**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Governing Board Meeting**

Wednesday, January 28, 2015

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Via video using the Wyoming Equality Network (WEN)

***Meeting minutes pending approval.***

Those in attendance included the following board members, guests, and staff.

***Governing board members:***

*Dave Barker (Platte 2), Andrea Bryant (Professional Teaching Standards Board, executive director), Michael Day (UW, College of Education, interim dean), Mike Durfee (Eastern Wyoming College, for Dee Ludwig), Dennis Fischer (Platte 1), Kathy Hitt (Fremont 1), Paige Fenton Hughes (Wyoming Department of Education, State Board of Education), Paula Lutz (UW, College of Arts & Sciences, dean), Kevin Mitchell (Park 1), Molly Potas (Professional Teaching Standards Board, board president), Leslie Rush (UW, College of Education, Teacher Education, associate dean), Ray Schulte (Park 6), Audrey Shalinsky (UW, College of Arts & Sciences, associate dean), Tracy Stibitz (Wyoming Department of Education, GEAR UP), Walt Wilcox (Natrona 1), and Rick Woodford (Big Horn 2).*

***Guests:***

*Rollin Abernethy (Wyoming P-16 Education Council), Jillian Balow (Wyoming Superintendent of Schools), Jo Chytka (UW, Statewide Longitudinal Data System update in board packet, and UW Center for Advising and Career Services, director), David Jones (UW, Vice President for Academic Affairs), and Dicky Shanor (Wyoming Department of Education, Chief of Staff).*

***Staff:***

*Audrey Kleinsasser (Partnership director) and Beth Wiley (Partnership office associate).*

Paige Fenton Hughes, the past chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. She welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that we had many guests at today’s meeting. Then, Paige began with a quote from NNER founder, John Goodlad, reminding everyone about the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. Paige asked everyone to introduce themselves and share their own reflections about Goodlad and public education in a democracy.

To begin the introductions, Paige made special note of our guests, including Jillian Balow, State Superintendent, Paula Lutz, UW College of Arts & Sciences Dean, Mike Durfee who was sitting in for Dee Ludwig, Rollin Abernethy of the Wyoming P-16 Education Council, Jo Chytka, the director of the UW Center for Advising and Career Services, and a UW representative on the SLDS, David Jones, UW Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dicky Shanor, Superintendent Balow’s Chief of Staff. Along with guests, this was the first Partnership board meeting for Molly Potas, President for the Wyoming PTSB board, and Tracy Stibitz, Gear Up and Wyoming Department of Education.

During the introductions, several board members noted that the idea of democracy within education was important. Michael Day commented that Goodlad didn’t create his ideas in a vacuum, but was building upon theories and ideas of early twentieth century educational thinkers such as John Dewey. Mike Durfee queried whether or not our education system always takes advantage of instructing students about government and democracy at the elementary levels. Kathy Hitt explained that she hopes for an education system that helps students who might not see how they fit into society envisage a place for themselves in a better future. Paula Lutz added that from the perspective of an administrator, college professor, and parent, she struggles with the financial end of schooling – how do you make that equitable? Audrey Shalinsky commented that within a functioning democracy, we should not expect things to function perfectly as there will be disagreement. Paige expanded on Audrey S.’s comment, noting that we should not be afraid to tackle tough issues and discussions just because everyone might not be in agreement. Kevin Mitchell noted that as models and mentors, educators need to do more than teach and talk about democracy; we also need to participate actively.

Paige took time to introduce Dicky Shanor, Superintendent Balow’s Chief of Staff. He added that public education is foundational to democracy because it provides all students a chance to succeed. He noted, too, that one way Wyoming works to reach elementary students is through Liberty Day. Attorneys speak to fifth grade students about the U.S. *Constitution*. Dicky mentioned that his experiences with it were that the students and instructors were always enthusiastic. Paige also introduced Wyoming State School Superintendent Jillian Balow. Jillian thanked everyone for a chance to be there and said it was an honor for the WDE to be included in this partnership.

Paige asked Audrey Kleinsasser to present the meeting agenda and supporting materials which included the financial report, the October 29 meeting minutes, and the director’s report. Audrey K. briefly explained each item. Kathy Hitt moved to approve the agenda and related consent agenda items. Andrea Bryant seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved.

Paige then introduced Kathy Hitt, interim superintendent in Fremont County School District #1, who led the grounding discussion. Kathy explained that the grounding today was twofold: first, the Partnership’s 2014 annual report for the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) and the *New York Times’* obituary for John Goodlad.

Board members noted that they thought there were several successful aspects of the 2014 report. Several members were excited and proud that Wyoming was co-hosting the 2015 NNER Summer Symposium. Tracy Stibitz added that she thought it was nice to see that Lost in Transition planners had been published in the NNER journal. Andrea was impressed to see the number of Wyoming educators who had been involved in the Lost in Transition initiative. Kathy shared that some of the teachers from her district had been leery to attend a Lost in Transition meeting because they suspected that university officials would talk down to them. They were delighted to report to Kathy after the meeting that no university officials talked down to them; the meeting was a collaborative process where everyone had an equal voice at the table. There were no additional inclusions for the report. Audrey K. thanked everyone for confirming the report, and let board members know that the Partnership staff would email this to the NNER by the end of the week, and if people had suggestions, they should email Audrey K. or Beth.

Kathy directed board members to John Goodlad’s obituary in the *New York Times*, and the ideas that Goodlad promoted over a long and fruitful life. Rick suggested that perhaps the inequality in schools across the nation, and even within Wyoming, wasn’t as extreme as it had been in the past. Ray Schulte commented that instead of the world of “talky teachers” that Goodlad found, Ray sometimes sees a lot of technology being used that may or may not be engaging or effective. Molly Potas, who is also currently teaching in Park County School District #16, added that teachers need to see their profession as a moral enterprise, especially in terms of technology such as social media that might enter into the classroom. She emphasized that the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board discusses this topic and looks for ways to encourage teachers to be moral professionals. Leslie Rush commented that the faculty in the University of Wyoming’s College of Education would agree that helping teachers see schooling as a moral enterprise is crucial. In addition, noted Andrea, parents rely on teachers and schools to help children develop not only academically but socially. Expanding on Andrea’s comment, Michael pointed out that, given the nature of Wyoming, the state exemplifies the classic Deweyan notion that schooling is central to communities. Michael said that there is something so Wyoming and positive about how our schools are epicenters of communities, and each school and community is unique.

Kathy asked what board members thought about Goodlad’s suggestion that students should be grouped by ability, not age. Tracy answered that for her children personally that approach worked for one daughter, but not another. Overall, she liked the idea, but wasn’t convinced that it worked for a lot of children. Paige pointed out that legislatively, there really was nothing preventing schools from doing this. While social constructs stop most schools from implementing a policy like this, law does not mandate against it. Audrey S. mentioned that much of Goodlad’s ideas came from his own experiences in one-room school houses. She saw a connection between that and recent work within UW to encourage undergraduate students to become mentors in classes they had already successfully completed. Paula added that the College of Arts & Sciences is currently emphasizing active learning, which involves students learning from other students.

Several board members noticed that many reforms cycle through education. Walt Wilcox, with twenty-one years in education, and Kathy, with forty-one years, both have seen some trends recycled. Both wondered if we stick with ideas long enough to know whether they were effective or not. Paige followed-up by saying that often we don’t begin with a specific end in mind. Along that vein, Kathy commented that schools have an amazing capacity for rejecting change mandated from state or federal levels. Kevin added that while legislators can mandate five different improvement plans, administrators, teachers, and local school boards won’t follow them if they don’t think they’re important at the local level. Rick pointed out that he believes you can’t legislate excellence in education, but excellence must be up to the local community, school board, and teachers. Kathy said that the school board in Lander often speaks of the erosion of local control. Paige noted that she sees this connected to the idea of not having a specified end goal. We don’t know exactly what excellence in education in Wyoming is, but we’re constantly saying we’re not there. Walt agreed, suggesting that part of that problem comes from the variety of different stakeholders in education. Rick expanded on that comment, arguing that if there was clarity about standards in Wyoming, schools could meet the targets. Right now, schools are being held accountable to too many different standards that don’t align with each other. As there were no further comments, Kathy thanked everyone for participating in the grounding conversation and turned the meeting back to Paige.

Paige thanked Kathy for leading the discussion, and then asked Audrey K. to provide other Partnership updates and reports. Audrey pointed out that the summer symposium was on track, and more information will be made available in the coming months. She also asked board members to note the information in board packets about other upcoming events, such as the Life Sciences Lost in Transition Summit and Project Citizen. Audrey K. then introduced Jo Chytka and asked her to speak to the SLDS. Jo mentioned that a bill before the Wyoming House today might change what information the data system could access. However, for now, Audrey K. and Jo would be seeking input from Partnership board members about what information they’d like to see available on the SLDS. After the SLDS task force creates a survey to solicit feedback, both Audrey. K. and Jo will be sending the survey out to their constituents.

Paige then introduced Paula, who provided updates about the University of Wyoming’s College of Education dean search. The committee has been working since October, but has a list of eleven candidates who will be interviewed by phone in early February. After the interviews, the committee will narrow it down to 4-6 candidates to come visit campus in person. Paula said that the pool of candidates is strong. And she thanked all of the members of the committee, which includes several Partnership board members. Paula commented that the committee was excellent. As a follow-up, David Jones thanked Paula for her work as chair, Michael Day for stepping in as interim dean during a difficult time, and the College of Education’s associate deans as well.

Andrea asked if there would be public presentations during the on-campus interviews. Paula answered that there would be. There were no further questions. Paula added that it’s been a pleasure for her to chair dean search and get to know her College of Education colleagues better as the College of Arts & Sciences works closely with education. Paige thanked Paula for her work and contributions.

Paige thanked Beth Wiley, Partnership office associate, for her contributions to the Partnership. Beth’s last day of full-time work with the Partnership will be February 6, but she will continue to work part-time for a few months, telecommuting to help Audrey K. and the Partnership during the transition to a new office associate. Paige also thanked everyone for attending today. She noted that as this was a distance meeting, we did not end with an evaluation feedback form as usual. However, if people had suggestions or input, they could always email Audrey K. or Beth. Audrey K. mentioned that we hope to see everyone at the next board meeting in Casper on April 29. Paige adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Beth Wiley, January 29, 2015.