

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 22, 2016

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman VanOrden, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Mendive, McDonald, Dixon, Kerby, Pence, Kloc, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Phil Homer, Helen Price, Rob Winslow, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Blake Youde, State Board of Education; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural School Administrators; Marcia Judry, I.A.C.I.; Emily McClure, Idaho Charter School Network; Clark Corbin, Idaho Education News; Marilyn Whitney, Governor's Office; Terry Ryan, Bluum; Tamara Baysinger, Alan Reed, Public Charter School Commission

Chairman DeMordaunt called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

RS 24019C1: **Blake Youde**, Office of the State Board of Education (OSBE), spoke to **RS 24091C1**, relating to school district continuous improvement plans. He said school districts set annual goals, and their plans to achieve those goals. These are submitted to the OSBE. The Board works with districts to make sure the plans are in compliance with the law. The legislation incorporates the Accountability and Autonomy Task Force subcommittee recommendations into the school district continuous improvement plan process. Improvement scores will be based on year-over-year improvement in the level of readiness produced by the school, and shown as a percentage of change in the applicable readiness score. For example, said **Mr. Youde**, a score of 49% one year and 50% the next would show a 1% improvement score.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Youde** said the names of students are concealed and represented by asterisks in reports. The districts are already required to post their plans and goals online, he added. The Board reviews plans submitted by school districts, and it provides feedback. **RS 24019C1** provides guidance on categories which may be included in the continuous improvement plans, he added.

Chairman DeMordaunt encouraged the committee members to look at past plans and reports from school districts in their own legislative district.

MOTION: **Rep. Wills** made a motion to introduce **RS 24019C1**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Terry Ryan, Bluum CEO, explained the role of Bluum and the legislature in charter schools. He said Bluum supports school choice, to help families, children and educators achieve more. Bluum supports educators by increasing the number of successful school models, developing school leaders and creating opportunities for them, sharing research and learning innovations, advocating for innovation in learning, and providing school support and management help, in partnership with the Idaho Charter School Network.

Emily McClure, Idaho Charter School Network (ICSN), explained the role of ICSN is to help create an atmosphere which supports school choice legally. Charter schools must operate on less funding, and do not have access to the local tax base, she added. The creation and funding of the Public Charter School Debt Reserve has helped charter schools negotiate the interest rates on loans from banks, she said.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Ryan** said the success of a school such as the Upper Carmen Charter School can be replicated for rural areas of Idaho, but it is not easy to do. The Upper Carmen Charter School was made possible from a combination of a \$100,000 grant from the Albertson's Foundation, and the support of the community in the building of the school. He added that it is possible to duplicate success, but it is necessary to have a great school leader for a community to rally around.

Mr. Ryan added that Coeur d'Alene schools do not have as many English Language Learners or special needs students as other schools in Idaho, but the numbers are starting to get closer. Charter schools take students who reflect the community's demographics, and establish a rigorous curriculum and expectation of hard work, and engage the parents, staff and students in the mission of the school. Bluum has encouraged the charter school to expand its services to more students, as it has a waiting list of 700.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Ryan** said rural school districts could combine their resources for students interested in a STEM school, and perhaps use an innovative model such as a residential program, where students live at the school during the week. He gave an example of another innovative model for rural areas, Advanced Regional Technical Education Coalition (ARTEC) in South Central Idaho. Several school districts work together to offer students more class options. **Mr. Ryan** said there are a handful of charter schools which offer tuition-based pre-k classes, but there is no state funding for schools to offer pre-k classes.

Alan Reed, Idaho Public Charter School Commission Chairman, gave an annual report to the committee. He thanked the legislators for adding funding for more staff positions at the Commission last year. Mr. Reed said improving the diversity of the student demographics in charter schools is one of the goals, but it is difficult to make students attend a specific school. The Commission is encouraging the replication of successful schools, and wants to make sure the yearly renewal of charter schools is fair.

Tamara Baysinger, Public Charter School Commission (PCSC) Director, said the Commission experienced a significant staff increase last year, from 2.5 FTE to 4 FTE, thanks to state funding. Because of the extra staff, the Commission has been able to expand the services it offers charter schools. The extra staff are also better able to help schools find financial resources and prepare for the renewal process beginning in 2017. The number of brick and mortar PCSC portfolio charter schools increased by 520, and all Idaho charter schools increased by 409. Portfolio virtual schools decreased by 60, and all Idaho virtual charter schools decreased by 110, said Ms. Baysinger.

Ms. Baysinger said the annual performance reports are sent to all the schools each year. The math proficiency rate comparison, based on SBAC 2016 scores, shows approximately two-thirds of charter school students perform higher than students in the school district, and approximately one-third perform more poorly than school district students. This is true of English proficiency rate comparisons as well.

Ms. Baysinger spoke to the demographics of the Heritage Community Charter School in Caldwell, as it relates to the school district and the state demographics. The whole Caldwell School District tends to perform below the state in math proficiency, including Heritage, she said. One question the Commission attempted to answer, said Ms. Baysinger was if the reason the demographics for charter schools is different from the surrounding school district is due to the lack of services, such as free and reduced lunch, and transportation. Most charter schools offer transportation, she said, and most provide free and reduced lunch. The conclusion reached was that the difference in demographics is due to some of the public not understanding charter schools are public schools, and the Commission is still struggling to convey the message that charter schools are open to every one, she added.

Students in charter schools score higher on SAT tests than students in non-charter schools, said **Ms. Baysinger**, and the percentage of students scoring over 500 is also higher in charter schools. Most charter schools do well meeting and reporting their operational outcomes, she said, and late reporting is the most common reason for a lower score in accountability. Most charter schools are financially strong, she added, but one of the weaknesses they experience is long-term sustainability. Very young schools face the most financial challenges, she added.

In conclusion, said **Ms. Baysinger**, the Commission recommends the continued implementation of NACSA recommendations, broadening the scope of resources available to petitioners and schools, and preparing for the renewal process in March 2017. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Baysinger said more flexibility in how funding is used would be helpful, as long as schools are held accountable for results. Schools cannot require parental involvement, and schools cannot force a certain demographic of students to attend the charter schools, she said, but the Commission is looking at the lottery process to see if it contributes to charter schools having a different demographic than surrounding school districts. A majority of charter schools do receive Title 1 Funds, she added, and they have the same requirement to use continuous improvement plans as the surrounding school districts.

Chairman DeMordaunt asked the Commission to provide information on charter schools in their districts to the committee members.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary