

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

**January 9, 2019**

A meeting of the State Board of Education Acting as the Governing Board for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind was held on January 9, 2019 at the Utah State Board of Education Building, 250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, Utah. Chair Mark Huntsman presided.

**Members Present:**

Chair Mark Huntsman	Member Jennie Earl
Vice Chair Brittney Cummins	Member Alisa Ellis
Member Laura Belnap	Member Jennifer Graviet
Member Michelle Boulter	Member Linda B. Hansen
Member Janet A. Cannon	Member Scott L. Hansen
Member Lisa Cummins	Member Carol Barlow Lear
Member Cindy Davis	

**Members Absent:**

Member Scott Neilson

**USDB Staff Present:**

Joel Coleman, Superintendent	Michelle Tanner, Associate Supt.
Carolyn Lasater, Associate Supt.	Carl Empey, Finance Director

**Others Present:**

Scott Jones, Angie Stallings, Patty Norman, Leah Voorhies, Debbie Davis, Emilie Wheeler, Lorraine Austin—USBE staff; Bryan Quesenberry, Michelle Beus—Assistant Attorneys General; Jackie Ball, Whitney Larsen, Natalie Shaw, Brandon Shaw--parents

Chair Huntsman called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION** was made by Member Belnap and seconded that the Board approve the minutes of the December 7, 2018 meeting. [For additional details, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-1.]

Motion carried.

**Public Comment**

Jackie Ball – expressed serious concerns about the Utah School for the Deaf (USD). USD promotes a heavily bi-modal language approach combining sign language with spoken language, which means that children learn both languages at the same time. She and other parents have spoken to audiologists and professionals at the University of Utah, Utah State University, and a former audiologist at the USD and they all agree this is not the best for families and students and is not supported by current research. She reported that parents are not being informed that they can choose a spoken language-only option for their children. She also stated that some staff members at USD feel they are in an environment where they are fearful to advocate for spoken language children and present accurate and current research. Ms. Ball distributed statements outlining the concerns. [For additional details, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-2.]

Whitney Larsen – informed that her daughter was born profoundly deaf and started with the USD Parent and Infant Program (PIP) early on. She expressed that her experience with PIP was wonderful and she had a clear understanding of her choices between Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) and American Sign Language (ASL). Her daughter participated in the PIP toddler group where staff were very knowledgeable about LSL and provided valuable tools. When her daughter was age three the family was given a choice of the language mode for her and they chose LSL. Ms. Larsen indicated she has heard from several parents with children in the toddler group that now LSL and ASL are combined and there is no choice to choose LSL only. She also observed that the dynamics at the school have changed over the last year and teachers seem afraid to express their opinions or answer questions. She asked for an investigation into USDB.

Natalie Shaw – informed that her son attends the LSL preschool at USDB. By working with a certified LSL professional, at age three her son has not only caught up to his typical hearing peers, but has passed them in vocabulary and comprehension skills. Because of LSL he is fully able to integrate into the world around him. Ms. Shaw indicated that while she and her husband have been elated with many parts of the USDB experience, they have a growing concern with the lack of information given to parents regarding the LSL-only option and

techniques. There is hesitation, reluctance, and inability for USDB teachers to freely and honestly answer parents' questions directly, which has created an environment in which parents are unable to make fully informed decisions. She expressed her belief that teachers aren't doing this intentionally, but it appears to be a byproduct of some larger organizational agenda and organizational preference for combined ASL and LSL instruction. She requested an investigation immediately into USDB.

Brandon Shaw – reported that he analyzed all of the publicly published content from three primary sources—the USDB website, the USDB Facebook page, and the PIP Facebook page. The resulting keyword analysis clearly illustrates a failure to provide thorough and balanced information to the parents. He provided statistics that show there are overwhelmingly many more references to ASL-related keywords than to LSL-related keywords, particularly on the PIP Facebook page. He believes this shows an organizational bias that has led to parents' inability to make informed choices. He believes this organizational agenda is directly related to the disproportionate financial incentive between providing services for ASL versus LSL students. The school's funding is based on student enrollment, however, LSL-only classes are limited to preschool and kindergarten students because of the expectation that LSL-only students will mainstream into their local elementary schools, taking those funds with them. On the USDB campus ASL classes are offered preschool through post-high school. He asked for an immediate review of USDB with an opportunity for teachers to speak honestly.

### **Monthly Budget Report**

Finance Director Carl Empey presented the financial report and stated that there are no concerns at this time in terms of revenues and expenditures. [For additional details, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-3.]

### **Recodification of UCA 53E-8 Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind**

Superintendent Joel Coleman reported that last year legislators asked USDB and USBE Special Education staff to review the USDB and Special Education Code as part of a working group looking at recodification. The proposed changes in Utah Code 53E-8-101 that are before

the Board are largely the recommendations of that group concerning USDB. The language will be recommended to the Legislature by Representative Pulsipher. [For additional details, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-4.]

**MOTION** was made by Member B. Cummins and seconded that the Board support forwarding the recommendations to the legislature.

Motion carried, with Member Lisa Cummins opposed.

### **2019 USDB Legislative Update**

Superintendent Coleman reviewed with the Board the USDB budget priorities presentation that has been prepared for the Legislature. [For additional details, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-5.]

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION** was made by Member Belnap and seconded that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Lorraine Austin, Board Secretary  
Minutes approved February 7, 2019