

Meeting Summary

Montana Public School Renewal Commission

State Capitol-Room 317

March 15, 2004

10:00 a.m.

Lt. Governor Ohs, Presiding

Participating: Mary Whittinghill, Mike Nicosia, Linda McCulloch, Sen. Don Ryan, Carter Christiansen, Darrell Rud, Lt. Governor Karl Ohs, Steve Gibson, Ron LaFerriere, John McNeil, Scott Sielstad, Shirley Barrick, Tonia Bloom, Kirk Miller, Rep. Holly Raser, Bruce Messinger, Eric Feaver, Robert Murray, Keith Allen, Verdell Jackson, Sen. Bob Keenan, Peggy Treno, Ric Floren, Cathy Day, and John Fitzpatrick.

Recorder: Suzan Hopkins

The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m.

Lt. Governor Ohs presented information regarding the standing of the School Renewal Commission budget. Changes in facilitation have been made to ensure resources are more effectively utilized.

Kirk Miller spoke about the parking lot to allow for discussion to move more fluidly. The parking lot is an intermediate area to put the thoughts that we have all agreed upon. Will allow a full discussion of all of the thoughts without having to have a unanimous decision. Hopefully this will allow for a more efficient discussion.

Lt. Governor Ohs asked if there were any changes to the meeting summary from February 23, 2004. He mentioned that there would be a series of reports from the working groups and a report on the Gifted and Talented Program.

Ron LaFierre introduced the Gifted & Talented group. He introduced Kathy Bailey, Gifted and Talented coordinator with Corvallis Schools, and Jan Lapean, who is an Associate Professor in the gifted and talented field. Ms. Lapean stressed the need to be able to employ a mechanism to identify children with outstanding potential. She pointed out that currently there is no legislation that funds gifted and talented and there is no provision in NCLB for gifted and talented. There is also no coursework for teachers to handle gifted and talented children. She stressed that all voices should be recognized. The talents and academic needs of children who perform above other children should be considered. Her opinion on the essential components for quality education for gifted and talented youth included, an advocate for children on staff, residential expertise, policies that talk about access to curriculum that is a match to the children's abilities, and professional training.

Michael Hall, OPI, Title II, discussed the Accreditation Standards and Montana State Law as it pertains to gifted and talented. His education did not prepare him properly to be able to teach gifted and talented students. Schools should meet ALL childrens' needs. Mr. Hall then discussed ARM 20-7-901 which describes a definition of gifted and talented students and professionally qualified persons. 20-7-902 addresses school district programs to identify and serve the gifted and talented child. 20-7-903 addresses programs that serve gifted and talented children and makes sure of their compliance with board policy regarding funding. 20-7-904 addresses review and recommendation of further proposals.

Kathy Bailey passed out an identification form, used to identify gifted and talented students utilized in Corvallis Schools, which uses multiple instruments. Primary identification criteria consist of MAT (Matrix Analogy Test), TCS (Test of Cognitive Skills), and Creativity Test (not established at this time). The needs she feels should be met in order to properly address gifted and talented students' requirements are: small classes, continued teacher preparation, and more gifted specialists in the school to be able to identify these special needs children.

MAPS Working Group Report-Kirk Miller reported on the conference call held on 3-11-04. (See Working Group Minutes) Matt Bugni, OBPP, outlined the maps the group works from. A map illustrated different levels of base millage for each district. One map demonstrated the comparison of elementary and high school both combined and separated. The statewide mills were calculated by meeting base budgets for each district statewide. Mr. Bugni explained that approximately 66.2 mills statewide would be required for the state to fund the BASE budgets. Need to examine oil and gas revenues. Centrally assessed properties can play a role in developing equity for homeowner property taxpayers.

The group needs to:

- ◆ review the use of centrally assessed property taxes
- ◆ the benefits of all centrally assessed property
- ◆ cooperate with Interim Tax Reform Committee,
- ◆ get data that shows state revenues and state expenditures on education
- ◆ creation of a map with oil/gas 2.7 mills returned to the districts,
- ◆ investigate other minerals
- ◆ invite School Business Officials to lend expertise
- ◆ establish next meeting

Regionalization of Education Services Working Group Report-Kirk Miller presented an overview of the findings of the group at the last meeting (3/10/04). (See Working Group Minutes)

The group is working on the following:

- ◆ Madalyn Quinlan to check into possibility of generating a map of Montana with the boundaries of all MASS Regions, CSPD Regions, Special Ed Co-ops, and Curriculum Co-ops in order to examine commonalities

- ◆ Madalyn and Kris Goss to compile results of survey
- ◆ Madalyn and Kris to categorize survey results and Service Needs list into the three categories in the research document “Educational Service Agencies: Initiating, Sustaining, and Advancing School Improvement”.
- ◆ Decision on date and time of another conference call meeting to be established

Consideration of funding formula ideas

Tonia Bloom distributed a document discussing funding recommendations compiled by her and Carmen McSpadden. (see document) Two main issues of importance in the document are equity and adequacy.

Carter Christiansen stated that the last time Montana developed a funding formula it was based on available dollars. He is working on a formula and should have something by the next meeting.

John McNeil said Montana must think about models that are used by other states that have a general fund, a capital fund and a transportation fund.

Karl Ohs stated that policy makers must generate an explanation that is understandable for the general public

Verdell Jackson stated that in regards to current funding formula there is too much emphasis on per student cost

Tonia Bloom stated that the legislature could change formula as long as there are no large disparities in spending.

Public Comment

Tova Winston, parent of gifted child, thanked Commission for tackling issues regarding Gifted and Talented and taxation. She related a personal story demonstrating how her child was bored and frustrated with school and the lack of a challenge. Her child’s teacher told her every child would be treated equally in her class. Her child was put into a classroom with students that were two years older than she to assist in providing her with an education that was suitable for her needs. She feels we are paying a great deal of money for disabled students, but a miniscule amount to gifted and talented students. She felt that the commission needed to bring up the top of the bell curve (gifted and talented) and subsequently all students will improve.

Lunch

Lunch provided by the Farm Bureau

Meeting Reconvenes

Cathy Day, John Fitzpatrick and Madalyn Quinlan (substituting for Linda McCulloch) joined the meeting after lunch.

Dr. Miller (in the absence of Lt. Governor Ohs) reconvened the meeting and asked if anyone had questions regarding the funding document that Tonia Bloom distributed before lunch.

Jim Standaert, LFD was invited to speak on a handout illustrating K-12 district sources of revenues. Try to build the cost side of the equation and then fund it. (See Document)

Kirk Miller distributed a document related to an announcement made that morning by the United States Department of Education regarding No Child Left Behind.”

Barriers to Consolidation Working Group Report

John McNeil gave an overview of issues discussed at the last meeting of this working group. This document was a summary of issues identified in sources considered by this group. The sources included:

- Consolidation and Annexation Issues
- School Consolidation Analysis
- Barriers to Consolidation and Annexation-Possible Solutions
- Governor’s K-12 Public School Funding Study Advisory Council-Report and Recommendations, December 2001
- School Reorganization in Montana-Project SEEDS, 1993

This document also attempted to lay out some clear technical issues and then present some of the pros and cons identified with regards to changes commonly proposed to promote consolidation.

Continued Discussion on Definition of Quality Education

Concept of Quality

Assume Social Responsibility

Proposed Changes

Gifted and Talented

Ron LaFerriere presented a summary of needs addressed by this group including

- ◆ the improvement in teacher preparation programs
- ◆ gifted and talented children are significantly underserved with regards to finance and mandates
- ◆ need technical support and expertise to identify needs of gifted and talented children

Mr. Laferriere stated the group does not have problems with Accreditation Standards or Montana State Law, need to re-establish personnel support.

Eric Feaver felt funding of gifted and talented shouldn't have been earmarked by the legislature.

Discussion then occurred about governance issues that need to be worked out. BPE has right to declare a standard. A recommendation may be made to BPE to examine the standard for gifted and talented. Montana must examine teacher preparation programs to address the needs of gifted and talented. Professional development and the funding of needs to be examined.

Verdell Jackson said schools should examine teacher in-service programs and the testing issue to identify gifted and talented children.

Tonia Bloom passed out a document comparing a great student with a gifted and talented student.

Lt. Governor Ohs stated the definition of gifted and talented is ambiguous. There needs to be a more realistic way to determine who is gifted and talented.

Senator Ryan felt that if gifted and talented were properly identified and their needs met, all children would benefit and there would be less children in juvenile justice system.

Scott Seilstad asked how rural schools can identify these children. He wondered if the possible regional service centers could help.

There was no objection to move the gifted and talented issue to the parking lot.

Concept of Quality

Reason Critically and Creatively

Proposed Changes

School Nutrition

A breakfast program is needed for every student. Many districts do offer breakfast.

Vending machines are a hindrance to school nutrition, but the money is used to fund school activities.

The questions remaining are:

- ◆ Does this concept need to be included in the concept of a quality education or should it be left up to the local districts?
- ◆ Does proper nutrition education serve students better than a particular breakfast or lunch programs?

There was no decision on moving the item to the parking lot.

Concept of Quality

Communicate Ideas, Knowledge, Thoughts and Feelings

Proposed Changes

Special Education

Ron LaFerriere spoke on special education. He feels this issue belongs in the parking lot. Montana follows what the federal government mandates. Still, the state provides much of the support for special education. Toll on local taxpayers has increased dramatically which creates disproportionate cost reimbursement

Where does No Child Left Behind fit into the special education issue? One of the big issues with NCLB is that there are some conflicts with IDEA. NCLB mandates that all students need to be 100% proficient in reading and math, even special education students. The NCLB 1% rule makes this issue even more convoluted.

The commission asked for a report from State Special Education Director Bob Runkel to answer some questions.

The key issues with special education are:

- ◆ 19-21 year olds
- ◆ High cost for rural schools: disabled children are expensive
- ◆ Funding Structures: Weighted ANB
- ◆ Federal Standards: Examination of reauthorization of IDEA
- ◆ Testing requirement: 1% of special education kids to take the alternate assessment.
- ◆ Professional Development: there is a lack of training for people who deal with special need children.

Next Steps

A brief conversation took place regarding the pending school funding adequacy lawsuit. Next meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2004. Can we expect a decision on the lawsuit by then? Lt. Governor Ohs stated that issues still exist so we should push forward with our work. Kirk Miller stated that working groups can make some progress in the meantime.

Lt. Governor Ohs and Kirk Miller discussed the cooperation with the Interim Tax committee. The Commission will attempt to coordinate with the Tax Committee to inform and work with each other.

Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.