



**MASS Board Leadership Web Meeting DRAFT Minutes**  
**Monday, August 30, 2021**  
**10:15 – 11:00 am**

In Attendance: Dr. Greg Dern, Dave Wick, Casey Klasna, Scott Kinney, Dr. Laurie Barron, Bart Hawkins, Hannah Nieskens, Allison Evertz, Thom Peck, Cal Ketchum, Tobin Novasio, Rick Duncan, Nick Schumacher, Dr. Mike Perry, Kirk Miller, Kim Scofield, Marcus Meyer

Not in attendance: Elliott Crump, Dan Schmidt

Dr. Greg Dern called the meeting to order at 10:18 AM.

**Items for Discussion - MASS President Dr. Greg Dern, Presiding**

1. Consideration of [MASS Board Leadership Web Meeting DRAFT Minutes 8-19-21](#) [Action]

Hannah Nieskens made a motion to approve the minutes; Casey Klasna seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. COVID-19 Impact on SAM 2021-22 Conferences and PD – [Actions of SAM Executive Board](#)

Greg reviewed the actions taken by the SAM Executive Board on 8-25-21 to move all 2021-22 conferences and professional development to a virtual format with the consideration of holding in-person events as COVID conditions allow. Kirk stated that the decision was made in order to protect SAM members from the risk of attending in-person events and to protect SAM financially. He stated that this has an impact on statewide events but not necessarily regional events and meetings. Kirk shared the current COVID data in Montana.

3. MASS/MCASE Fall Conference 2021 – September 21-22 Update and Discussion

- [Proposed Schedule for Virtual Conference](#)

Greg reviewed the proposed schedule explaining that due to the virtual format, the schedule has been condensed to two half days instead of full days. He stated that regional discussions would be held instead of caucus breakout sessions. The SAM office will provide the region presidents with a Google document for documenting the discussion around topics such as school reopening and implementation of school plans and requesting funds through ARPA, ESSER II, and ESSER III.

- [Proposed Message for Conference shift from Blended to Virtual Delivery Draft 8.26.21](#)

Kirk stated that a memo will be sent to all conference registrants requesting that the registrant cancel their hotel reservations and inform the SAM office if they choose to cancel their conference registration. The SAM office will create a virtual conference landing page. He asked board members to continue to promote the conference with their region members. The conference registration fee will remain the same.

4. Opening Schools Discussion - issues related to SAM – [SAM Board Update 8-26-21](#)

Kirk reviewed the [SAM Board Update 8-26-21](#) stating that the most up-to-date COVID tracking information can be found on the [COVID 19 Information for Schools webpage](#) on the SAM website as well as the latest version of the MT-PEC 2021-22 COVID FAQ document. He then opened the discussion up to Board members.

- Bart Hawkins: Bart stated that the local health department will no longer be posting requirements and is now posting recommendations. His district has had its first COVID cases since school started and masks are now required. He doesn't feel schools have any support at the state level for any precautionary measures.
- Hannah Nieskens: Hannah stated that her district is using the BINAX testing. School nurses (with parental/staff consent) are administering the tests. Parents are contacted before a student is sent home to gain permission to test. Those who test positive must agree to the CDC guidelines. Most pushback seems to be from high school students due to sports.
- Scott Kinney: Scott stated that his district is also using the BINAX tests and experiencing the same as Hannah is in her district. He stated that his district is now in charge of all of their own contact tracing.
- Tobin Novasio: Tobin stated that the test is only being administered to staff in his district.
- Laurie Barron: Laurie stated that two out of 19 districts in the northwest region are masking K-6 or K-8 with others stating that masking is optional. The local health department is following CDC guidelines and advising quarantining for those unvaccinated and 14 days for vaccinated. Districts are unsure of who to report positive cases to. Administrators are experiencing leadership fatigue.
- Rick Duncan: Rick stated there are currently three legal cases against schools in the Missoula area. He stated that Montana is the only state to have a law in place like HB 702 (AN ACT PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON A PERSON'S VACCINATION STATUS OR POSSESSION OF AN IMMUNITY PASSPORT). He stated that one of the issues discussed with Senator Daines in July was the issue of masking on school buses because they are public transportation. Daines office has been trying to have school buses removed from the mask mandate.
- Masking and Protesters: Tobin and Hannah stated that the group of protesters attending board meetings across the state are getting their information from Stand Up Montana. Bart asked SAM to create a document to share with administrators explaining how to respond to the talking points presented by Stand Up Montana. Scott stated that we need to collectively talk about the "business" or "macroeconomy" of education because that is the metric that the Governor seems interested in. He also stated that the Red Pill Festival was held earlier in the summer. Approximately 200 people from WA, ID, MT attended including the Montana Attorney General. Scott questions what recourse district superintendents have.
- Thom Peck: Thom stated that the health officials have been working together in his community. Vaccinations for 12-18 year olds have increased drastically due to coaches encouraging vaccination as a way players can take care of each other.
- Tobin shared the following leadership goal: "Always assume positive intent".
- Hannah stated that she has learned through her time on the governor's COVID-19 task force there is a distinct lack of knowledge at the state level about what is happening in every district such as how many districts are engaged in online learning and what percentage of students are receiving their learning remotely. She feels that the same thing is happening with vaccination status data. She encouraged members to gather this information for our use as administrators. Her district is inputting vaccination records, including COVID vaccines, into Infinite Campus. Her motivation is to have the ability to report this data to community members and for MASS to have the data to use as a talking point.

## 5. [MASS Region](#) Updates and Communication

- Discussion Region President plans for Regional meetings – schedule, location, delivery
- Reminder of SAM Business Partners and access to Region meetings
- [2021-22 MASS Membership by Region](#) (Google Sheet)
- [2021-22 MASS Regional Membership Monthly Meeting Log](#) to track meeting attendance for awarding MASS Recognition Pins

Kirk stated that these documents are located on the MASS Board Meetings webpage. He asked that region presidents send the information to Kim ([samks@sammt.org](mailto:samks@sammt.org)) about when and where meetings are held as well as meeting agendas and minutes.

- Region President Updates – *Region Presidents*

Western: Scott stated that Western MASS is meeting Wednesday with a handful of superintendents meeting in person at the MCPS board room. Tobin asked where districts are on their CSCT allocations. Scott stated that Superior hired a local LCPC. He wrote and submitted a plan for districts to own their CSCT programs. He believes this would allow districts to follow the OPI special education model of identifying students who qualify for CSCT just as students are identified for special education. Bart stated that his district also contracts with a private entity and this has proven to be a good model.

Discussion about the state superintendent making appearances at state protests:

Mike stated that he plans to bring up the discussion at the Western MASS meeting. He is upset that the state superintendent is talking poorly about administrators across the state. Bart asks if there is any possible recourse. Kirk stated that there is no legal recourse as the duties and responsibilities of the state superintendent are to serve on the land board and to provide general supervision of Montana schools. He believes her motivation is to keep her name in the minds of Montana voters and that any recourse would fuel the fire and continue to benefit her campaign and keep the attention on her statement that she is “protecting the common good”. Kirk is considering scheduling a meeting with the state superintendent and describe to her that her actions are putting the staff at risk when attempting to serve the children in Montana if SAM members believe this is the action that should be taken. He and Tobin cautioned members in providing her with ammunition that could backfire and be used against public education in Montana. Kirk doesn’t believe that if he spoke to the governor that he would hold the state superintendent accountable. Greg stated that a better approach may be to attempt to neutralize the negative comments coming from the state superintendent. Laurie added that we must keep in mind that we have many members and our members have different views so the issue with the state superintendent should not be about masks or vaccines but about the fact that the state superintendent attempted to insert herself into usurping local control. Greg suggested surveying the members that would provide data to see similarities that could be highlighted instead of focusing on dissimilarities.

Scott mentioned that the MASS OPI liaisons have changed this year to include the deputy superintendent, chief of staff, and communications director at OPI. Kirk stated that the strategy created by OPI is to serve the MASS regions. MASS Region Presidents may invite the liaison when the region members have an OPI issue to discuss and OPI will provide staff to speak to the issue.

6. [COVID-19 Information for Schools](#)

7. [Advocacy Issues](#) Update– *Rick Duncan*

Rick reported that HB 702 and SB 400 (AN ACT RESTRICTING A GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY'S ABILITY TO INTERFERE WITH FUNDAMENTAL PARENTAL RIGHTS...) are current state advocacy issues. Masking on buses continues to be a federal issue.

8. AASA Governing Board and Executive Committee Updates – *Tobin Novasio, Laurie Barron, Mike Perry, Cal Ketchum*

Tobin reported that AASA has done a great job of creating webinars that are easy to attend. AASA is looking for a rural representative to contribute to the Maintenance of Equity conversation.

9. Future Meeting Dates

- [SAM Web Calendar](#)
- [2021-22 SAM Conference-Meeting Schedule](#)
- [2021-22 SAM and Affiliate Board Meeting Schedule](#)

10. What's on Your Mind ...

Greg stated that he plans to send a memo following the meeting to open the conversation about where we begin as an organization with our inclusive voice this year.

Kirk plans to use the ideas from this discussion when writing his article for the September SAM Bulletin. He asks board members to review his article and let him know if these ideas could be used for a larger media presence.

11. Adjournment

Laurie Barron made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Scott Kinney seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kim Scofield  
Director of Professional Learning and Member Services