

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

**February 7, 2019**

A meeting of the Utah State Board of Education Acting as the Governing Board for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind was held February 7, 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  
Vice Chair Brittney Cummins  
Member Laura Belnap  
Member Michelle Boulter  
Member Janet A. Cannon  
Member Lisa Cummins  
Member Cindy Davis  
Member Jennie Earl

Member Alisa Ellis  
Member Jennifer Graviet  
Member Linda B. Hansen  
Member Scott L. Hansen  
Member Carol Barlow Lear  
Member Scott B. Neilson  
Member Shawn E. Newell

**USDB Executive Staff Present:**

Joel Coleman, Superintendent  
Carolyn Lasater, Associate Supt.

Michelle Tanner, Associate Supt.  
Carl Empey, Finance Director

**Others Present:**

Jackie Ball, Shelli Rosbach, Jodi Katz, Alisa Ensign, Natalie Shaw, Michelle Draper—parents; Bryan Quesenberry—Attorney General’s Office; Brandon Watts, Shellee Marlar, Stephanie Morgan, Amy Breinholt, Jennifer Salazar—USDB staff; Lori Ruth—USDB Education Association; Sydnee Dickson, Emilie Wheeler, Lorraine Austin, Cory Kanth—USBE staff

Chair Huntsman called the meeting to order at 3:23 p.m.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION** was made by Member Cannon and seconded that the Board approve the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting.

Motion carried. [For additional information, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-6.]

**Public Comment**

Jackie Ball, parent – addressed a presentation that will be made later in the meeting by USDB administration, and indicated she has put together a point by point rebuttal, affirmation and supporting documentation for the Board. [For additional information, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-7.]

Shelli Rosbach, parent of a child who is deaf – explained that for two years her son did not have access to spoken language so opted to do sign language. Once he was implanted, the family was given a lot of advice along with scare tactics used by audiologists and a former USDB superintendent that if her son continued to sign he wouldn't be able to speak. She chose the ASL program because the choice was not available to go to both modalities. Because there was not a choice, her family taught her son themselves and he is now able to speak and sign and can participate in both environments. She urged the Board to keep providing choice.

Jodi Katz, parent of a deaf child that attends the Jean Massieu School (JMS) – also experienced not having a choice of dual modalities, but having to choose ASL (American Sign Language) or LSL (Listening and Spoken Language). When her daughter was transitioned to ASL, within one week she came home speaking—it was bridge for her daughter to learn speech. She urged the Board to not remove the choice.

Alisa Ensign, parent of deaf child who attends JMS – expressed her support for the bimodal program. Since her daughter didn't recognize sound, she is very grateful for access to all the tools. She asked that every option be made available for children.

Natalie Shaw, parent – voiced that parent concerns are not being heard and no changes have been made by USDB administration. Her intent is not that bimodal programs are eliminated or this becomes a battle between the two. She asked for investigation into USDB.

Michelle Draper, mother of deaf children that attend JMS – expressed her support for parents advocating for their children and USDB. As a sign language interpreter she has observed that every deaf person who learned to speak first learned sign language later because speaking wasn't helpful for them. Her child has the choice to be taught in both modalities and he is excelling. She expressed support for USDB administration.

### **Monthly Budget Report**

USDB Finance Director Carl Empey gave the monthly budget report and cited no areas of concern. [For additional information, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-8.]

### **Utah School for the Deaf**

Superintendent Joel Coleman and Associate Superintendent Michelle Tanner gave the presentation—*LSL and ASL/English Methodologies at USDB*. The presentation included information about the oral approach and ASL/English (Bilingual/Bicultural) approach and official positions on language acquisition. Superintendent Coleman reviewed key policy questions.

[For additional information, see General Exhibit No. USDB19-9.]

Superintendent Coleman informed that when USDB determines how its programs work staff uses evidence-based practice, clinical expertise, and family values (informed parental choice). He emphasized that USDB allows families to choose how they want their children educated and staff are encouraged to be supportive and caring to parents, even if they disagree.

Stephanie Morgan, USDB Parent Infant Program (PIP) Director, spoke about the approach the PIP program uses. PIP staff visit homes with the goal of empowering parents to provide a rich language environment; however, staff won't do anything without parent approval.

Associate Superintendent Michelle Tanner reported that the USDB LEAD-K Committee has representation from supporters of all modalities and has developed a brochure to improve communication to parents.

Amy Breinholt, Jean Massieu School of the Deaf Educational Director, explained the process for a child transitioning from PIP to preschool at age three. She indicated she is working to have teachers from all disciplines meet together to share strategies from both modalities.

Jennifer Salazar, Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) Program Director, informed that when she talks with families she is open about LSL and why families choose it, and about the

hybrid program and why some families choose that. Her biggest concern is that families understand the options and choices and are happy with their school choice.

Associate Superintendent Tanner responded to a question on whether there is any retaliation toward employees and parents, indicating there is none at all.

Board members thanked the parents that have voiced concerned and USDB staff members for their dialogue, and questioned whether something additional can be done to reach out to the parents that are still expressing frustration.

USDB administration informed that there is a battle in deaf education that has gone on for decades, and the vision is to end the battle and offer something where parents will work together and support one another to help children be successful in whatever manner they choose. Superintendent Coleman acknowledged that there are some teachers that are resistant, but no one has been disciplined and the goal is to retain these teachers who do such great work in their profession.

Associate Superintendent Tanner provided information that the amount of time American Sign Language is taught to a student is determined by an IEP team that includes the parents.

Superintendent Coleman responded to a question about disclosures required of employees, indicating that his H.R. director recommended all employees fill out a conflict of interest disclosure, which had not been done previously at USDB, but is typical of state employees. It is meant to be a protection for employees. He also addressed administrative changes and direction to employees as outlined in the presentation.

Frustration was expressed by Board members that it seems what the parents really want is for a piece of paper to be given to the parents with children in the PIP program about their options moving forward. Superintendent Coleman indicated that this information is in USDB written policies and he was unaware of that request.

Board members requested that the USDB Advisory Council come to the Board with the Council's recommendations on the issues, that the brochure from the LEAD-K Committee be presented to the Board, and that definitions of when the program becomes a hybrid be clear. They also noted that parents should be able to meet directly with Superintendent Coleman.

**Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Coleman reported that the Legislative Fiscal Analyst and the Social Services Committee have recommended taking donated funds away from USDB and giving them to the Department of Health, which is of great concern to him.

Superintendent Coleman addressed a concern he has heard from the blind community about a district that has requested USDB to take over services for its deaf and blind students, as is allowed in Board rule. The fear is that USDB is trying to pull teachers from those districts into USDB. Mr. Coleman gave assurance that moving teachers is not the intent.

**Executive Session**

**MOTION** was made by Member Neilson and seconded that the Board go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending or reasonably imminent litigation.

Upon voice vote of all Members, the Board moved into closed Executive Session at 5:08 p.m.

Those present included all Board members, Sydnee Dickson, Dave Laycock, Bryan Quesenberry, Brooke Baker, Joel Coleman, Emilie Wheeler, and Lorraine Austin.

**MOTION** was made by Member S. Hansen and seconded that the Board come out of Executive Session.

Motion carried unanimously. The Board reconvened in open meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Chair Huntsman announced that he will invite the USDB Advisory Council Chair to the next meeting to report any concerns and recommendations to the Board.

**Adjournment**

**MOTION** was made by Member L. Cummins and seconded that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Lorraine Austin, Board Secretary  
Minutes approved March 8, 2019