

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION

Education Committee
Meeting Minutes

LOCATION
Governor's Council Conference Room
3601 C Street
Anchorage, Alaska

Teleconference
Meeting Date
September 24, 2015
1:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Amy Simpson – Council Chair
Jill Burkert
Angie Fraize
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus
Clayton Holland
Margaret Kossler
Patrick Pillai

Community Members and Guests:

Amber Parker
Maria Pepperworth
Amy Westfall
Donna Girard

Staff:

Christie Reinhardt
Brittney Howell

Minutes prepared by: Jeannette Rice, Peninsula Reporting

Call to Order –1:30 p.m.
Roll Call

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR
INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND GOOD NEWS

Christie Reinhardt explained that Margaret Kossler had to step down as chair of the Education Committee, so Amy Simpson, the Council chair, will chair this meeting.

Donna Girard of Homer, who is raising her 6- and 7-year-old grandchildren who experience disabilities, introduced herself.

Maria Pepperworth, mother of two autistic children, is active in Anchorage autism events and organizes an annual concert called Anchorage Rocks for Autism. Maria works in the school district as a substitute TA.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus announced that her daughter Ivory, the only student in Kiana taking a college course for dual credit, had completed FASD 101 training with Jeanne and Mike Jeffery.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

There was not a quorum at the beginning of this meeting, so the agenda was not formally approved.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

With no quorum, the minutes from August 20, 2015 were not approved at this meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

REPORTS

Chair's Report

Christie Reinhardt noted that the Education Committee needs a new chair, and asked committee members to ponder their availability. Christie added that the Governor's Council is going to be reduced from 28 to 23 members, and determinations about chairs and committee members will be made at the October meeting.

SESA

Patrick Pillai reported that SESA has hired a new multiple disabilities specialist who is a native of Valdez. Also, two SESA specialists are LEND fellows this year, and CPI and LEND training are planned for SESA staff.

Patrick announced that Dani Bowman, a college student who is on the autism spectrum and has started a company called Powerlight Animation Studios, will be coming to Alaska to participate in the road show that the Alaska Autism Resource Council (AARC) puts on. She will share strategies and how to plan for success.

DEED

Representatives from the Department of Education and Early Development were excused from this meeting.

CASE

Clayton Holland noted that Mike Jeffery had visited the Kenai area and was interested to see the FASD services offered by Frontier Community Services and the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

Clayton Holland reported that CASE would have the next in-person meeting in October during the Special Education Directors' Conference. Clayton said that he had testified on behalf of CASE last week in favor of allowing other health professionals besides physicians to diagnose FASD under "other health impairments".

Clayton remarked that the restraint and seclusion legislation that was passed last year requires 100 percent of all certified staff to have training, but did not include a fiscal note, raising questions of how to come up with the time and substitutes to cover that in today's fiscal climate.

FASD Workgroup

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus announced that the FASD Workgroup has decided on a mission statement: "The Alaska Governor's Council Workgroup on FASD, in collaboration with stakeholders and partner agencies, advocates for a comprehensive service delivery system so that individuals and their families impacted by prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) / Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) have access to effective early interventions and lifelong supports."

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus said that she had an incredible time in Nome, where she and others went recently with the Alaska Brain Injury Network and ANTHC. They did trainings and meet-and-greets, and Jeanne and Mike Jeffery and Ivory taught FASD 101 and attended an FASD meeting, among other activities. Many people attended from various parts of Alaska and agencies.

Jeanne added that she heard a disturbing comment from a case manager who said that she feels like her job is to fight the state at every turn. Jeanne said this shows that more progress needs to be made in services.

Autism Ad Hoc Committee

Christie Reinhardt said that the Autism Ad Hoc Committee will be meeting all afternoon on October 6 at the Mental Health Trust. They will have the same facilitator as at the last two meetings, and the specific goal of the meeting is to finish the Five-Year Plan.

State Board of Education

Christie Reinhardt reported that she and Britteny attended the State Board of Education meeting in Sitka recently. The Department released a draft which adds FASD as a category specifically mentioned under other health impairment eligibility. This would make Alaska one of the first states to

name FASD under “other health impairments” in statute. The Department expects a lot of comments on this issue, and Christie said that the Department is going to rely heavily on the counsel of Chief Medical Officer Jay Butler, so the Council would direct its advocacy toward him, whose office is right next door. Christie said that staff are planning to meet with stakeholder partners, plan some discussions, and have comments prepared by the December deadline.

OLD BUSINESS

Community Forums

Christie Reinhardt said that the Council has been having community forums in various locations, and it has been exciting to see how much people want to give input to help improve systems statewide.

NEW BUSINESS

Five-Year Priorities for Council Meeting

Christie Reinhardt led a discussion of what five-year priorities the Education Committee wants to bring to the October Council meeting. Christie reminded committee members that as the state Special Education Advisory Panel, they are required to produce an annual report to OSEP identifying areas in need of improvement. The committee discussed issues and developed a list of four concerns:

- Graduation rates: Students with disabilities graduate at lower rates than general ed students.

Related to this issue, Christie said that OSEP has ordered the SEAPs to examine suspension and expulsion rates within their states, since it has been identified as a federal problem.

- Meaningful and appropriate workforce development and professional development opportunities for teachers: More training is needed for all school staff, and improved financial incentives for paraprofessionals. Considering the high need for workers in this

field, high schools could develop voc-tech programs to help prepare students for such careers.

- Inclusion: General ed teachers should have sufficient training and knowledge to be able to include special ed students in their classrooms. Christie Reinhardt noted that Alaska has a higher incidence of kids being excluded from regular classrooms with same-age peers than other states.
- Transition planning: In community forums, people have commented that expectations for transitions to employment or independent living are not laid out early enough, and people could use more support systems at these junctures. Christie Reinhardt added that, in fact, Alaska is not in compliance with OSEP in the Part C to Part B transition.

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

- October 6: Autism Ad Hoc Committee Face-to-Face, Mental Health Trust Authority, Anchorage
- October 7 - 8: Governor's Council Meeting, Special Olympics Building, Anchorage
- October 18 - 20: Alaska Principals' Conference, Anchorage Sheraton
- November 5 – 8: Alaska Association of School Boards, Hilton Hotel, Anchorage

Time and Date of Next Meeting

The next Education Committee meeting will be on October 15th from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.