present print in a very positive way because it is easier. Had he not had Braille he would not have been successful. But he would have benefited even more if he had received it earlier. We need to make sure students who are blind and we know going in from their level of visual acuity that to be successful they need to get Braille instruction. We need to bring it to the forefront in a positive way. Braille is important. Expectation is important. We need to present it how they can accept it.

Presentation on Related Services

Ms. Leah Voorhies commented on her USDB work experience and then identified the scope of responsibilities and staffing of the Related Services Department. She explained that she is responsible for nine of the ten service departments. The tenth is deaf interpreters. The mission for Related Services is to facilitate students ability to

access the general curriculum and their IEP goals and to experience educational success. Ms. Voorhies explained her staff's assignments. There are two audiology booths that travel throughout the state. Almost every deaf child in the state goes through our audiology services. Mrs. Kinner asked how psychologists could evaluate the different population, i.e. deaf, blind, etc. Ms. Voorhies indicated her staff tries to do in training at USDB and spends an enormous amount of time in continuing education. There are very few grad programs dedicated specifically to these fields; it is largely continuing ed.

She gave a handout which gave the breakdown of each group and the services they provide. An error was found. She will send a corrected copy to Mrs. Betty Hall to send out to Council. Transportation requires coordination with districts. Ms. Voorhies explained how HB 296 impacts her staff. Some will change from merit to teacher salary positions.

Review and Discuss Bylaws for Advisory Council.

Chairman Hortin indicated we will defer this activity to the next meeting. We will need to work heavily in the May and June meetings and reach a conclusion in our all day meeting in August.

It was noted that the next meeting will be May 28, 2009. Both Mrs. Kinner and Mr. Gardner asked to be excused. Chairman Hortin will determine how many can attend to determine if the meeting could be held or needs to be rescheduled. He asked that everyone look at the USDB Institutional Council Bylaws and the Call to Civility and Community from The State Board. Mr. Hortin will send these to Mrs. Hall to distribute. He also mentioned WIMBA which is a medium to broadcast things on the internet. It is audio and visual. He thought we might be diverse enough to set up WIMBA for future meetings.

Update on State Board Rules

Mr. Wilson reported that they have not made significant progress. The last meeting had to be canceled because he could not attend. He has recommended that someone partner with him in the event he might not be available. The next meeting is May 5, 2009 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Location yet to be determined. It will require a broad stakeholder representation.

Mr. Gardner commented that in his meeting with Representative Sumsion and Mr. Wilson that they agreed in principal on the definitions of blindness, low vision, etc., and that do not all necessarily mean same thing. He asked if this is the time to it bring up with Ms. Carol Lear, indicating that what we say we are doing we are not because of the law. Mr. Wilson said it will be discussed; Ms. Lear has been going through this in the last few weeks. Mrs. Hall will forward the meeting notice to all IC members.

INFORMATION

Superintendent's Items

1. Graduation

Superintendent invited Council members to attend the graduation ceremony at 7:00 p.m. on May 14, 2009. It will be held at the Ogden campus.

2. Legislative Update

Superintendent indicated that HB 296 is bringing some complex issues. We will be moving some staff to other positions. Salary is big issue. Category A and category B are being worked on.

3. Building Update

Superintendent read a letter that he had sent to staff regarding Libby Edwards [copy on file].

4. Budgetary Process

Superintendent explained that the budgetary process is from USDB to USOE and then on to the Governor. **Correction – information added: Programs that were cut, including athletics, were discussed.**

OTHER

1. Jennifer Howell informed Council of some changes taking place in preschool beginning the 2009-10 school year. This was brought to our attention by parents who moved and found the program for their child was very different. We have programs from two hours and up. Adding transportation time makes some days very long. We also determined what we can do for children instructionally. We researched programs, USDB staff, then a team of preschool teachers. Beginning next school year, we will implement a four hour school day for four days per week. There will be time for family orientation so we can provide parents with information as to what they can do at home to help. This will be available to all families.

2. Mr. Wilson announced that it is time to complete the evaluation of the superintendent. He has forwarded the information to Chairman Hortin who will send it on to Council. Members are asked to complete the evaluation and mail it directly to Dave Rodemack. A team of three will collect and summarize the information and bring it back to Council by the end of May so the presentation can be made in June.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive session could not be held due to lack of a quorum.

Mr. Gardner moved to adjourn. The meeting came to a close at 6:35 p.m.