# MEMBERSHIP OF TASK FORCE ON BLIND STUDENT ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL PERFORMANCE Assisted by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Office of Special Education

**Blind Task Force Website**: <https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/advisory-panels/blind-task-force>

**Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 – Virtual – Zoom**

Minutes taken by Regina Miller, Administrative Assistant, DESE

Virtual meeting opened at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson, Carla Keirns

Welcome and Introductions: *C. Keirns*

**Roll Call** *–* No new members or visitors present

**Present**: Anthony Blades, BSS, Springfield, MO; Kerry Boehm, Executive Director, Children’s Center for the Visually Impaired; DJ Butcher, BSS, Springfield, MO: Rose Ehresman, Teacher of the Visually Impaired; Jessica Hall, BSS, NE RPDC; Jane Herder, Lead Parent Advisor/Family Specialist/Teacher of the Visually Impaired/OMS; Carla Keirns, Parent of Blind or Visually Impaired Student; June Lenk, Missouri Council for the Blind; Jonita Scarbrough, Institution of High Education; Samantha Scott, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, DSS; Robert Woerther, Special Education Administrator, Angie Yorke, Employer, BCE Programs Manager, Lighthouse for the Blind-St. Louis

**Absent:** Geoffrey Barney, Superintendent, Missouri School for the Blind; Jenny Carmack, National Federation of the Blind; Sheila Wright, Rehabilitation Council for the Blind; Gwen Deimeke, IDEA Coordinator, DESE/OSE

**Review and Approval of February 7, 2023 Agenda**: C. Keirns motioned to accept agenda as presented; R. Ehresman seconded the motion. Motion carried. Agenda approved.

**Review and Approval of November 1, 2023 Minutes:** C. Keirns motioned to accept minutes as presented; J. Lenk seconded the motion. Motion carried. Minutes approved without changes.

**DESE Update:**

* Wrapping up the 2017-2022 State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), and have begun the process of selecting districts to participate in the DCI-MTSS (District Continuous Improvement – Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) project through the 2022-2027 SPDG grant.  In this process we are looking at selecting approximately 15 districts that have varied experiences in DCI, Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, and the Literacy Work that is part of the Read, Lead Succeed Initiative. We are excited about this co-designed approach that involves voices each step of the way. Our goal is to create a stream-lined approach for districts to engage in MTSS systems and practices in order to improve academic and behavior outcomes with a focus on literacy.
* Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Retention and Recruitment. The Office of Special Education, with input from the Special Education Advisory Panel, has begun work to review certification requirements of both special education teachers and administrators. We are looking at required coursework, with an emphasis on coursework/content covering the writing and implementation of IEP’s and the special education process, behavior (including physically acting out), data-driven

decision making, inclusionary practices, and field experiences.

* A survey was recently sent to districts and organizations working with special education to gather input from both practitioners and parents on accessibility of parental involvement in the school system, transition, and least restrictive environment. The survey closed on January 31, and we will be sharing information from that survey in the near future.
* Paperwork is being submitted to renew the contracts for both MSB Parent Advisors and the Blind Low Vision contract through MSU. As part of our work to retain teachers in Missouri, we are asking that recipients of the MSU Blind/ Low-Vision grant stay and teach in Missouri for five years following their graduation.

**2023 Sub Committees: Membership and Chairpersons:** C. Keirns reviewed the current subcommittees which consist of Academic and Vocational Services, Children’s Vision Summit, Rules, and Student Achievement. She reviewed subcommittee charge and current membership. Currently, a chairperson for the Rules committee is needed to fill a vacancy left by Linda Coccovizzo. This has been tabled for further discussion and consideration to be voted on during the May meeting. A review of members needing to be assigned to a subcommittee has been tabled for the May meeting.

**New Members/Vacancies/Updates:** C. Keirns reviewed the current vacancies still needing to be filled as of the February meeting:

* (1) Public School Special Education Administrator
* (2) Public School Building Principals
* (1) Orientation & Mobility Specialist
* (1) Parent of Blind or Visually Impaired Student Attending Public School in Missouri
* (2) Student

Currently, we have one student representative, Tara Coccovizzo who has been nominated but was unable to attend today’s Zoom meeting for technical reasons. Hopes to join us during our May meeting.

**2023 Nominations/Election of Officers:** C. Keirns opened the floor for nominations for Co-Chairperson. J. Lenk nominated Rose Ehresman; C. Keirns seconded the nomination. Rose accepted and members voted unanimously. Motion carried.

**2023 Meeting Dates/In-person or Virtual Zoom:** C. Keirns opened the floor to the members to discuss remaining meeting dates for 2023.

* **Tuesday, May 9, 2023** – In-Person, Howerton State Office Building, Large Conference Room, Jefferson City, MO. Members had agreed to arrange a tour of the Center for Braille and Narration Production at the Jefferson City Correctional Center. This tour has been postponed and a new date will be discussed during the May meeting.
* **Tuesday, November 14, 2023** – In person or virtual to be decided during May meeting. C. Keirns offered to send out an email to all members to determine the preference of in person or virtual for our November meeting. Samantha Scott has reserved the large conference room for this date at the Howerton Building.

**Current Workshops/Events:** C. Keirns asked members to submit events, workshop flyers, announcements to her or Regina to be included on the BTF webpage.

**Topics of Interest to Discuss During Future Meetings:**

* Braille and Narration Production Tour 2024 for Blind Task Force members
* Membership
* Subcommittee Goals for 2024
* Request data from DESE related to Transition and ask Mark Wheatley, Assistant Commissioner, DESE, OSE to make a presentation to the members to discuss his Education Doctorate in Transition
* Broader discussion related to mixed and complex incentives for school districts related to receiving continued transition services after a student has completed their academic requirements for education.
* Planning for the 2024 Children’s Vision Summit
  + Possible locations to consider for 2024
    - Alpha Pointe, Scottish Rite, Kansas City School for the Blind, MSB, Children’s Center for the Visually Impaired
* Ask DESE to pull data on student achievement to evaluate and review academic success
* Accessible Materials - parents and districts need to know what’s available (AEM)
* Career Education Special Needs (CESN)
* Graduation rates
* TVI coms and staffing issues
* Advocacy and the IEP – making it relevant
* Post-Covid recovery
  + Teacher Retention
  + Mental Health
  + Need for TVI’s
  + Filling the gaps left by distance learning as students return to the classroom
  + Moving from a five-day week to a four-day week – Does it fundamentally change the instructional approach and effectiveness? What effect might it have on student stability?
    - Challenges of Childcare
    - Parent Employment
    - A Safe Place at School
    - Feeding our Students
    - What does this accomplish in preparing our students for a 40-hour-a-week Workforce?
* 504 and visual impairment/blindness services
* How are we supporting (or failing) our teachers?
* We don’t have a teacher shortage we have a Master’s-trained shortage of individuals willing to work for $35,000 a year in Missouri
* How can we teach our students (6th – 12th Grade) that education is a viable profession?
* What Are DESE’s Requirements for TVI certification?
* Promote COOPs!

Motion to adjourn – Carla Keirns

Meeting Adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, May 9, 2023 – In-person at the Howerton State Office Building, 615 Howerton Court, Large Conference Room, Jefferson City, Missouri.