**Meeting minutes**

**Wyoming School-University Partnership Governing Board**

**Thursday, July 12, 2012**

**Casper, Wyoming**

Those in attendance included the follow board members, staff, and guests:

**Governing Board**

Boyd Brown (Campbell 1), Diana Clapp (Fremont 6), Tammy Cox (Fremont 24), Joel Dvorak (Natrona 1), Joey French (WDE), Bob Gates (Carbon 2), Michelle Hoffman (Fremont 14), Tracey Kinney (Laramie 1), Dee Ludwig (Eastern Community College), Joe McCann (WY Community College Commission), David Nicholas (Washakie 1), Kay Persichitte (UW – Dean, College of Education), Audrey Shalinsky (UW – College of A&S), Ray Schulte (Goshen 1), Ron Sniffin (WEA), Allen Trent (UW – College of Education – teacher education), John Weigel (Converse 1)

**Partnership Staff**

Audrey Kleinsasser, Beth Wiley

**Guests**

John Anderson, Kevin Lewis

In the absence of Paige Fenton Hughes, chair-elect Diana Clapp called the meeting to order at 10:05am.

Diana welcomed everyone. Because there were several new members present, Diana had everyone introduce themselves. If previously involved in the Partnership, she asked for comments about how the Partnership had been useful for members professionally, individually, or as an organization. Several board members stated that involvement in the Partnership helps them to gain a different, broader view of education across the state. Several members mentioned enjoying the opportunities the Partnership provides for discussion and action, such as the Lost in Transition initiative, the school-community engagement initiative, and these board meetings where individuals at different levels have opportunities to share ideas, problems, solutions, inspiration, information, multiple perspectives, and encouragement.

With introductions over, Diana asked Audrey K. to present the meeting agenda and supporting materials, which included the financial report, the April 5 meeting minutes, and the director’s report. Joel Dvorak moved to approve the agenda and related consent agenda items. Michelle Hoffman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved.

Then, Diana opened the grounding discussion about M. Hartley’s essay, *An Engagement for Democracy*. Diana gave everyone a few minutes to re-read the article and refresh memories about the content. Everyone present was given a set of green, white, and red cards. Board members were asked to rate their organization using the cards with green representing the idea that their organization was successfully democratically collaborative, white indicating that there was some success, and red indicating that their organization was not democratically collaborative. Along with that, Diana asked the group to think about the difference between civic engagement and democratic engagement. Because Hartley’s essay had a few specific examples about community engagement, Diana turned the discussion to the Partnership’s school-community engagement initiative. Are those projects democratically collaborative? David Nicholas said Worland High School’s involvement in the initiative has been a great opportunity for kids to come up with ideas to improve the community and has been a good connection with the university, as well as other organizations in the community of Worland. Diana asked John Anderson to explain a little more about the school-community engagement initiative for our new members. John explained the program started in Nebraska with the basic idea to get students involved in projects to improve an area of their community or school. When the initiative began in Wyoming, Torrington, Worland, and Pinedale applied to participate. Audrey K. added that each district paid $2,500, and the Partnership provided a working budget for John’s travel and collaboration with university partners who would fit each project. For example, in Worland, the students worked with ecologists from UW to make decisions about landscaping renovations and improvements to Riverside Park. In Torrington, the middle school students wanted to set up a soup kitchen. Because of the socially negative connotations around the words “soup kitchen,” the students decided to call their community meal program *Comfort Kitchen*. These students are working with MaryKay Wardlaw of UW’s Cent$ible Nutrition program. In April, these students visited and observed the operation of the Laramie soup kitchen. The idea behind the school-community engagement initiative is to make the projects about the students helping their community, with the UW partners providing consulting and suggestions.

Diana then asked the group if anyone had any other examples of this kind of community engagement from students. Michelle Hoffman used the example that her community wants to use school facilities for various events and meetings. A student asked her why people wouldn’t use the gym down the road. Michelle responded that the school gym was in better condition. This student involved other students in asking how to get the community to use the other gym. They decided to paint and clean the other gym. Now, these students have started asking more questions. They are currently working on ways to help improve the senior center. During the project, there were staff members who questioned the validity of letting students out of class to paint or clean. But, Michelle commented that these students learned other skills and values from this project. Allen Trent added that the type of learning that comes out of a service project is rich and can’t be learned in an out of context situation within a classroom. We need to do a better job of showing how learning works in these situations. Michelle commented that convincing some staff members can be hard because they don’t want to give control to students. However, if students decide on a project, it becomes meaningful to them. We as leaders show them the door, but ask them to go through it.

Diana moved the conversation forward, asking what members would say about how their organizations teach for democracy. Answers included trying to find a way to mesh together student learning systems and the requirements of the Common Core State Standards. Diana asked if people felt that democratic learning in the classroom can only be as democratic as the surrounding environment. Several members were optimistic that classrooms could be democratic even without a democratic environment. Other members expressed concerns being voiced in their communities that the federal government is taking over local control. Many stakeholders view the Common Core that way, although the federal government did not write the standards. Boyd Brown pointed out that clear communication from the state and the school districts can help clear up some of those misconceptions. Diana then asked how members perceived the Common Core affecting their organizations. Michelle stated that if the question came down to what was best for students versus scoring well on tests, her district will support what is best for students.

Because there is a direct link between the common core, assessments, and accountability, Diana asked what would accountability look like if the primary purpose of education was creating democratically competent citizens? Kay Persichitte answered that the assessment would not be a paper/ pencil test, but perhaps a combination of experiences and documentation of different types of learning over a broad span of time instead of an annual yearly snapshot. David concurred and added that high stakes testing is just one part of a larger picture.

Diana stated that there is no measurement system for judging whether or not students become democratic citizens. Because this is true, what actions would each member need to take to defend the idea that there is value in educating for a democracy? Joel answered that we need to define what an educated citizen looks like and start with the end in mind. What is the necessary skill set for a citizen who can successfully participate in a democracy? The accountability bill is trying to do that – the intentions are not evil. The state stakeholders want to see a return on investment. So, educators need to engage in that process and try to show whether or not what we’re currently measuring shows that return; does our education system create successful citizens? How do we document that? Boyd added that sometimes educators compound the problem. Educators around the state repeatedly said that one assessment wouldn’t do it, so now the state is putting together all these different assessments as a response. Plus, educators should remember that not everyone has the same vision of what a successful democratic citizen looks like. Audrey Shalinsky commented that UW’s College of A&S is getting more complaints from parents and students based on political stances than in the past. Diana asked the group what happens when you give people their voice and you don’t like what they say back? Joe McCann responded that schools are a reflection of the local society, and state schools are a reflection of the state. There are two sides to education in these societies: accountability/cognitive and affect/value. K-12 education has really been pushed into the accountability/cognitive domain. Democracy is value laden, and it’s on the affective side. We have to value all different views and all different values within education, but this is difficult to do when the focus is on accountability/cognitive ability.

Kay reminded the group again that we all likely have different definitions for what it means to educate children to be successful democratic citizens. Our country is polarized politically. Several board members shared that they felt discussions within their school boards have shifted more to politics than local concerns and are often arguments in black and white. Joe pointed out that the US constitution was put together by men who had an external enemy. They had different political leanings, but had to make it work. It wasn’t set up to be followed forever exactly as it was. There’s always been controversy; it waxes and wanes. Kay agreed, adding that in the early 1800’s, the great education controversy was about the quality of the teachers and how the most intelligent people went into other professions. Now, two hundred years later, we’re still having the same politically charged discussions.

Diana wrapped up the grounding discussion by asking board members to break into small groups, and think about a specific stakeholder and his/her role in educating for democracy. Then, write down what would have to happen to absolutely assure the failure of that stakeholder’s ability to educate for democracy. Each group was to identify one or two barriers, and then think about whether or not those barriers currently exist. After about ten minutes, Diana brought us back as a full group, asking for comments, conclusions, or “aha!” moments from the small group discussion. Dee Ludwig and Tammy Cox said the failure to listen or bring an open mind to the conversation could happen no matter what the stakeholder brought to the table. Tammy added that it can be hard for her to listen to those who say things she doesn’t want to hear. Audrey S.’s group said expediency and time constraints were barriers, especially for administrators. Sometimes, administrators’ might not have time to listen or it’s more expedient to take the easy solution, instead of the hard one.

There was a short recess for lunch.

Diana reconvened the meeting after lunch, and turned the discussion over to Audrey K. who proposed the following quarterly schedule for the board’s 2012-2013 meetings.

Thursday, November 8, 2012 – 10am – 2pm, Casper

Wednesday, January 30, 2013 – WEN meeting, TBD during the regular 10am-2pm time block

Thursday, April 4, 2013 – 10am – 2pm, Casper

Wednesday, July 10, 2013 – 10am – 2pm, Casper

Boyd Brown moved to approve this schedule. Michelle Hoffman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed.

Audrey K. explained that the executive council for the Partnership is set for 2012-2013. The following members were re-affirmed in their NNER appointments.

NNER Governing Council – Dave Barker

NNER Tripartite Council – Kathy Hitt, K-12; Allen Trent, Teacher Education;

and Audrey Shalinsky; Arts and Sciences

Audrey K. reported that 2012-2013 membership dues are coming in regularly and distributed an updated list. Michelle suggested including a note in the membership packet that the invoice was enclosed. The goal is to have all memberships paid by August 15. Four new districts joined the Partnership so far this summer: Fremont #24, Fremont #38, Sheridan #1, and Teton #1.

The NNER annual conference is coming up on October 18-20, 2012, in Denver. The Partnership staff has been involved in the conference planning for about two years. Brenna Wanous, previous partnership office associate, was contracted to do the website and help with the registration website set-up. The registration site will be live July 15. All 33Wyoming proposals have been accepted. Professional development classes will be offered for teachers Saturday afternoon, October 20, for an extra cost of $30 per class. The Partnership will try to book the UW Fine Arts bus to take people from south-east Wyoming down and back each day. The Partnership has $20,000 to distribute among Wyoming presenters to the conference. Our goal is to pay all registration fees, then look at lodging and travel needs. All our board members are encouraged to register and attend. Full information can be found at [nnerconference.org](http://www.nnerconference.org).

Audrey K. brought attention to the annual reports for the school-community engagement initiative included in the board packet. To keep this initiative going, more funding sources need to be found. The participants from 2011-2012 will be presenting at the NNER conference. John Anderson added that two aspects he’d like to work on this year are better communication among the schools, the university, the Partnership, and the project coordinator, and finding ways to evaluate the initiative so we can make improvements. Diana asked if the initiative would be expanded this year. John answered that we were waiting to see if there was interest. Tammy expressed an interest in participating in the future. Audrey K. wanted others to know if they are interested to let her, Beth, or John know.

Audrey K. gave a short summary of the 2011-2012 Lost in Transition initiative, addressing materials in the board packet. The Partnership is looking to apply for more funding from the Qwest foundation and other sources as well. Diana asked if the flyers that explain differences between high school and college/university would be updated. Audrey K. answered that the P-16 council created those documents. They may or may not need to be redone to align with the common core standards. (To see these documents visit <http://www.uwyo.edu/wsup/publications/index.html> under High School to Higher Education Transitions Charts.) Diana commented that she uses these brochures to help her teachers see what they need to get students ready for post-secondary education. Audrey S. pointed out that these brochures are also useful to give to parents. Diana asked if the Lost in Transitions initiative has strong k-12 participation. Audrey K. responded that it does. This is the first year a meeting was rescheduled because of inclement weather. The life sciences group ultimately decided to cancel because not enough K-12 participants registered for the rescheduled date.

Audrey K. pointed out that the director’s performance evaluation was also included in the board packet. This document was approved by the governing board’s executive committee and will be used to guide the director’s work this year.

Kay then discussed the upcoming UW College of Education’s Fall Literacy conference, September 21-22. The conference has been well-attended in the past, and is built around workshops taught by classroom teachers so educators can take the ideas back to their classrooms. The College of Education hopes to start a follow-up conference in the spring where educators could discuss what they were able to try in the classroom, what worked, and what didn’t.

Audrey K. pointed out that there was also an update in the board packets from the Wyoming National Board Certification Initiative. Their goal is to get a core of nationally certified teachers in every county in Wyoming. There was no further discussion.

Diana asked everyone to complete an evaluation form and adjourned the meeting at 1:50pm.

Minutes prepared by Beth Wiley

July 16, 2012

**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Governing Board Meeting Evaluation Form**

**July 12, 2012**

**Session Feedback transcribed July 16, 2012 n = 9 responses**

***All responses from evaluation forms were transcribed exactly as written.***

**Not all respondents answered all questions.**

1. **What insights or reactions did you have from the discussion from Hartley’s essay, “An Engagement for Democracy”? Was this essay and discussion useful? Why or why not?**
* Interesting – discussion concerning what is community service and what is service learning
* Very Global – Not useful to me.
* Reactions to the political climate . . . It strikes me that fear of politics lead to a shut door of Democracy.
* It was helpful to hear others’ interpretations of Democracy.
* Good article Good conversation
* My reaction from the discussion was this is a huge undertaking; and we need to have a plan to start. I liked defining a definition of this topic of what is “Democracy”. Very Interesting.
* People here seem to know what “education for democracy” means

reminder to listen to all voices, even one that personal disagree with

success of democratic engagement (in Wyoming)

* Good conversation in small groups
* Excellent conversation; might add a small group discussion component
1. **For those who received an invoice packet for 2012-2013 membership dues last month, were the inclusions useful? Did you share the newsletter and/or the flyer about our year’s activities? If so, with whom? What kinds of flyers and/or reports would you like to see in the future? Other suggestions?**
* Planning on sharing several of them
* It was great. No issues.
* Yes, yes, colleagues . . .
* I didn’t receive it
* Yes, same, all stuff
* I just got the packet, but will be sharing it ASAP.
* N/A
1. **Often, the encouragement of another superintendent is instrumental in recruiting new school districts for Partnership membership. Who or what convinced you to become a Partnership member? Did you do any recruiting this year? What could we do in the future to encourage other school districts to join?**
* Founding Member – I will work on some of the non-member supts.
* N/A
* Regional WASA mtngs
* Communication – is key – I think all people would be interested in learning more on helping our students be involved in community
1. **How might we improve the meeting? (e.g., board member engagement, information prior to the meeting, the meeting site, the agenda, printed materials supporting the agenda, the pace, time frame)**
* Very good
* On-line agenda & Materials please
* More task take aways – I would like to see action plans for each entity.
* N/A
* In advance or establish on agenda: Sharing time for “what’s new”
1. **Reactions, suggestions, recommendations, or anything else you’d like meeting planners to know?**
* Enjoyed the networking
* Great meeting.
* Enjoyed the meeting and learned a lot. Great networking
* Good Work
* This org is great! I am ready to continue working with this initiative.
* Really like the map
* Smooth meeting – All agenda items addressed