

Wyoming School-University Partnership Governing Board Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2010

Present

Board Members: Dave Barker, Debbie Bovee, Bob Bryant, Judy Ellsworth, Paige Fenton Hughes, Bob Gates, Shon Hocker, Joe McCann, Kevin Mitchell (via conference call), Audrey Shalinsky, John Weigel.

Partnership Staff: Audrey Kleinsasser, Brenna Wanous

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dave convened the meeting at 7:30am. As a number of participants were new to Partnership board meetings, Dave asked all participants to introduce themselves and summarize their views of the November 2 election in three or four words.

2. Minutes and Financial Report

The first order of business was to review and approve the meeting agenda, along with consent agenda items including the July 13, 2010, meeting minutes and the July-October Partnership bills. Paige Fenton Hughes moved to approve minutes and financial report; Bob Bryant seconded.

3. Partnership and NNER Grounding Activity: Annual Report to NNER

The National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) requires each of its members to submit an annual report exploring the year's successes, challenges, progress, and goals for the coming year. Audrey Kleinsasser reviewed the relationship between the Wyoming School-University Partnership and the NNER, such as the shared philosophy of needing large and meaningful collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary levels in order to facilitate change in schools. The NNER tripartite committee encompasses these groups; Wyoming's representation includes Audrey Kleinsasser (University, College of Education), Audrey Shalinsky (University, College of Arts and Sciences), and Rick Luchsinger (PK-12). Dave Barker is a member of the NNER's Governing Council.

Audrey K. asked participants of past NNER Summer Symposia to share their experiences and take-home messages. Audrey Shalinsky (2006 Symposium attendee) found the Symposium to model the types of conversations and democratic practices the Wyoming School-University Partnership values and seeks to incorporate into education. Paige (2010 Symposium attendee) indicated she wished she could have attended the Symposium in the earlier years of her Partnership involvement as it provided context for and connections between our work. She relayed that social justice is a conversation topic Wyoming citizens do not delve into enough, which is a liability in many parts of the state, particularly in Fremont County.

Audrey K. then led the group through the latest iteration of the NNER report draft. Prior to arriving at this state, Audrey K. drafted the document, Brenna W. edited it, and members of the executive committee provided feedback.

The group discussed one of the Partnership's primary challenges listed in the report: the expansion, maintenance, or elimination of the League of Democratic Schools program in favor of another civic curriculum. The challenge culminates from a lack of support or connection from the national level, and the difficulty schools face when adding yet another component to their curricula. Audrey K. suggested conducting a small inquiry with a focus group to determine if League of Democratic Schools is a valuable and sustainable program, or if the Partnership should switch focus to a different, more established program.

Another challenge identified in the report is the Partnership's relationship with University partner school districts, the eight districts which host student teachers. Judy Ellsworth, Director of Teacher Education, explained that while having student teachers in a limited number of schools helps mentor teachers spend more time with each student in their school, it also reduces the number of settings these important conversations take place. It is a product of Wyoming's rural and geographically distant nature, and a constant challenge.

One of many successes highlighted in the report was that of the Senate Enrolled Act 52: Improving Equity and Access to Quality Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Programs Through Consensus Building. Joe McCann of the Wyoming Community College Commission reported making significant progress over the last 18 months on making recommendations for dual and concurrent enrollment to be more accessible, more rigorous, and more aligned between high school, community college, and university educators.

After reviewing and discussing the document, Bob moved to approve the report (with additions and corrections discussed during the meeting), Paige seconded.

4. Update: Partnership's Email Marketing Project

With materials in the packet about the Partnership's iContact email communications and outreach, Brenna led the group through a discussion on whether Partnership emails contain appropriate and useful amounts of information, are sent at appropriate and useful intervals, and how to increase number and diversity of recipients within school districts. Brenna explained that the iContact program has been useful to some extent in addressing these questions through the program's email tracking feature, but is continuously seeking to improve meaningful and useful communications with Wyoming educators.

Governing board members indicated that successful receipt of communications start at the top administration level within the district. One board member indicated school board trustees would be a great audience for the information, but the communication should be approved by the superintendent first. Brenna requested that any additional suggestions be sent to her.

5. Update: World Languages Work Group

The World Languages Work Group grew out of the World Languages Institute held April 18-19, 2010 in Casper, hosted by the Partnership. The driving factor in the group's creation was a need for a common set of learning expectations for first year language courses (Spanish, German, French 1010), which is taught at the K-12 (dual/concurrent), community college, and university levels. The group of eight (five from the high school level, two from the university, and one from a community college) convened over eight conference calls to work out learning expectations documents for the three languages.

The group presented the documents at the Wyoming Foreign Language Teachers' Association annual conference in Casper October 22, and received overwhelming support and strong buy-in from the 75 attendees. The documents will be available for teachers across the state and levels to use in their curricula as an outline for what students should learn during their time in the class, not a requirement for how teachers should teach. The next step is to examine possible statewide placement tests and learning expectations for Spanish, German, and French 1020 courses.

This working group is a great example of a democratic convening, as it required multi-level collaboration, consensus from group members, feedback and buy-in from the teaching community, and support from administrators in each group. The results of the work will not be pushed on teachers as a top-down requirement, but as a grassroots collaborative effort done for the greater good of Wyoming students.

6. Update: 2012 NNER Conference – Denver

The NNER is looking to hold its 2012 annual conference in the mountain west, most likely in the Denver area. The NNER has asked the Wyoming School-University Partnership to assist in conference planning. Audrey requested feedback from the governing board, who did not express any concerns with this idea. Audrey indicated that in order to justifiably hold the conference in Denver, there must be very strong representation from Wyoming educators and students. Audrey and Brenna will work with the NNER to plan the conference that would be co-hosted by NNER settings in Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

Wyoming School-University Partnership Governing Board Meeting Evaluation Summary

November 4, 2010 Casper, WY

N=8

1. What were important or worked well in this board meeting?

Organization related

- Agenda and minutes were well organized
- Organization was great
- Short meeting
- Appreciated introductions of all
- Good time to talk about specific issues to our state

NNER related

- Good review of NNER annual report – generated excellent discussion
- Update on NNER
- NNER orientation was very helpful!
- Explaining some background about the tie to the NNER is valuable for everyone

Partnership activities related

- Transitions activities – challenges and opportunities – need for continued work
- Conversations concerning foreign language
- Conversation about issues at the college level which are similar to K-12 issues
- Conversations about K-12/UW link is always valuable
- Update on dual/concurrent enrollment issues
- Discussion of issues around concurrent courses, testing out of classes, etc.
- Discussion of future issues – what will happen with League of Democratic Schools, etc?
- Overview of the year's work
- Updates on ongoing work

Email marketing related

- Information about email distribution
- Appreciated Brenna's emails
- Information around e-mail

2. What did not work well during the meeting?

- The onsite meeting went well, unfortunate that our phone connection didn't
- The spider phone
- A chance to revisit some of the above

3. What might we improve in future meetings?

- I personally like a reading/article, something to spark our conversations
- A follow-up conversation about what the election means for education might be valuable
- I appreciate the packets beforehand. Getting info in advance makes the meetings more efficient.