**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, January 19, 2012**

**10:00 a.m. – 11:44 a.m.**

**via WEN and telephone audio-conference**

**Present**: Dave Barker, Mike Bowman, Bob Bryant, Diana Clapp, Paige Fenton Hughes, Shon Hocker, Tracey Kinney, Jason McArthur (for Dustin Hunt), Kay Persichitte, Audrey Shalinsky, Ray Schulte, Allen Trent, Dirleen Wheeler and Terry Burgess (for Tom Sachse).

**Partnership Staff**: John Anderson, Audrey Kleinsasser.

**Guests**: Bill Gatley, Roger Humphrey**,** Scott Marion, Alan Moore, Janet Philp.

Paige Fenton Hughes, chair, called the meeting to order via Wyoming Equality Network (WEN) and telephone conference call. She welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially guests, then asked all participants to introduce themselves by sharing an education-related new year’s resolution. As the Wyoming Legislature is working in committee prior to the February 13 budget session, many of the comments related to involvement and communication with local and state policy makers. Several other comments focused on promoting civility in professional and other contexts. Several participants identified local initiatives they hoped to strengthen such as a learning community or another collaborative approach to improving instruction and strengthening curriculum.

Paige asked Audrey K. to present the meeting agenda and supporting materials which include the financial reports, November 3 meeting minutes, and the director’s report. Dave Barker moved approval of the agenda and related consent agenda items. Diana Clapp seconded the motion.

Then, Paige asked board members to turn their attention to the Partnership’s 2011 NNER report which Audrey K. files with Ann Foster, NNER executive director. With no further questions or additions to the report, Kay Persichitte complimented the Partnership on accomplishments over the calendar year and its work toward achieving the NNER’s tripartite mission.

In related NNER business, Dave Barker who represents the Partnership on the NNER’s governing council reported on recent action by the council to initiate the process of hiring an interim executive director to replace Ann Foster who plans to retire May 1. Candidates from any of the current NNER settings are eligible. The NNER governing council will examine applications and make a decision in late February. The interim director will serve for about 18 months during which time NNER leaders will examine recommendations from a strategic planning group that met December 3-5 in Seattle. Recommendations address issues ranging from the location and role of the executive director to strategies for increasing membership and engagement.

By telephone conference call, Scott Marion, co-director of the Center for Assessment joined the meeting from Georgia for a 30-minute conversation about recent educational policy decisions in Wyoming, including educational accountability and adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

Scott is leading the team of consultants working with the state to develop an educational accountability plan in accordance with 2011 legislation. His team has been advising a select committee of the legislature and also an advisory committee of educators to the select committee. Both committees met over the summer and fall. Their recommendations were reflected in the report Scott delivered to the Joint Education Committee, January 17. The JEC subsequently accepted the report and starting working a bill to reflect some of those recommendations. After taking the Partnership governing board through a brief history of the work, Scott specifically addressed the dilemma of Wyoming’s accepting and moving forward with the Common Core State Standards. He explained that the intent of the National Governors’ Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and ACHIEVE (a research and advocacy group) who forwarded the recommendations was to create a set of standards that could be described as fewer, clearer, and higher. Scott remains unsure if clearer and higher was met. One overarching purpose of the Common Core is to bridge the gap between high school and college/career. Scott also observed that by creating the standards in a way that works backward from the completion of high school, kindergarteners will have to know more than is expected of them now.

Scott reported that both the select committee and its advisory committee voted for Wyoming to adopt the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English/language arts. Wyoming’s State Board of Education likely will bring the issue to a vote later in 2012. Even if adopted, Scott warned that the transition from current state standards to the Common Core will not be easy. Gaps are large. Specifically, elementary mathematics Common Core standards are much more focused on numbers and operations. In English/language arts, there is much more emphasis on challenging text, for information (e.g., science, social studies, other sources). Writing will move away from writing prompts to responses to reading, information, and literary items. Given much work in English/language arts over many years, Scott thinks this content area is already more attuned to the Common Core expectations and will be able to respond faster. Scott reminded the governing board that if Wyoming goes with the Smarter Balance assessment consortium, tests for both contents would be online in 2015.

With that overview, Scott asked for questions. Allen Trent asked when the Common Core will come on line for other content areas. Scott responded that the only other content area in the pipeline is science which will build off the American Association for the Advancement of Science standards. He anticipated a draft soon.

Scott posed a question to those on the meeting about cross-collaboration across districts: Were districts working on instructional and curricular alignments? Representatives from Cheyenne, Sheridan, and Torrington said that they were, some for as long as two years. Other schools in the state are doing so as well, some reporting assistance from McREL. Scott suggested that cross-collaboration among districts would be wise and useful, especially in the current political environment in which some groups are challenging the CCSD adoption and the WDE is necessarily hesitant about moving forward to aid districts.

As the conversation with Scott concluded, he urged Wyoming districts to work more closely together. Scott observed that instructional and curricular differences will be exacerbated not reduced, if districts work independently. In one last example, Scott cited work in New York City on the development of replacement units, ones that are partially summative and partially instructionally relevant. In essence, the entire curriculum was not revamped.

Paige thanked Scott for joining the meeting and invited participants to send additional questions for Scott through Audrey K.

Then, Paige asked governing board members and guests to return to the meeting agenda and invited John Anderson to provide updates about the school-community initiative now up and running in Pinedale, Worland, and Torrington. John described each of the three projects: a) serving needy, hungry people in Torrington; b) a riverside park renovation in Worland; and, c) two different sets of classes working together in Pinedale. John anticipates that the next phase of the work will involve community college and UW faculty as experts to the students and their project plans. The community engagement projects will be show-cased at the October, 2012 NNER conference in Denver. Audrey K provided current planning information about the conference and briefly discussed the $20,000 conference participation scholarship that will be available to Wyoming presenters.

Paige closed the meeting by inviting those still on the call to identify what worked and what didn’t work about the meeting, especially the WEN and conference call format. Several responded that a conversation about the Common Core with Scott was timely and very helpful, especially the “focus on Common Core and educators, not legislators.” Others observed that while a WEN and conference call connected saved highway travel time for most, meeting face-to-face around a table was still the optimum way to conduct Partnership business.

Paige adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Meeting minutes prepared by Audrey Kleinsasser

January 20, 2012

**WHAT WORKED, WHAT DIDN’T**

**Pluses**

KP - not having the travel time

Ray – appreciated comments from Scott; technology didn’t make a bad difference; wanted to hear how he would speak to educators; I appreciated that

Diana – well prepared meeting really helped the WEN meetings

John – I’m really impressed with the network in Wyoming; you guys are phenomenal, quality of the meetings, the regularity, the high quality of the packet; good experience today

**Minuses**

KP – always issues with the tech problems

We tried to get too much done today; maybe cut the agenda back; set different kinds of agenda; to offer opportunities to interact and talk

Ray – an hour on the WEN is enough for me; I prefer our face to face meetings

AS – although I appreciated hearing about the CC, I missed our regular meeting and the grounding we do in reading a text and talking about it; I look forward to that part of our program and missed it today; I didn’t think we had too big of an agenda, but I missed that (the conversation)

Paige – we’re trying to go back to our activity in November, what kinds of things would be useful and helpful at our meetings; pertinent issues to all of us (I made notes to myself and we’ll build on this)