

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Education Committee Meeting Minutes
May 2, 2017

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Admin Asst.
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Call to Order and Introductions

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of March 28, 2017 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were tabled.

Prioritize Committee Goals Discussion

Bob Kresmer stated the Education Committee developed an Early Childhood Workgroup, a K-12 Workgroup and a Secondary Education Workgroup. Mr. Kresmer noted the Early Childhood Workgroup met with Maureen Casey, Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), who explained the process for providing services and education to blind and visually impaired infants and toddlers and their parents. Bob Kresmer stated the Early Childhood Workgroup had scheduled to meet with Susan Greer, Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB). Bob Kresmer stated many parents were unable to afford to see their children's pediatricians frequently; therefore, many children were not identified as having visual impairments until later in life. Bob Kresmer stated AzEIP agreed that many pediatricians and doctors did not detect visual impairments in children and historically did not direct

the parents to available resources. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the Education Committee had any feedback or suggestions that the GCBVI could make regarding early childhood processes. Julie Urban stated Annette Reichman, ASDB Superintendent, had indicated that the school did not have adequate funds to properly serve children. Bob Kresmer stated Ms. Reichman had requested an additional \$800,000 to improve their ability to provide early childhood intervention services. Julie Urban inquired whether the GCBVI could submit a letter to the Governor in support of the additional ASDB funds. Bob Kresmer stated the GCBVI could support any bill or proposal that the Governor was neutral on or supported. Bob Kresmer stated the majority of requests submitted to AzEIP were from the metropolitan Phoenix and Tucson areas. He noted that ASDB was requesting additional funding to assist with providing services to the rural areas that were not fully represented.

Bob Kresmer stated the Education Committee agreed to review the different phases of education, which included early childhood, K-12, youth transition, and secondary education. Mr. Kresmer noted blind and visually impaired students in K-12, required adequate Assistive Technology (AT). Bob Kresmer noted the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) was committed to ensuring that each school had adequate AT, although the ADE had to deal with each school district separately, which was a difficult task. Bob Kresmer stated Arizona was a model state for the Youth Transition Program, in which blind and visually impaired students could receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services beginning the summer after their freshman year. He noted the students participated in summer programs such as career education, Braille, AT, daily living skills and travel training until the age of 22, in which the individual could receive VR services as an adult. Bob Kresmer stated there was significant data indicating the success of the Youth Transition Program that could be submitted to the Legislature regarding the success of the program.

Bob Kresmer stated community colleges, universities, and technical colleges were required to have disability resources and accessible educational materials. He noted currently there were no recommendations or instructions for colleges and universities on how to provide accessible educational materials. Mr. Kresmer stated colleges and universities typically had to undergo lawsuits in order to provide accessible educational materials and online resources to blind and visually impaired students. Bob Kresmer stated the Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education Act, (AIM HIGH) Act called to Congress to establish a commission to develop regulatory and instructional information for colleges and universities to develop accessible instructional materials in print and online. He stated the American Association of Publishers and the Higher Education Commission

have agreed to the AIM HIGH Act. Bob Kresmer stated the GCBVI could request that Arizona support a state version of the AIM HIGH Act and encourage colleges and universities to collaborate with Legislature to pass the act. Bob Kresmer stated the GCBVI could support a state version of the AIM HIGH Act if Governor Ducey was neutral on or in support of the act. Lisa Yencarelli stated her agreement that the council should support a state version of the AIM HIGH Act. Bob Kresmer stated the act had support from the American Association of Publishers and the Higher Education Commission and did not currently have any opposition. Bob Kresmer stated any committee members interested in developing an AIM HIGH Act workgroup should contact Mr. Kresmer.

Julie Urban expressed her concern regarding the AZ Merit test, which was not accessible to blind and visually impaired students. Ms. Urban stated she would recommend that Braille readers take the AZ Merit test on Braille tests, and the low vision students take a large print version of the test. Bob Kresmer stated Annette Reichman, ASDB, recognized the inaccessibility of the AZ Merit test and explained to the GCBVI that the majority of students failed the test. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB had started gathering data to be submitted to the ADE and noted the test included some questions that required the student to have vision in order to answer the question. Ms. Yencarelli stated her understanding that the Braille reader students took the Braille version of the test. Lisa Yencarelli stated the ADE was interested in working with the ASDB to ensure that the AZ Merit test was accessible. Bob Kresmer stated Ted Chittenden, GCBVI member, reviewed the AZ Merit test for Braille accuracy as well. Julie Urban stated her understanding that the students would be required to pass the AZ Merit test in order to pass high school and noted all versions of the test should be accessible to blind and visually impaired students.

Ed House inquired whether the Education Committee had identified a timeframe for when the workgroup activities should be completed. Bob Kresmer stated the committee had not developed a timeline for activities. Julie Urban suggested the committee develop a timeframe for developing recommendations regarding the AZ Merit test accessibility. Bob Kresmer stated the Legislative session was almost over and noted the GCBVI would support issues that required immediate action such as supporting additional funding to ASDB. He stated the Education Committee could continue to develop recommendations regarding the AZ Merit test, and assist the Legislature in developing language in support of a state version of the AIM HIGH Act.

Jared Kittelson stated all issues were important, although the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) was keenly interested in early childhood intervention.

Bob Kresmer stated the FBC had a contractual arrangement with ASDB, which had a contractual arrangement with AzEIP. Shannon Kemlo stated she was also concerned regarding the inaccessibility of the AZ Merit test. Ms. Kemlo noted that while many students were successful in schools, many students were not successful. She stated that many blind and visually impaired students were far behind their peers whether they did or did not have accessible materials. Shannon Kemlo stated she noticed a significant difference in the students from public schools versus the state schools.

Committee Member Discussion

Bob Kresmer stated the Education Committee members were encouraged to invite anyone that worked directly in education to join the committee. Mr. Kresmer noted the committee did not place a high demand on committee member's time.

Community Member Partnership Discussion

This item was tabled.

Date and Agenda for Next Meeting

The date of the next Education Committee meeting would be determined. Agenda items are as follows:

- Equalizing Educational Priorities

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

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

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 pm