

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ACTING AS THE GOVERNING BOARD FOR THE UTAH SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND**

September 8, 2016

A meeting of the Utah State Board of Education acting as the Governing Board for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) was held September 8, 2016 at the Utah State Board of Education Building, 250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, Utah. Chair David Crandall conducted.

**Board Members Present:**

Chair David L. Crandall	Member Linda B. Hansen
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chair David L. Thomas	Member Mark Huntsman
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair Jennifer A. Johnson	Member Stan Lockhart
Member Laura Belnap	Member Jefferson Moss
Member Leslie B. Castle	Member Spencer Stokes
Member Barbara W. Corry	Member Terryl Warner
Member Brittney Cummins	Member Joel Wright

**Board Members Excused:**

Member Dixie L. Allen

**USDB Executive Staff Present:**

Joel Coleman, USDB Superintendent	Michelle Tanner, USDB Associate Supt.
Carolyn Lasater, USDB Associate Supt.	Letty Debenham, USDB Finance Director

**Others Present:**

Sydnee Dickson, Scott Jones, Rich Nye, Angie Stallings, Patty Norman, Emilie Wheeler, Lorraine Austin, Crystal Thomas—USBE staff; Jackie Ball; Stephen Persinger, Sari Williams—Utah Association for the Deaf; Mercy Persinger, Kazie Swain, Ana Fonua, Aimee Breinholt—USDB; Pam Christensen—USDB Education Association; Jan Ferre—Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities; Bonilynn Henrie—Utah Education Association-Eastern; Heather Merkely, Alden Tanner, Abiligail Wright, Sara Doutre, Dennis Hansen—parent.

**Call to Order**

Chair Crandall called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION** was made by Vice Chair Thomas and seconded that the Board approve the

minutes of the August 11, 2016 meeting.

Motion carried.

### **Public Comment**

Lauri Nelson, Director of Deaf Education, Utah State University - expressed concerns with the language in the proposed deaf education license and indicated there are some misleading statements in the community documents. She stated that the lack of transparency in the proposal is alarming. USU is in favor of working side by side with USDB and the Board to identify a solution. She requested the Board take no action today on this license.

Heather Merkley, parent of daughter with hearing loss - informed about how important an emphasis on spoken language has been for her daughter. She questioned why American Sign Language (ASL) would be necessary for a Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) teacher. She asked the Board to reconsider having ASL as a requirement.

Abigail Wright, parent of deaf child - reported that her son went through USDB's listening and spoken language program and has been very successful. She asked the Board not to force ASL on families that don't want it or need it.

Kerra Davis, mother of two sons with hearing loss - reported that her sons have been recipients of hearing aides and went through the USDB LSL program. Because of the program the boys have not only matched, but exceeded achievement levels. She reported that there has been a lack of information for parents concerning the proposed license and asked the Board to make a decision based on data.

Heather Adams, parent of deaf child - shared that her child has participated in the spoken language program and has benefitted from deaf mentors. Her child uses both signing and spoken language. She expressed concerns about the proposed license and asked why parents weren't informed on the methodology and classroom expectations. She also questioned why no one from the spoken language program was included in the preparation of the rule and why parents weren't informed.

Sara Doutré, parent of deaf child - distributed a copy of a USDB program survey sent to parents, which highlights her concerns. She voiced that she is not sure what the questions mean, and these are the questions being used by USDB to gather information. She expressed a

concern that parents have to come to the Board to air their concerns. She also mentioned that there is no seat for a parent of a deaf child on the USDB Advisory Council.

Julie Ramirez, parent of child in LSL program - expressed her belief that the LSL program is critical to her child. It should be a parent's choice to put children into programs. She questioned who has done the research for the proposed rule and indicated every parent has been surprised and upset about it.

Jackie Ball - conveyed that none of the families were informed about the change to the program and that the survey questionnaire would be used to incorporate ASL into the LSL program. Current LSL teachers would not qualify under the proposed rule. She believes the change will force an ASL/LSL integrated approach. Parents should have the choice. She asked the Board to please consider the input from parents.

Stephen Persinger, President, Utah Association for the Deaf (UAD) - informed that deaf people utilize visual language and have cultural norms. He stated that the UAD believes the deaf education license would be an appropriate process to help students render those cultural values and that visual language they value so much. It is important for students to have strong language skills both in American Sign Language and English and those teachers need to be able to have that second language to teach the cultural elements and to be able to help these children be empowered and continue to progress. This license would also allow for the school to recruit highly qualified teachers.

Gina Coleman, parent of child attending LSL preschool in Salt Lake City - reported there are multiple and serious events occurring at USDB currently. As a clinical social worker who often evaluates entire programs and procedures, she urged the Board to consider conducting a formal analysis of USDB at the macro level. She indicated along with many other parents she is very concerned about the pervasive problems within the infrastructure of how USDB is operating. Parents are not made aware of any legislation or proposed changes to programs. She stated that no one but the parent of any deaf child should be making language and communication decisions for deaf children and voiced her alarm at the message from administration at USDB that every child needs ASL.

**Kenneth Burdett School for the Deaf**

Mike Hillstrom, Director of the Kenneth Burdett School for the Deaf, gave a presentation about the history and work of the school.

### **Financial Report**

Letty Debenham, USDB Finance Director, reviewed the financial report.

### **Deaf Education License**

USDB Superintendent Joel Coleman gave an overview of the deaf education license to the Board. He indicated there have been some misunderstandings about the license. He assured the Board that the license will not change anything in the Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) program. He reported that currently in Utah individuals with deaf education degrees can't be hired as teachers because there is no deaf education license. The proposal adds an option for deaf educators and does not address or change LSL. He reported that there have been meetings with stakeholders and more meetings will follow. USDB will now work with the Board's Licensing Task Force on the license.

Associate Superintendent Michelle Tanner observed the testament that was given today to USDB's phenomenal LSL teachers. She gave an assurance that USDB administration honors and respects those teachers and wants to keep them in place. The new license will provide an avenue for ASL teachers that hasn't been available.

Board members expressed appreciation for the stakeholder input received today.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Coleman reported on the following.

- The work on the USDB Annual Report is complete and the report will be presented to the Board in October.
- The property the school was hoping to purchase in Utah County did not work out. Superintendent Coleman is currently working with a second property owner.
- Superintendent Coleman is working with the national League of Innovative Schools to pursue a personalized education approach at USDB including competency-based grading. He is waiting to hear whether USDB has been accepted into the program.

- The annual meeting with the USBE and USDB Advisory Council has been scheduled for October 6 at the new USDB building in Salt Lake City. The annual report and USDB strategic plan will be reviewed. The meeting will be followed by a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the building.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION** was made by Vice Chair Johnson and seconded by Member Warner that the meeting adjourn.

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Lorraine Austin, Board Secretary  
Minutes approved October 7, 2016