

Wyoming School-University Partnership Governing Board Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2011

Present

Board Members: Dave Barker (Platte #2), Bob Bryant (Wyoming Department of Education), Judy Ellsworth (UW College of Education), Kathy Hitt (Fremont #1), Marty Kobza (Hot Springs #1), Kay Persichitte (UW College of Education), Audrey Shalinsky (UW College of Arts and Sciences), Ray Schulte (Goshen #1), John Weigel (Converse #1).

Calling in: Paige Fenton-Hughes (Wyoming Department of Education), Shon Hocker (Big Horn #1), Kevin Mitchell (Park #1).

Staff: Audrey Kleinsasser and Brenna Wanous (Wyoming School-University Partnership).

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dave Barker convened the meeting at 10:00am. Dave asked all participants to introduce themselves, as there were three board members participating via conference call. This was the first Partnership board meeting for Marty Kobza and Kathy Hitt. There were technical difficulties with the phone connection causing Kevin Mitchell to disengage.

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 November 4, 2010 meeting minutes and the November-January Partnership bills. Kay Persichitte noted one correction in the November 4 minutes: there are eight partner school districts rather than six. Bob Bryant moved to approve amended the minutes and financial report; Kay seconded.

3. Partnership and NNER Grounding Activity: Shared reading: *Solitude and Leadership* by William Deresiewicz

Dave opened the discussion by stating the author writes that leadership and ‘moving up the ladder’ aren’t always mutually exclusive. Many board members agreed there is always some degree of hoop-jumping required in any job, particularly in a bureaucracy, and in order to be promoted to a position of leadership, one may need to determine which hoops are worth jumping through. Audrey Shalinsky noted that being a successful hoop-jumper, however, does not preclude being a leader. Marty Kobza and Paige Fenton Hughes highlighted the need to find the balance between working within the system and determining what is important enough to go out on a limb for in order to instigate change.

Dave turned the discussion to sustained reading’s ability to concentrate solitude (as suggested by the author), and whether we as leaders and our students do this on a regular basis. Marty noted the Northwest Superintendents’ Association, by recommendation of Kevin Mitchell, is beginning a reading and online discussion group in hopes of an enriching conversation. The group is beginning with *Buffalo for a Broken Heart: Restoring Life to a Black Hills Ranch* by Dan O’Brien. Other board members agreed that book studies they participate in are very powerful ways to identify and develop core values in education. Ray Schulte noted that educators love to converse, and reading discussions allow them to forget menial classroom problems and focus on larger-picture ideas.

The group discussed the myth of children’s ability to multi-task: when students text, Twitter, surf the internet, etc., they skim information. Whether they are able to reflect deeply, employing patience and concentration, is not certain. As educators and leaders in our schools and communities, it is crucial to set an example for introspection and sustained concentration.

Dave turned the discussion to how true leaders must think not only about how things are done, but also if they are the right thing to do in the first place. The group discussed the disconnect and lack of trust between communities, schools, and legislation. As an example, Marty highlighted the Alaskan School Board Association’s initiative to visit every community and rebuild trust and grassroots support. Wyoming’s rural setting makes this a feasible model to replicate through the Wyoming Association for School Administrators or School Board Association.

Schools are a service for the common good, and in some cases are commandeered by special interests groups. It is time to refocus on the society as a whole.

4. **2011 NNER Summer Symposium and 2012 NNER Annual Conference discussion**

The NNER Summer Symposium is a great opportunity to learn more about the basis on which the Partnership works. Past attendees have reported it to be a valuable use of time and a great resource for networking and grounding. The Partnership will support up to five Wyoming educators' participation by paying the \$750 registration fee, and encouraged new board members to consider attending. There will be two informational conference calls February 11 and 14 to identify individuals interested in attending. The Wyoming cadre will include a mix of K-12, General Education, and Teacher Education representatives.

Each fall the NNER holds an Annual Conference, last year in Illinois, this year in Connecticut, and in 2012 Denver is proposed. The Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska partnerships are considering co-hosting the Denver meeting. In order to make it a more successful meeting than in past years, Wyoming would need to commit to significant local participation, including teachers and administrators on secondary and post secondary levels.

The conference will be held the second, third, or fourth weekend of October, likely Thursday through Saturday. However, Ray pointed out that this time of week is difficult for high school faculty and administration to be away, and a Sunday through Tuesday meeting will ensure a much higher participation level from this group. Audrey will pose this option to the NNER conference planning committee.

5. **Spring 2011 Partnership Board Meeting Date Check**

Bryan Monteith (Park #6) recently pointed out the next scheduled board meeting conflicted with the National School Boards Convention the week of April 7. The attending board members agreed to vote on whether March 31 or April 7 would work better for their schedules. Brenna will send out a Doodle poll shortly after the meeting to determine which date works for the most individuals, and send an email to all board members confirming the final date.

6. **Around the Partnership Updates**

Newsletter: The Partnership currently has over 1,000 contacts on various email listservs, broken into topic or positional categories for effective outreach. The December 2010 newsletter was distributed to all individuals on the listservs in addition to a number of requested hard-copy newsletters. Any board members who have events or news in their schools are encouraged to inform Audrey K. or Brenna to include it in the next Partnership newsletter.

In Praise of Education Conference: Despite a small attendance, the In Praise of Education Conference attendees provided extremely positive evaluations. Board members noted that those who attended the conference seemed to have gained a lot from the experience.

Wyoming P-16 Education Council: The Wyoming P-16 Education Council is expanding its membership to include a community college member, a University of Wyoming faculty member, and two representatives from the public and private sectors. The nomination form is included in the board packets, and board members are encouraged to consider nominating themselves or colleagues.

Lost in Transitions Initiative: Five "Lost in Transition" meetings will occur this spring, one in each Hathaway content area. Each content area meeting will focus on issues that students struggle with as they transition from high school to higher education.

The first event this spring is math in Riverton on February 17-18, focusing on college algebra and the recently adopted common core standards. The 6th Annual Life Sciences Summit will take place on February 23 in Douglas. The 4th Teaching Writing in Wyoming Colloquium will occur in Casper on March 6-7 and will include a Dinner and a Book event. The first of the Social Sciences Transitions meetings will take place in Cody on March 25. Finally, the 2nd World Languages Institute will be again in Casper on April 15. More information for each of these events is available at www.uwyo.edu/wsupt/transitions/index.html.

National Board Certification: Wyoming's goal for increasing National Board Certified teachers was 10% by 2010. The actual increase was closer to 5%, but is a great example of a grassroots, public-private initiative and a great opportunity for staff development.

College of Education Pamphlets: Judy Ellsworth provided College of Education outreach pamphlets to the board members. Pamphlets were created to bolster the public's perception of the College and counter-act negativity associated with higher education. The pamphlet quantifies the actual monetary value of time student teachers spend in Wyoming classrooms and the College's impact in Wyoming.

Dave adjourned the meeting at 12:25. He encouraged board members to complete evaluation forms and enjoy lunch provided.

Wyoming School-University Partnership Governing Board Meeting Evaluation Summary

January 20, 2011 Casper, WY

N=5

- 1. Three things that were important or worked well in this meeting**
 - a. The common reading and discussion were valuable (x4)
 - b. Thanks for Partnership updates!
 - c. The P-16 Council info – valuable to know it is at work
 - d. Dave led us well!
 - e. Packet was excellent (x2)
 - f. Thought this was one of the best grounding discussions
 - g. Explaining upcoming events
 - h. Value of comments
 - i. It was nice to see new participants
 - j. Shared participation

- 2. What did not work well in this meeting**
 - a. Phone connection (x4)