



**WYOMING ADVISORY PANEL
FOR STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES**

June 30th, 2011

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The Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities (WAPSD) has sought to identify potential barriers faced by students with disabilities in Wyoming's educational system. The WAPSD is comprised of stakeholders and parents of children with disabilities from around the state. Our mission is to discover unmet needs of students with disabilities and report them to state officials, specifically the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In collaboration with parent groups and other stakeholders, we have identified an issue that we feel needs to be addressed on behalf of the students we represent:

An increase in the understanding about and sensitivity to students with disabilities, including those with physical, cognitive, and emotional differences. The need for greater sensitivity, awareness, acceptance and higher expectations of those with disabilities shows up in many measures of Wyoming's educational system.

We commend school districts across Wyoming for their efforts made with anti-bullying programs, policies and use of positive behavior supports. However, students with disabilities continue to be the victims of both adult and child bullies. This pervasive and persistent problem has come to our attention through panel stakeholder reports, public comment, state complaints and from educators that confront disability intolerance in general education.

We feel that an improvement in this area of concern would allow for more inclusive classrooms and workplaces where individuals with disabilities may thrive. If not addressed, this problem could further perpetuate prejudice, bullying, increased drop-out rates, parental discontent, social rejection, academic struggles and future unemployment among individuals with disabilities.

The WAPSD would like to encourage the Wyoming Department of Education to use this information to improve educational programs systemically. We implore you to consider this advice when developing future training initiatives and certification requirements in Wyoming for all levels and areas of those working in education.

On behalf of the panel and for our children,

Julie Heil
Chairperson

cc:
Professional Teaching Standards Board
Wyoming Education Association
Wyoming State Board of Education