WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

### Minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting

March 11, 2022

Conference Call/Zoom

**Board Members Participating**: Greg Szabo, Brent Stark, Keri Clark, Nancy McDaniel, Dennis Mathews, Reg George, and Lily Clifton.

**Ex-Officio Members Participating:** Marci Carpenter (National Federation of the Blind of Washington), Krista Bulger (Parent Representative), Scott Hone (Washington Federation of State Employees Local #1225), Stephanie Face (Teacher Representative) and Joleen Ferguson (Washington Council of the Blind).

**WSSB Staff Members Participating**: Mr. Scott McCallum (Superintendent), Pam Parker (Director of Outreach/State Vision Consultant), Joe Dlugo (Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVI), Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist (CATIS) and mentor), and Janet Kurz (recording secretary).

**Special Guests**: Oliver Beatty and Carl Gaul, Assistant Attorney Generals.

**March 11, 2022 – 11am-1pm**

Greg called the meeting to order at 11am. The meeting started with a roll call.

**Business Meeting:**

Old Business:

* Approve board meeting minutes of November 19, 2021. Nancy moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Reg seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
* Approve board meeting minutes of January 12, 2022. Nancy moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Dennis seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

New Business:

**Department Highlight – Outreach Department – Pam Parker, Director of Outreach/State Vision Consultant**

* Pam thanked the board for the invitation. Pam reported that the Outreach department has been very busy this school year with staff covering Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation & Mobility (O&M) services across the state. Amanda Pizzo, procurement specialist creates all Outreach contracts and has done an amazing job keeping up with all of the new and revised contracts.
* Pam stated that we hired Josh Easley, Outreach’s first non-TVI hire. Pam feels he is going to be an excellent TVI. Josh comes to us from Steilacoom, has a special education background, just received his endorsement for English Language Learner (ELL) and has been accepted into the Portland State University (PSU) TVI/O&M program.
* Joe Dlugo is mentoring students in the Stephen F. Austin University (SFAU) and PSU programs. Kathryn Kier and Joe both have mentoring contracts with school districts for new TVI’s in their respective areas.
* Annie Stockton, TVI, is nearing the end of her virtual Unified English Braille (UEB) class. These classes are being recorded for future training opportunities. Originally 40-50 people signed up for the class; however, 15 participants have consistently showed up for classes.
* Keri asked for an update about the northwest region of the state. Keri said that there are quite a few students in Bellingham who don’t receive TVI or O&M services. Bellingham did hire a teacher, but they are not yet certified. Pam reported that Kathryn Kier has contracts in Bellingham and surrounding areas for O&M services. Keri said she is aware of what is going on in the area. Keri expressed that her child is going without O&M services and feels the area is under-supported and there are a lot of kids that need a lot more than what they are getting. Pam let Keri know of the services and staff who are in Keri’s congressional district that provide services. Keri asked if anyone was mentoring the Bellingham teacher; Pam said yes. Keri feels the new special education director in Bellingham will make great changes, however Keri feels their situation is desperate.
* Scott asked Keri if she is suggesting that Bellingham needs more O&M specialists. Keri said Bellingham needs support in general. Keri reported that they have had TVI’s come and go over the years and they are unhappy. Keri asked how we can make Kathryn’s services more accessible. Keri said she is driven and wants her kid to be driven and wants her to have the opportunity to be the next leader of the free world. Greg feels this is how it is throughout the country and is the same as when he was in high school. Keri asked how Vancouver can have 6-7 TVI’s but in Bellingham they only have 1. Scott said the reason Vancouver has so many more, is because they contract with WSSB for services. Keri is suggesting that her district needs to ask for more services. Scott said he would love to see a state-run coordinated system so we can assist with services. Scott said that special education decisions are run through each school district and they make those decisions. Keri asked what is WSSB doing to reach out to districts who have multiple service needs. Pam stated there are times that WSSB is invited into districts to assess and determine the need for services and sometimes we have to push our way in. Keri asked if Pam could reach out to the new director in Bellingham to offer services. Scott said that he finds some aspects of local control extremely challenging for this very reason. Scott said behind the scenes there are efforts to address this in a different way.
* Keri asked if WSSB pays for rent or housing for Orcas Island. Pam said the TVI lived there before getting hired. Scott said some districts have to pay additional costs for transportation, built into the contract to get Kathryn.

**Department Highlight – Mentorship Program – Joe Dlugo, TSVI, COMS, CATIS and mentor**

* Joe lives in Tenino and is one of four outreach personnel in the south sound. Part of Joe’s job is to provide mentorship services for the grant program with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Washington Sensory Disability Services (WSDS), SFAU and PSU. To date, over 30 grants have been awarded; 24 for TVI’s and 6 for O&M. Adding 30 professionals to the state pool is huge. The application deadline for the grants this year is April 1 and we only have two applicants at this time.
* Reg stated that he is an assistive technology specialist for the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) in Yakima. Reg would like to connect with our CATIS staff to share resources. Reg reported that 15% of DSB’s budget is tied to youth programs at this time. Reg also wanted to let the Outreach department know how much he appreciates them as they are crucial and vital to the whole learning process. Joe stated that it is great to hear from another person who is CATIS certified. Washington state has six people who are CATIS certified and three were on the call today (Joe, Krista and Reg).
* Joe and Krista will be presenting at the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) conference in March regarding assistive technology services and needs in the state. Joe reported that far and away, the most anxiety provoking area of being a new TVI is the area of technology.
* Marci thanked Pam and Joe for attending and presenting at the meeting. Marci feels that unless you have a blind child, work with, or advocate for blind children and their families, it is hard to understand technology. When a blind student receives a screen reader or braille display, it takes a great deal of ongoing training.
* Brent wanted to chime in with Pam and Joe to give a historical perspective about the grant they are referring to. Six years ago, Craig Meador, former Director of Outreach at WSSB, was working on his doctorate and learned through this process that over 35% of TVI’s and O&M instructors in the state of Washington were going to retire in the near future. Brent brought that information to OSPI. Craig and several other folks got involved and SFAU redesigned their whole program for Washington state. The decision-making process regarding applicants includes a matrix and part of that matrix included information regarding where the applicant lives (underserved area). The grant is open to all school districts in the state (296). Brent suggested that we inform people that there is $100,000 in grants available each year for these programs. Pam, Joe and Brent are going to meet with the state to ask for more money to increase the number of spots for the training program at PSU. Keri asked if there is anything in the grant that requires a TVI to stay in the state of Washington after they receive their credential. Brent said that this was discussed, but they do not have people to police that aspect. Keri feels that anything is possible if they are willing to do it. Pam said she has had very few people leave the state after getting the endorsement. Pam said Oregon is meeting with SFAU to see if they can replicate the program.
* Review/approve 2022-2023 school year calendar. Nancy moved to approve the 2022-2023 school year calendar as submitted; Keri seconded the motion. The calendar was approved unanimously.
  + Scott reported that he met with both unions’ leadership to discuss the calendar. This year, school starts in late August and we built in a state in-service day for teachers (October 14). The last day of school will be June 14 with June 15 set aside for commencement ceremonies. We also built in a snow day in March, just in case
  + Lily asked if we expect board meetings to return to in person meetings. Scott said he is hoping this is the last time we have to do a virtual meeting. The next meeting will be held in May; however, this historically has been a brief conference call. Scott also said that board members are more than welcome to join future meetings virtually if that works better for them.

**Superintendent’s Report**

* Scott reported the following:
  + Scott reported that in January, we were in the midst of an uptick in Covid cases (Omicron) and we also had a report filed against us regarding Covid protocols (Department of Labor & Industries). Scott followed up with L&I and we were informed that no follow-up was needed. Scott feels the WSSB has been very cautious throughout the Covid pandemic.
  + In February, our administrative team meetings were restructured. We now have a “Cabinet” group with every department lead participating and we have a separate education leadership team who focuses primarily on the WSSB’s strategic plan.
  + In February, listening sessions were offered to all staff. These sessions were lightly attended.
  + Starting March 14, masks will no longer be required on campus. We have ample supply of PPE for those who wish to continue to wear masks, etc.
  + Also, in February, presentations were given to the Ft Vancouver Lions Club and also to the Washington State University (WSU) superintendent cohort. WSSB used to host the cohort on our campus each year which included an informational session and tour. There were approximately 50 people in attendance for Scott’s presentation. As part of the presentation at WSU, Scott spoke about the WSSB’s enabling laws ([RCW 72.40.070](https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=72.40)). Within this RCW, school districts are required to report the names of all blind and low vision students to their Educational Service District in their region and then ESDs must report that information to the OSPI Superintendent, WSSB Superintendent, and the Executive Director of CDHY. This information led to a task force being created to ensure this is being followed and that by getting this information, we can help districts with providing adequate services. The task force includes OSPI and also the Washington Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth (CDHY).Y
  + In March, Scott was invited to be in a play that was written and produced by a WSSB student. The students created the props and costumes and directed the play.
  + Our annual swim meet was held in March and Scott hopes this will be the last atypical event requiring Covid safety protocols.
  + Scott was asked to be on the interview panel for the Director of DSB.

**Ex-Officio’s Reports:**

* Washington Council of the Blind (Joleen Ferguson):
  + Joleen said members are gearing up this week to participate in the American Council for the Blind leadership seminar. This is a four-day seminar from March 11-15.
  + Joleen discussed several areas of legislation that the WCB is working on. They are: exercise equipment accessibility, medical device accessibility (glucose monitors, etc.), and video accessibility (i.e. if there is an emergency notification on TV, this would be accessible).
* National Federation of the Blind (Marci Carpenter):
  + Marci sent out information regarding the upcoming Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) program. This program is being offered in person in a few states and virtually in others. In Washington, BELL will be hosted virtually mid-July through the first part of August.
  + The NFB national scholarship program is open now through the end of March. They will be awarding 30 scholarships and they will be $8,000 each. Scholarship finalists will be required to attend the NFB convention. Also, scholarship winners must turn 18 years old before July 5.
  + The NFBW and WCB worked together on a bill brough forward by medical students. This bill focuses on accessible prescription labels. This bill did not make it through the process this year but will be reintroduced next legislative session.
  + The NFB legislative seminar was great. NFB members were able to meet with congresspersons to discuss the bills they are focusing on. The bills are: Access technology affordability (offering a refundable tax credit to help offset the cost of assistive technology whether they file tax returns or not), non-visual medical access act and the third centers around sub-minimum wages for disabled citizens (over 85 disability organizations signed on in support of this bill).
* Teachers (Stephanie Face):
* Stephanie reported that in January, a virtual braille challenge was held. They are hopeful that this will be in person next year in Seattle.
* Middle school students were able to attend Islandwood environmental science camp. The Islandwood facility was fantastic and is run by educators who are in their master’s degree programs in environmental science.
* Staff are preparing for spring which includes testing, planning for summer programs, etc.
* Stephanie reported that the staff are anxious to have colleagues back on campus who have been out for an extended period of time.
* WSFE Local #1225 (Scott Hone)
  + Scott reported that the WFSE is in contract bargaining soon and their council representative has been promoted (Jennifer Thomas). A new representative has been appointed to WSSB, Peter Tetrick.
* Parent Representative (Krista Bulger)
  + Krista said she is excited that school is moving towards in person activities. Krista is looking forward to the next few months which includes our annual track meet, etc.
  + Krista reached out to Sean McCormick, Director of On Campus Programs, earlier this week regarding the potential for parents to come back to campus for activities, etc. Sean let Krista know that there would be an announcement coming out shortly regarding this.
  + Krista asked Marci about the BELL Academy and volunteers. Marci reported that when the students apply, the NFB will receive their profiles and will then match them up with an NFB volunteer. The NFB volunteer will work with the family throughout the academy. Each student will receive a box of materials that will include learning shades, slate and stylus, crafts, activities and much more. Krista thanked Marci for the information as she plans to share this with other parents.
  + Scott reported that we are in the process of determining how we are going to welcome everyone back to campus. We will begin outside facility rentals after spring break, but they will only be Friday’s, Saturday’s and Sunday’s.

**Committee Reports:**

* Education Committee:
  + Brent stated he was on campus last week and it was great. Scott took Brent on a tour and he met the new music teacher. Brent was also able to tour the science room. Brent said the coffee shop is opening back up which is awesome. Brent got to see some of the asbestos abatement for the new Learning Independence for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) building.
* Buildings and Grounds Committee (no report at this time).
* Management Committee (no report at this time).
* Legislative Committee (no report at this time).

Miscellaneous:

* No miscellaneous discussion items were brought forth.

The Board is now transitioning into executive session to have a discussion with legal counsel representing the agency.

**Executive Session**

An Executive Session was called to order at 12:30pm. The Executive Session ended at 1pm.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1pm. The next Board meeting will be held via Zoom on May 5 at 7:30pm.

Greg Szabo, Chair Scott McCallum, Superintendent

# Board Reports – March 2022

#### Outreach (Pam Parker, Director of Outreach/State Vision Consultant)

Outreach continues to fulfill needs of blind and low vision students, their families and school districts around the state. Our roles change as the needs change. Our team is always looking for ways to fill the gaps.

* **New Staff:** We hired someone to fill our open position in the Olympia area. Josh Easley has come to us from Steilacoom School District. Josh has worked in Special Education and just recently completed an endorsement in English Language Learners. Josh is being mentored by Joe Dlugo and supported by the other Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) in the Olympia area. He will be starting a TVI program this summer.
* **Mentoring:** Outreach has taken on the role of mentoring, above and beyond Joe Dlugo’s role as Mentor for the Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) students. Joe continues to provide mentorship for the remaining SFASU students around the state. He is also mentoring the Portland State University (PSU) Orientation & Mobility (O&M) students who received the Washington Sensory Disability Services (WSDS)/Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) grant.
* **More Mentoring:** We have taken on two contracts for mentoring new teachers, beyond Joe Dlugo’s role. Joe is providing support for a new teacher in Stanwood/Camano and Kathryn Kier is mentoring a teacher in Bellingham. Kathryn is also supporting three PSU O&M students and Pam Parker is supporting one PSU O&M student in Walla Walla and one PSU student in Yakima completing her O&M hours.
* **Virtual Unified English Braille (UEB) Class:** Outreach TVI Annie Stockton’s UEB class is coming to an end. The videos will be closed captioned and placed on the WSSB YouTube channel.
* **Outreach Contracts:** Outreach contracts change all the time. Currently we hold 56 contracts for TVI and O&M services in the NW, SW and NE regions of the state. We have one contract for a Braillist, three contracts for mentors, ten for initial evaluations, and 39 for three-year evaluations.

**On the horizon**:

* **Pacific Northwest Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (PNWAER) Conference**- Our team plans to attend the virtual PNWAER conference on March 17-18.
* **American Printing House for the Blind (APH) Education Products Advisory Committee (EPAC)/Educational Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) Meeting:** As an APH Ex-Officio Trustee (EOT), I will be attending the EPAC/ESAC meeting March 28-April 1 in Louisville, Kentucky.
* **Outreach Meeting:** We plan to meet in person, on June 3 at WSSB, for our final Outreach meeting of this school year. This will be our first in person gathering since the beginning of the pandemic.
* **Summer Institute (SI) 2022:** SI will be held in-person August 1-4, 2022 on the WSSB Campus.

#### On Campus (Sean McCormick, Director of On-Campus Programs)

## Enrollment

Middle School: 18

High School: 41

Part-Time: 3

Distance Learning: 2

Total: 67

## Digging into Science

Science Teacher Emily Owens has made experiential learning a priority for students this school year. Every class has at least one field or community experience. Classes have partnered with Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), Columbia Springs, Vancouver’s Water Resource Education Center, as well as other entities. Recently, middle school students attended a four-day environmental science program at Islandwood on Bainbridge Island.

## Exercise for Heart

Students and staff exercised for heart health awareness and to celebrate Heart Awareness Month. Together, our students helped raise nearly $500 in donations for the American Heart Association.

WSSB logged a total of 109,231 minutes of exercise.

## WSSB Welcomes New Music Teacher

Dr. Christopher Benfield joined WSSB just prior to the second semester as a full-time music teacher. Dr. Benfield brings experience from working in both public and private school settings. During the spring concert, he will have the opportunity to direct students in the school’s first in-person music performance in a couple of years.

## Short Courses at WSSB

Students around the state are invited to participate in Short Courses at WSSB. Short Course took a break last year, yet they are back up and running again. More info on the upcoming courses can be found at: <https://irwin.wssb.wa.gov/services/short-courses>

## WSSB Adds a National Board-Certified Teacher

In December 2021, Amanda Rodda was awarded the recognition of becoming a National Board-Certified Teacher (NBCT). Becoming a NBCT is a rigorous process focused on growth, reflection, and competency of their teaching craft. WSSB now has a total of six National Board-Certified Teachers.

#### Residential (Corey Grandstaff, Associate Director-Transition & Residential Programs)

Residential

We have recently hired two new on-calls for the residential department, Annoreen Fitim, and one of our previous students, Alex Murillo. Students continue learning their skills of daily living. The residential manager and recreation coordinator meet with a “cottage” council monthly, which consists of a representative from each cottage to discuss ideas students have regarding recreation, things students would like to see differently in the cottage, and a myriad of other topics. We currently have 39 students currently in our residential department.

Recreation

We have been preparing for our annual cross-country ski trip, which will take place on March 16. At this time, we have 29 students signed up to attend. Adrienne Fernandez, Volunteer/Recreation Coordinator, has been working extensively with various volunteer groups to recruit ski guides and necessary equipment to make this event exciting for students. In addition, we have continued hosting other recreation activities including a discover chocolate activity, monthly art activities including seashell swag and birdfeeders, open recreation nights in the rec center, movies, paddle boarding with Northwest Association for Blind Athletes, yoga, and a Jackson Pollock paint throw experience in the Ahlsten building. In addition, the recreation department is working with the music teacher to put together a talent show night for students.

Learning Independence for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT)

Construction has begun on the demolition of the Ahlsten building, which will be the new site for the new LIFTT building. In addition, there are several participants who have expressed interest in attending LIFTT for the 2022-2023 year. There are currently 8 participants in the LIFTT program.

#### Business Office (Mary Sarate, Director of Business and Finance)

1. 2021-22 Operating Budget: Books for January closed slightly in the red but should not be an issue at year-end.

Allotted: $5,179,910

Actual: $5,190,059

$ 10,149

1. Performance Measures: We reported on the following measures for quarter ending Dec. 2021:

#1585 Percent of WSSB students enrolled in online classes 0%

#1586 Braille Distributed on time 95%

#1590 Pages of Braille Transcription 99,136

#1591 Training opportunities accessed by individuals 11,246

#1592 Number of teachers/paras taking Braille exams 14

#1593 Number of students on campus 60

#1594 Off-Campus Services 1,545

1. 2022 Operating and Capital Budget Supplemental

We did not submit any supplemental requests to the legislature, however, the Governor’s office/Office of Financial Management (OFM) submitted requests on agencies behalf for furlough savings and increases pursuant to collective bargaining agreements, increases in benefits and other OFM central services. Currently we are looking at approximately a $159K increase.

1. 2022 Legislative Session

The legislature is in session and will end on March 10, 2022. So far, we have received and responded to 10 fiscal note requests. They have been regarding: Procurement/Automated decision systems, Power Equipment Emissions, Language Access in Schools, Ransomware and State Government Tech Policies.

1. E-Commerce

We have been working, for almost two years, to get the Ogden Resource Center approved for E-Commerce (the ability to make payments on-line/accepting credit cards). It is a very simple process for a regular business to accomplish this but when you have state agencies trying to implement these programs, it is not that simple with all the state requirements. So, it has been a long process but am happy to report we are finally up and running.

1. Inventory

Due to the pandemic, agencies received a waiver last year on the requirement to conduct a physical inventory of assets. They granted a waiver again this year, but we were almost done with it, so we continued and are working on completing it.

1. Safety Net

We will be applying for Safety Net funding this year. Applications are due March 11, 2022 and we will be applying for approximately $200K.

1. One Washington

We were scheduled to go live with Phase 1a in October 2022. The One WA lead team has evaluated progress and have postponed the go live date. The word is it will take 6-8 months for them to determine how to proceed.

1. 2022 Fiscal Year/Biennium Close

We will begin to focus on tasks and processes for closing our books for the fiscal year. This is a process with tasks into September 2022; happening in conjunction with working in the new fiscal year.

#### Human Resources (Anne Baker, Director of Human Resources)

New Hires:

* Joshua Weiland – Custodian
* Elle Horton – School Secretary
* Heidi Quiogue – Fiscal Analyst 3
* Christopher Benfield - Music teacher
* Josh Easley - Outreach
* Annoreen Fitim – on-call Residential Life Counselor (RLC)
* Alexander Murillo-Collins – on-call RLC
* Linda Muro – on-call Teacher’s Aide (TA)

Recruitments:

* Speech Language Pathologist – Part Time
* Substitute TVI
* On-call TA
* On-call RLC
* On-call Custodian
* On-call Cook

Trainings/Functions Attended:

* HR Managers Meeting – Facilitated by Franklin Plaistowe and Marcos Rodriguez
* Labor Relations Roundtable – Facilitated by OFM
* Personnel Management Meeting – Facilitated by OFM
* Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy Quarterly – Facilitated by OFM

#### Ogden Resource Center (ORC) (Jennifer Merry, Director of the ORC)

Braille production at the women’s prison was shut down from early January to the end of February due to a COVID outbreak. Administration created a plan to bring back transcribers in small groups so that partial hours can be worked. The ORC has had to turn down some transcription work and a few clients pulled their projects due to the closure. Some transcription work has been contracted out but the textbooks that are already at the prison and in process are running behind schedule. Kandi and the contractors have been keeping up with the incoming daily jobs.

Adrienne Lattin, Proofreader, stepped up to help Kandi with thermoforming since there were no transcribers available to do thermoforming.

Two of our inmate transcribers are currently scheduled to present at the online California Transcribers and Educators for the Blind and Visually Impaired conference in April.

Kandi developed a workshop, based on her leadership training, for the inmates on team building and rebranding. Due to COVID the launch of the workshop has been delayed.

The supervisor position to replace James Estep at the prison is being filled. The first round of interviews was completed February 18. A second round is taking place the first week of March.

Instructional Resource Center-ORC Online is in the process of being updated and enhanced. The database is being redesigned along with the DeafBlind Project database as a collaborative effort.

New large print procedures are now in place with most large print requests being sent to APH for digital large print copies.

Jennifer Merry will be presenting with Pam Parker at PNWAER on the results of the surveys conducted the past 2 years for the implementation of the [Strategic Plan](https://www.wssb.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/WSSBVisionStrategySummaryV1.1_092220.pdf), Goal #1. All 3 objectives of Goal #1 have been accomplished and now Pam and Jennifer are continuing to keep everything updated and moving forward with annual surveys to update information.

An interactive TVI locator map is available at <https://www.wssb.wa.gov/interactive-map>. Mike Face, IT department, assisted Jennifer with the launch and the ORC is maintaining the map.

Jennifer and Pam also developed a *Welcome Vision Professionals* to help new vision staff learn about blind and low vision services in Washington State. The ORC is keeping the document updated.

Jennifer is working on the annual APH Census and the numbers have increased, especially for students in Preschool through High School. The increase in students is in large part the result of the work done on the strategic plan. The census will be completed in early May 2022.

#### Buildings and Grounds (David Zilavy, Facilities Manager)

1. Safety:
   1. We have had no safety incident reports to review with the Safety Committee.
   2. We have run the following drills: November-Lockdown using Alertus; December- Earthquake; January-Shelter-in-Place using Alertus; February-Fire Drill.
   3. We had two vehicles hit by catalytic converter thieves on a Sunday morning. $1500 in replacement/repair. In response we are increasing nighttime walk-arounds by our custodial crew members.
2. We have kicked off the School Health Council. This group is charged, via our Wellness Policy-Physical Activity and Nutrition, to “develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies.” After one meeting there was consensus that our existing policy needs revision, and that we need to determine what reports are necessary to comply with USDA Food Program requirements. What was nice about the meeting, for me, was to hear from a diverse group a common interest in the nutrition, health and well-being of the student population.
3. Our quest for rights to well water continues. We spent $10,000 with PBS Environmental, and a staff hydrogeologist, to communicate with Department of Ecology and develop a plan to test our well. The question is, will it significantly affect the aquifer if we use our well. I am anticipating a test in April, monitoring Clark College wells while we run ours for a period of time (two days?). The testing and reporting and communicating will cost a further $20,000-$30,000, and still does not guarantee our well water rights. It is frustrating, but I think in the best long-term interest of this campus to fight for the right to use our well water.
4. Also, regarding water, it came to light during the design phase of our new building that our main water lines into campus are not up to code because backflow devices are underground in the tunnel system. We have been told this is no longer acceptable. While I seek some clarifications as to why this is suddenly not okay, the architects for the new building cost-estimated the changes necessary at about $250,000. It was then that they opted to connect the new building not into the current distribution system, but into the main line under 13th street. We will be assessing our water system and tunnel condition in anticipation of submitting for capital monies the next biennium.
5. There are no other significant milestones to report. Work proceeds daily with the custodians helping us adapt and disinfect through all our Covid cases and concerns. Much kudos to their dedication. John Fleming happily works to keep the grounds looking good. Brian Kindblade gladly executes any and all jobs assigned. We have been working on some energy efficiencies in the cottages, cleaning out sclerotic lines, replacing broken valves, updating thermostats, etc.

#### Birth-5 (DeEtte Snyder, Associate Director Birth-5)

The Birth to 3 Program has seen some changes this month. Jessica Chandler has been a wonderful addition to our team and is serving her families well in the SE corner of the state.

Our referrals seem to have increased lately; February we had 10 and January we had 8. Many of these are in the region that Jessica serves. So, she is very busy in her new role here at WSSB and we feel very blessed to have her on board.

DeEtte continues her work with Division for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)/Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) to develop training modules for vision and hearing screening. At the spring regional provider meetings hosted by DCYF/ESIT, DeEtte and her partners from Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth (CDHY) and Washington Sensory Disability Services (WSDS) is introducing the final product called The Three Prong Approach to Vision and Hearing Screening or TPA to all the ESIT provider agencies. Additionally, the first portion of the revised ESIT Practice Guide to Providing Early Supports for Children with Sensory Disabilities is also being introduced and it is the document called “Pathways to Services”. A very important component of the revision process for the Practice Guide is to define the framework of service delivery for infants and their families who are identified with blindness and low vision. DeEtte and her partner at CDHY are meeting with the leadership at DCYF/ESIT on 3/23 to discuss the statewide framework, which may include a statewide contract for services.

#### Deafblind Project (Katie Humes, Associate Director, Deafblind Project)

Hello! The DeafBlind Program is celebrating being part of WSSB for two years! Thank you, WSSB staff and board for all you do to support children and youth who are deafblind in this state.

**State and National Collaboration:**

The DeafBlind Program of WSSB is part of the collaborative WSDS [Washington Sensory Disabilities Services – Every child is a child first. (wsdsonline.org)](https://www.wsdsonline.org/), also comprised of CDHY and WSSB Outreach Teams. We work together to support children/youth ages birth to 21 years. Staff engage in statewide collaboration to improve services for students who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind/low vision, or deaf-blind, including those with multiple disabilities or complex health needs.

DeafBlind Program staff participate in the following ongoing meetings:

* Birth-Three Sensory State Agencies: ESIT; Dept. of Services for the Blind (DSB); Office of Deaf Hard of Hearing (ODHH); WSSB and CDHY Early Childhood Outreach Teams.
* National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB): Katie meets monthly with Kristi Probst (National Lead on Qualified Providers) re: national efforts to increase recognition of interveners of the deaf-blind.

**Professional Development:**

* Auburn School District/Back to School professional development: Staff produced and recorded a training on “Person-Centered Planning: What, Why and When.”
* Seattle Public Schools, October In-Service/Vision Department: “Effective Teaming with Your DeafBlind Program for Student Success.”
* Open Hands, Open Access Deaf-Blind Learning Modules *(*statewide): Fall and Winter Cohorts online for IEP teams. Sarah Godwin hosts regular “Coffee Hour” meetings with educators enrolled in modules.
* Community of Practice for Interveners of the Deaf-Blind:Monthly meeting led by Emma Packard (DeafBlind consultant, TVI, COMS) for educators who have completed Central Michigan University’s training program to work as an educational intervener.

**Statewide Family Engagement**

* New role: The DeafBlind Program now has a Family Engagement Coordinator. Lanya (Lane) McKittrick, Ph.D., is a mother of two sons who are deaf-blind due to Usher syndrome. As of January 2022, Lane works part-time with our team to support families in Washington state.
* DeafBlind Program Family Connect Nights (via Zoom) – Families from five Educational Service Districts (ESDs) met each other and discussed positive IEP meetings, ways to connect and support each other where they are.
* CHARGE Foundation Family Liaison (via Zoom): Staff joined one family night and a meeting to discuss the needs of families of children/youth with CHARGE syndrome. The most recent WA Deaf-Blind Child Count includes 18 children with CHARGE syndrome.

**Child-Specific Technical Assistance to Districts and Families of Children (Birth to 21 years) who are on the Washington Deaf-Blind Child Count**

* Requests were received from districts in all ESD’s (51 requests).
* Early Support agencies/schools requested consultation re: 10 children.
* Districts made requests re: consultation, evaluation, observation: 41 students.
* Families requested consultation on topics such as: communication/language (e.g., sign, spoken, tactile objects); O&M; vision; hearing; eligibility; family networking; preschool transition; and high school transition services.

**Outcomes:** Educational teams and families in WA received support on topics including:

* Functional Vision Assessments for children who are deaf-blind.
* Strength-based assessments for emerging communicators who have multiple disabilities.
* Understanding the impact of dual sensory loss on learning.
* Transition to Preschool.
* Access to the General Education content.
* Accommodations and modifications.
* Adding a child to the National Deaf-Blind child count.
* Next steps for active learning, communication, literacy and self-determination.
* Transition services in high school, community engagement, work and/or college.

#### Superintendent (Scott McCallum, Superintendent)

Each month I will provide, in bulleted format, a list of the more significant activities of the Superintendent’s office. For each month, I will describe a highlight or two in more detail. If at any point you would like more information or have questions, please do not hesitate to call, email, or schedule a time to meet in person. I want to make sure that you have the information that you need to advise and guide what we do to meet the needs of students who are blind or low vision throughout Washington State.

## January

January 13: Weekly check-in with Mahlum Architects re the new Learning Independence for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) building

January 14: Meeting with the Professional Education Standards Board (PESB) re Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) licensure

January 18: Virtually attend Education and Workforce subcabinet meetings re legislative session briefings (weekly meetings through January)

January 18: Meeting with Human Resources manager regarding upcoming diversity, equity and inclusion training for state employees

January 19: Meeting with Human Resources manager regarding all required training for WSSB staff

January 20: Provided a WSSB student a tour of the museum

January 21: Virtually attended the ESD 112 regional superintendents meeting

January 21: Virtually attended the WSSB outreach department team meeting

January 24: Shelter in place drill

January 25: Meeting with Van La (Office of the Financial Management-Facilities and Oversight Planning department) and Dave Zilavy, WSSB plant manager

January 31: Meeting with new outreach TVI, Josh Easley

### Highlight

A quick review of my update from last year at this time suggests that we are in a much different space-thank goodness! Last year, this same update noted our efforts to advocate for early access to the vaccine for WSSB staff. The previous update described our efforts to bring students back to campus for in-person learning, one group at a time. So much has changed. All staff and students at WSSB have now had the opportunity to get vaccinated and boosted. We have implemented a range of testing options for staff and students that includes PCR and rapid antigen testing in the health center, and home tests for staff and students who need them. We have a variety of PPE available for all staff and students and ample supply to provide ongoing access to PPE for the remainder of the year. We have upgraded our air filtration system on campus to include MERV 13 filters and improved our cleaning practices. This year, through the implementation of a layered mitigation strategy that aligns with state and local health guidance, WSSB has been able to provide and maintain a safe, supportive, and effective in-person education model that our students seek and deserve.

The myriad of meetings in my schedule note a change from the past two years and a return to some degree of normalcy. January did, however, mark the most significant increase in COVID cases touching WSSB. The increase in positive cases connected with WSSB seemed to mirror the significant level of increase in cases throughout our communities due to the Omicron variant. Throughout January, I continued to meet with area superintendents and local health officials each week. Since the legislative session is underway, I also have weekly education sub-cabinet meetings to stay abreast of legislative matters that may impact the school. As of the writing of this update, there is no proposed legislation that would have new or significant impact on WSSB or WSSB programs.

## February

February 1: Meeting with Department of Children, Youth and Families re Youth Engagement Collaboration

February 3: Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB) board meeting

February 3: First WSSB “cabinet” meeting (restructured admin. team meetings)

February 7: Attend/participate in student recreation event

February 7: Benefits of Audio Description in Education (BADIE) contest conference call

February 8: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Statewide COVID Updates and Collaboration Webinar

February 10: Listening Sessions (3) with WSSB staff

February 10: Meeting with board chair, Greg Szabo, to review the March board meeting agenda

February 11: Present (virtually) to the Fort Vancouver Lions Club

February 11: First “Educational Leadership” meeting (restructured admin. team meetings)

February 11: Present to Washington State University superintendent’s cohort

February 14: Meeting with superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

February 15: Provide tour for new Director of the Low Vision clinic located at WSSB (Dr. Ho)

February 15: Executive and Small Agency Cabinet meeting

February 16: Meet and tour with short course student

February 17: Meeting with Annie Tulkin, Accessible College

February 17: Meeting with Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) shop stewards regarding draft 2022-2023 school year calendar

February 18: Meeting with Washington Public Education Association (WPEA) shop stewards regarding draft 2022-2023 school year calendar

February 22: Preconstruction meeting for LIFTT building

February 24: Exercise for heart day with students

February 24: Fire drill

### Highlight

Positive case rates continue to decline locally, regionally and nationally. As such, a number of changes are being proposed and announced. It has been announced that March 21, and now March 12 will mark the end of state-required mask mandates in Washington public schools. Beginning on March 12, masks will become optional at WSSB. WSSB will continue to provide a range of masks and other PPE to all employees and staff who request them throughout the 2021-2022 school year. Also, we plan to maintain our testing program throughout the remainder of this school year.

I had the opportunity to speak to the Fort Vancouver Lions Club in February. I shared a range of updates that included an update on the school year, progress with the LIFTT building, playground update, and our intention to host the annual track meet again this year (Thursday, May 19). I also had the wonderful opportunity to re-engage with the Washington State University Superintendent Program. I presented a power-point presentation about the history of WSSB, an overview of current programs, services and supports, and highlighted some important RCWs and WACs. I also shared the “We Love Our School” video with the group. The presentation was very well received and sparked a follow-up meeting with ESD superintendents and special education directors to focus on the requirements of 72.40.060 and 72.40.070. A task force has been created to address compliance with the RCWs. The task force will include representatives of ESDs, school districts, OSPI, WSSB, and CDHY.

## March

March 2: Pacific Foundation for Blind Children (PFBC) retreat

March 2: Meeting with Daniel Weaver, Chief Financial Officer re Oregon Project

March 3: Swim Meet

March 3: Cabinet meeting

March 4: GoodMaps customer review

March 4: Meeting with Portland State University regarding grant opportunities

March 9: Facility rental – reopening discussion

March 10: Department of Services for the Blind Director interviews

### Highlight

One of the greatest highlights of my job is when I get the opportunity to support and get to know our students. Recently, I tried to participate in the production of a student-created play about frogs. Participating in the play allowed me to authentically engage with our students as creators, leaders, and actors. Our students never seize to impress me. Attending the swim meet provided another opportunity to support our students. The swim meet is typically an annual event, offered with the help of many wonderful volunteers. Some students focus on winning, others on practicing a particular stroke, and for some, the ultimate goal is to complete the event. Students, staff, and volunteers expressed joy, competition, perseverance, and pride throughout the event. We look forward to returning this event to its former glory where parents and spectators are welcomed to attend in-person to cheer on the students.

## Ongoing

Meetings with department managers and administration team

PFBC meetings

Executive Cabinet meetings

Goal Council meetings

Clark County and Regional Superintendent meetings

NWABA Board meetings

UEB committee meetings

Oregon Commission for the Blind Board meetings

Washington DeafBlind Advisory Council meetings

### Highlight

Sadly, WSSB recently lost two members of the WSSB family. Former WSSB students Yasmine Littleraven-LaClair and Misty Sahlbom recently passed away. Both Yasmine and Misty were beautiful young people who made a positive impact on many WSBB students and staff. Both students were featured in the video, “We Love Our School”. Misty and Yasmine, we will keep you and your families in our hearts and minds. We will miss you. Rest in peace.