

Home Education Advisory Council
June 11, 2013
Department of Education
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Abbey Lawrence, Amy Gall, George O'Dorazio, Michael Compitello, Michael Benik, Marc Boyd, Representative Barbara Shaw, Roberta Tenney, Barrett Christina

Guests: Christine Mukai

Abbey handed out a list of the duties of the Chairman.

There was some discussion regarding certifying completion of a home education program, college documentation requirements, and submission of letters of intent/acknowledgment from school districts when it is not required by law.

The meeting was called to order at 3: 40 when a quorum was present.

May Minutes: Minutes of the May meeting were changed to correct Mike Benik's name and add Christine Mukai to the guest list. They were then accepted by general consent.

Chairman's Report:

The Ed315 Initial Proposal was discussed.

A discussion was also held regarding parental obligations when they are using a non-public participating agency and the local school district wants proof. It is difficult for districts to know if a student is homeschooling or truant under these conditions.

Abbey asked Roberta to reserve a meeting room for next year.

Abbey reported that the issue discussed last month has been resolved with the school district which did not want to conduct an annual evaluation for a family.

Abbey reported about Jane Grady's presentation last month regarding college requirements for a GED or some other state certificate from homeschoolers to be eligible for federal financial aid. Jane had suggested that HEAC send a letter to the Commissioner asking for assistance in this matter. Abbey passed out her draft of a letter to the Commissioner requesting the Department issue letters to colleges on a case-by-case basis informing them that the state does not provide documentation of completion of a home education program. Discussion ensued.

It was suggested that a possible solution to this problem would be for an 18-year-old to submit a self-certifying letter of completion to the DOE in order to get back the acknowledgement. However, Roberta reported that according to the NH Attorney General, the DOE cannot give out a certification of completion for homeschooled students or write any other letter that is not directed under the purview of the law. The acknowledgment of receipt of the self-certification of completion for homeschooled students under 18-years-old is only to satisfy compulsory attendance and truancy issues. Students over 18-years-old cannot be truant, so the DOE cannot issue a receipt of self-certification. However, Roberta stated that the Department would be willing to advocate for an individual student over the phone if they are in compliance with the law when an issue like this arises.

An issue was discussed wherein a student wanted to participate in a local high school graduation ceremony in spite of not having met the requirements for the public school diploma due to homeschooling for part of high school. The consensus was that this issue is governed by local policy.

There was discussion about award of credit for mastery of competencies. There might not be a cap on the number of credits that can be earned outside of school, but there may still be a minimum number of credits earned while enrolled in the school to be eligible to graduate there.

Abbey reported regarding the issue of the requirement for a participating agency to sign a permission form for a homeschooled student to take the GED, the form is available on the Department website.

Abbey reported that she will be presenting her annual report to the State Board of Education next week. She will be including in her report the issues of push-out, reports of students using the home education law to drop-out of public school, and the legislation this year attempting to restore the voting rights of legislative members of the HEAC which failed. She is concerned that she doesn't have any hard data about these issues. If anyone has any comments or anything they think she should add they should please email her as soon as possible.

Department of Education Report:

Roberta reported that there are currently no homeschoolers using the Department as a participating agency.

Roberta reported that she although she called to follow-up she has not heard back about the issue from last month concerning the school district wanting to know how to find out if a student in the district is homeschooling in compliance with the law.

Roberta also reported that she received a lot of telephone calls from all over the country about both homeschooling in New Hampshire and unschooling due to the rebroadcast of a television program. She reported that she consistently gets the most questions every week from New Hampshire residents wishing to find out how to begin homeschooling. She refers those parents to homeschool support groups.

She has also had calls from superintendents who thought they didn't have to provide evaluations now that they are not required to be turned in to the district. Clarifications were made regarding their obligations if they are used as a participating agency.

There was no other old business.

New Business:

It was noted that this is Abbey's last meeting as an appointee to HEAC as her youngest child is graduating this year and she is stepping down from her home education roles.

Marc requested to have the minutes reflect our appreciation of Abbey's work with HEAC over the past seven years. Let it be known that the members present have found Abbey Lawrence to be organized, incredibly efficient, intelligent and insightful, wise and thoughtful, gracious, inspiring, a pleasure to work with, and a true advocate for New Hampshire homeschoolers.

George moved that we prepare a certificate of appreciation for Abbey for her dedication to the HEAC over the past seven years. The motion was seconded and passed.

Abbey stated that she will coordinate the September meeting for HEAC, but she will not be in attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55.

Respectfully submitted by Amy Gall