

**The Arc Michigan Education Committee+**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 1, 2024**

The meeting came to order at 10:10am via Zoom.

**Present:** Debbie Whitford, Darlene Heard-Thomas, Emily Henderson, Maggie Kolk, Tom Kendziorski, Kim Faiman, Sherry Kenworthy, Khalilah Montgomery, Andrea Beachnau, Katherine Mills, Kenya Harper, Deborah Moffit, Kelsey Biswanger, Margarita Rodriguez-Curry, Sue Lind, and Michelle Driscoll.

We welcomed new members Tom Kendziorski, Margarita Rodriguez-Curry, and Sherry Kenworthy to the Education Committee.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Meeting minutes from the November meeting were previously sent out to committee members and approved with no changes. There were no meetings in December 2023 and January 2024.

**Governmental Affairs/Legislative Update:**

*Emily Henderson, Governmental Affairs Consultant and Lobbyist for Arc Michigan with McCall Hamilton.*

We have kicked off the second year of a two-year session. Emily gave an update of where the legislators stand presently. An election is coming to replace two democratic seats and the session is expected to adjourn by July. So far one bill has passed out of the house, a resolution to rename a highway in honor of a firefighter that lost his life. We may be facing a political hold out phase as both Democrats and Republicans are not in a hurry to move legislation due to the political split. On the budget side of things, there's a wrap-up of recent revenue budget conference fiscal year 2024 with fiscal year 2025 starting in October with a potential estimate of reduction. The legislature spent the remaining 9 billion funds for Covid. The cost of living is more expensive right now. We foresee a flat budget year as we can expect to see programs previously funded continue to be covered. Governor Whitmer continues her pursuit to find money for school lunches. Governor Whitmer delivered her state of the state address where the focuses were on what Michiganders can afford or lowering costs on daily necessities and the expanding growth in the population by discussing rehabilitation of housing and creating more jobs. At the end of March, the budget plan should be ready for review.

Discussion on the following flagged legislation:

- [House Bill 4676](#)
- [House Bill 4677](#)
- [House Bill 4678](#)

The bills address various issues for children in Foster Care. Graduation requirements and making sure districts' records follow the school the child attends during their time in Foster Care are issues addressed. Concerns of the bills were that there was not an accountability mechanism and how information will be shared about whether students are earning their credits for diploma. Maggie Kolk had a concern that if there was language in the bills on how or whom would be working with Foster Care agency to make sure those records follow the schools. Emily stated she would look into the contract language of the bills. Sue Lind asked if LARA (Licensing and Regulatory Affairs) will be overseeing them if

there is a team built around foster care liaisons. Sherry Kenworthy offered concern about kids with disabilities and schools exiting kids early when they could be part of a transition program. Michelle suggested concerns on using personal Curriculum and making adjustments as well.

Also discussed was Senate Bill [SB 29](#) (House Bill version [HB 4389](#)). Legislation was introduced to allow five excused mental health days for school aged children. Would allow up to five absences due to behavioral/mental health without penalty. Emily stated that there are other organizations also following the bill.

Concerns with this bill:

- Looking at other states, most have said passing the bill really hasn't impacted the issues that the bill addresses.
- The days may be used as excuse to not attend school (are students now skipping school).
- School personnel (officers, resource officers) go to homes to check on students.

Kenya Harper felt it would be an unnecessary resource, most times kids don't pay attention to what's on their IEPs and what help is available. Sherry Kenworthy asked what mental health training would resources officers receive to support mental health and mental health crisis issues.

Emily stated legislation may move to listing all potential personnel who would be equipped to visit student's homes. Darlene Heard-Thomas asked who is qualified to say that five days is enough, she felt it is not enough. Maggie Kolk mentioned that if they were sending a resource officer to the home when a parent excuses them, what is the reasoning for the officer to do the visit.

It was mentioned that this is a huge concern for the Arc MI Education Committee when we don't know what a school district's policy will include. Kenya Harper asked about a checklist of what is considered a mental health crisis as she felt it needed to be better defined. Kenya also asked what if child is out sick, does parent have to specifically say they are taking a mental health day? Sherry Kenworthy mentioned that we don't want children coming to school ill, but we don't want children penalized for taking a mental health day either. She also mentioned seeing this as being a five day buy in before schools send truancy officers.

Emily introduced two articles to board members for the basis of the bill:

<https://www.manisteenews.com/news/article/michigan-bill-mental-health-days-for-students-17908599.php>

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit/2023/12/20/michigan-bill-lets-students-take-excused-mental-health-days/>

Darlene Heard-Thomas mentioned that she has had a couple calls regarding immigrants, not naturalized, who were looking for placement and resources (Medical/financial assistance) and wondering if it was on the legislative radar? Emily would research and get back to the committee.

Members also discussed Social Workers and legislation to change certification exams. A Request for Rulemaking (RFR) has been submitted to Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR) for review. Michelle will follow up with committee members regarding the status of the proposed changes.

### **SEAC Report Summary:**

*Kelsey Biswanger, Arc Michigan SEAC Representative*

### **Updates from the Michigan Teacher of the Year, Candice Jackson**

- Ms. Jackson reviewed her recent activities as Michigan Teacher of the Year, including attendance at the Future Proud Michigan Educator Explorer Conference, and a school visit to Midland Schools to learn about their adult learner program. She also highlighted ongoing teacher recruitment activities, including Grow Your Own Programs, and an upcoming meeting of the 2024 State Teachers of the Year through the National Teacher of the Year Program.

### **Alt+Shift Overview by Kate Fanelli, Project Coordinator, and Sara Pericolosi, Assistive Technology (AT) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Specialist**

- Ms. Fanelli and Ms. Pericolosi provided an overview of the available activities and resources provided by Alt+Shift across four content areas: accessible digital materials, assistive technology, autonomous communication, and mathematics. They also highlighted how Alt+Shift supports Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) through considerations of instructional practices, focus on adult roles, supporting adults, and Intermediate School District coherence. The presenters concluded by sharing how members can access and share Alt+Shift resources, including exploring their website that includes free learning modules, and attending an upcoming SEAC field trip to engage with Alt-Shift AT lending library.

### **Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Technical Assistance Center (MiMTSS TA Center) by Dr. Melissa Nantais, Advanced Tiers Coordinator**

- Dr. Nantais provided a definition of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) and emphasized it as a framework for supporting students and teacher/staff who need support in implementing evidence-based practices or using established process and procedures to flexibly meet the needs of students. Dr. Nantais also provided an overview of the MiMTSS TA Center's mission, core principles, and bi-directional model of MTSS, highlighting how the TA Center is providing support to all learners. Dr. Nantais concluded the presentation by introducing upcoming TA Center activities and professional learning opportunities, as well as ways for members to access TA Center resources via website and social media.

### **Statewide Autism Resources and Training (START) Project by Dr. Amy Matthews, Project Director, and Stephanie Dyer, Autism Education and Intervention Specialist**

- Dr. Matthews and Ms. Dyer introduced the START Project as a program in the Grand Valley State University Autism Education Center, funded by MDE, that provides training, technical assistance, and resources to Michigan educators who serve students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The introduction included

START values, which emphasize inclusion and belonging, and “START-isms” which are used throughout trainings to highlight START values. The presentation focused on three areas: challenges to LRE access for students with autism, research on access to inclusion for students with autism, and how START supports access to LRE and promotes inclusion and belonging. Dr. Matthews and Ms. Dyer also highlighted ongoing START initiatives, activities, and resources, including flexible professional development experiences and collaboration with other grant funded initiatives and organizations, including peer-to-peer support for students with autism as an evidence-based practice.

### **Due Process Case Review by Chantel Mozden, OSE Program Accountability Unit**

- Ms. Mozden presented a due process case that concerned a complaint related to child find and evaluation requirements. Members discussed the case in breakout rooms and provided notes to OSE staff.

### **Additional Business:**

- Michelle Driscoll mentioned that the Arc MI Board approved the updated position statements on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Pathway to Kindergarten and Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports and thanked everyone for their work on those position statements.
- Many agencies signed on for support of the Michigan Parent, Advocate and Attorney Coalition (MiPAAC) Literacy (Dyslexia) Bill Package Letter of Support and Michelle Driscoll noted that she would be sending out a copy of the letter of support via email.
- Michelle Driscoll talked with Sherri Boyd, Courtney Trunk, and Katherine Mills about making more posts on education in the Arc Michigan’s social media venues. That it is important that we get out there the work we are doing. Committee members are encouraged to follow The Arc MI on their social media platforms - [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Youtube](#)
- Discussion on possible NEW position statement to be developed or possibilities of bundles of information consolidated into one document. There were several suggestions:
  - Students w/ twice exceptionalities and oversight roles being who would do that whether it be MDE (Michigan Department of Education), ISD (Intermediate School District), LEA (Local Education Agency) and who would be responsible for what.
  - Discipline
  - Prior Written Notice
  - Evaluation process
  - Accommodations (what they can and can’t include)
  - McKinney Vento
  - RTI (Response to Intervention) Vs. 504 Plan
  - Early-on-Natural Environments (Explanation)

- Discussion on school social worker certification code (draft rules) and inviting someone that worked on the rulemaking of that code to come to an Arc Education Committee meeting to talk with members regarding content. Michelle Driscoll stated she would make contact with a representative from MDE to see if that could be arranged.

**UPDATE SINCE MEETING:** Proposed rules changes have been sent to the Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules for review. A public comment period has not been scheduled.

**The next meeting is Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am-11:30am**

### **Upcoming Monthly Meeting Dates**

Mar 7, 2024

Apr 4, 2024

May 2, 2024

Jun 6, 2024

Aug 1, 2024 (If needed)

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81104962316?pwd=WFA3eVFoNC92U3JJSFZmcjVzdEd2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 811 0496 2316 / Passcode: 707193

The meeting adjourned at 11:30am

Respectfully Submitted,  
Michelle Driscoll (for Debbie Whitford)