

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Education Committee Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2017

Members Present

Bob Kresmer*, Chair
Shannon Kemlo*
Ed House*
Lisa Yencarelli*
Jared Kittelson*

Members Absent

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Admin Asst.
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Jeff Bishop*
Julie Urban*

Call to Order and Introductions

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Committee Goals Discussion

Bob Kresmer stated the GCBVI was mandated to advise the Governor, Legislature, and state agencies regarding issues that impact blind and visually impaired individuals in the community. Mr. Kresmer noted the Education Committee had been re-established to identify the difficulties in education for blind and visually impaired individuals from infants to students in college or universities. Bob Kresmer stated the committee would then identify methods for addressing the issues raised. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the current challenges for infants and toddlers in the education field that Julie Urban had experienced. Ed House suggested the committee not only focus on the educational difficulties, but also identify the education aspects that were successful. Julie Urban stated the Education Committee was active in the past and fought for the Braille bill and opposed the bill that would have allowed any special education teacher from teaching blind and visually impaired individuals. Ms. Urban noted her largest concern was the lack of teachers, and the accessibility issues with the standardized testing administered to students. Julie Urban stated she was a member of the Association for Itinerant Teachers for the Visually Impaired (AITVI), and

noted the association discussed issues that students were facing in schools. She noted the association discussed the accessibility issues with the AZ Merit tests, and presented to the GCBVI Full Council regarding those issues. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Jeff Bishop, Chair of the Assistive Technology (AT) Committee had any suggestions regarding the AZ Merit test. Jeff Bishop stated blind and low vision students should predominantly use Braille tests, and noted the online tests were not developed with accessibility in mind. Bob Kresmer stated that very few students were taught to read Braille, and inquired regarding alternatives to taking the AZ Merit test. Jeff Bishop stated his understanding that it would be difficult to make the current AZ Merit test accessible.

Bob Kresmer stated one of the committee's challenges would be to make the testing accessible and to convince the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) that accessibility was a priority. Lisa Yencarelli, Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB), stated she contacted the ADE Deputy Associate Superintendent in charge of testing and noted the ADE had an Accessibility Task Force. Ms. Yencarelli noted the task force would welcome a member of the Education Committee to collaborate in ensuring the AZ Merit test was accessible for blind and low vision users. Shannon Kemlo stated her agreement with Mr. Bishop's previous comment that the AZ Merit test could be administered in Braille, although about 90% of students did not read Braille. Ms. Kemlo suggested the committee develop a list of Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVI) s to be able to distribute information and request feedback. Julie Urban stated the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) used to maintain a list of TVI's although the agency did not maintain those records due to privacy laws. Shannon Kemlo stated she requested information from the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), although she was denied the information. Bob Kresmer inquired when Shannon Kemlo contacted the AER. Ms. Kemlo stated she contacted the AER about eight months prior. She noted that she compiled a list of Tucson TVIs, although she did not have a complete list of Phoenix TVIs. Bob Kresmer stated he would contact the President of AER on behalf of the GCBVI. Julie Urban stated at the next AITVI meeting, she could inquire whether the AITVI list could be distributed to the GCBVI. Julie Urban suggested that Krista McAllister be involved in the ADE Accessibility Task Force, due to Ms. McAllister's knowledge in accessibility. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Krista McAllister could speak to the AT Committee regarding the AZ Merit test accessibility. Jeff Bishop stated he would welcome Ms. McAllister to speak to the AT Committee.

Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the current programs for toddlers and infants. Shannon Kemlo stated Phoenix would begin a parent and toddler group, to provide support for parents of blind and visually impaired children.

Bob Kresmer suggested that Shannon Kemlo and Jared Kittelson compare notes regarding programs for children. Julie Urban stated her understanding that the families of blind and visually impaired infants could choose the individual that came to the house to provide training. Ms. Urban noted that system did not allow for hands on training, which was necessary. Bob Kresmer stated the ophthalmologist professionals did not follow through with referrals, and parents were not given good information. Julie Urban suggested Jared Kittelson distribute letters to the ophthalmologists in order to potentially receive more referrals. Jared Kittelson stated the FBC had discussed performing more community outreach.

Bob Kresmer stated the Education Committee could develop workgroups to prioritize the issues and identify solutions. Mr. Kresmer stated committee members could develop information to be distributed to the various ophthalmologist associations. Lisa Yencarelli stated the ASDB Co-op served infants and toddlers statewide and noted that TVIs would provide services in the individual's homes. Bob Kresmer stated Shannon Kemlo, Jared Kittelson, and Lisa Yencarelli could develop a workgroup to address the current challenges to blind and visually impaired infants and toddlers.

Bob Kresmer stated the committee had identified the lack of TVIs and noted that consumer groups tried to assist the various TVI programs. Mr. Kresmer stated he was unsure how the GCBVI could address that issue unless the universities approached the council for suggestions for increasing TVIs. Shannon Kemlo inquired whether the Education Committee wanted to address the quantity or quality of teachers. Ms. Kemlo noted the committee could address the issue of the quality of the TVIs. Julie Urban stated she understood that more teachers taught remotely through online courses, although most teachers did not obtain sufficient experience working directly with students. Shannon Kemlo stated that salary contributed to the lack of teachers, and agreed that many teachers did not obtain experience working directly with students. Ms. Kemlo stated community programs such as SAAVI Services for the Blind and FBC would allow teachers to gain experience with children, although most teachers would not accept those invitations.

Bob Kresmer stated that several students entering colleges and universities did not have the technical or educational skills in order to be successful. Mr. Kresmer noted Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) developed a Summer Transition Program for students transitioning into college, with the objective to reduce the college and university dropout rate. Ed House stated one of the objectives of the Summer Transition Program was to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Mr. House stated main goal of the Summer Transition Program was to reduce the dropout rate of students

not ready for school, vocational training, or participating in Independent Living training. Ed House stated he did not have the current numbers of students that participated in the transition program, although he received positive feedback from the community. Ed House suggested the committee identify the reports that would provide ongoing information regarding the progress of the Summer Transition Program. Ed House stated RSA had a cooperative agreement with ADE, and suggested the committee review that document and potentially provide suggested changes.

Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the responsibility of the GCBVI to advise the Governor and state agencies. Ed House stated the committee should collect data from a wide range of community partners, analyze the information, and identify whether the information was acceptable. Mr. House noted the committee could then develop recommendations that could be shared with the Governor or state agencies. Julie Urban stated the Education Committee as part of the GCBVI, could request information such as lists of the TVI. Shannon Kemlo stated several students came to the summer programs at SAAVI Services for the Blind, as 4.0 students, but when tested, were reading at a second grade level. Ms. Kemlo noted the majority of students enrolled in the Senior Track were unable to test into college, and required several years of tutoring to be at the college level. Bob Kresmer stated he and Jeff Bishop met with the Superintendent of ASDB, and discussed the importance of making students accountable for their education. Jeff Bishop stated the ASDB distributed a poll for community members to meet over the summer to begin developing accountability measures. Bob Kresmer inquired whether a member of the GCBVI should sit on the ASDB Advisory Council to help guide the school. Jeff Bishop agreed and stated there should be an equal representation of agencies that served the blind and visually impaired students. Mr. Bishop stated the importance for parents of blind and visually impaired individuals to sit on the Advisory Council as well.

Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the accessibility issues regarding instructional materials for college and university students. Jeff Bishop stated colleges and universities were succeeding in providing literacy materials, although some alternative or online platforms were not as accessible. Bob Kresmer noted another challenge was introducing technology to the teachers, and stated the council could identify methods for teachers to update their technology skills. Julie Urban stated the TVIs were not required to attend classes and conferences and suggested the council recommend that teachers be required to be recertified. Bob Kresmer agreed that recertification was an issue that was historically ignored.

Committee Member Discussion

This item was tabled.

Community Member Partnership Discussion

This item was tabled.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Education Committee will be on May 2, 2017 from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm. in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Agenda items are as follows:

- Prioritize Committee Tasks

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

A call to the public was made with no responses forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Jim LaMay seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm