

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
January 8, 2013
Capitol Auditorium
Boise, Idaho

Cochair Senator Dean Mortimer called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Attending the meeting were Senators Cliff Bayer, Elliot Werk, and Les Bock, and Representatives Shirley Ringo (cochair), Maxine Bell, Gayle Batt, and Elaine Smith. Also present were Rakesh Mohan, director, Margaret Campbell, administrative coordinator, and other OPE staff. Audience members included the following:

Senators Pro Tem Brent Hill, John Goedde (education chair)
Representatives Wendy Horman, Phylis King
Jeff Youtz, director, and Paul Headlee, principal budget analyst, Legislative Services Office
Tracie Bent, State Board of Education
Luci Willits, chief of staff, Department of Education

Senator Mortimer welcomed Senator Bock and Representative Batt as new members on the committee. He recognized the two former cochairs of the committee, Senators Cliff Bayer and Elliot Werk, indicating that they have been great examples and will provide good council.

JLOC RULES

Senator Werk moved to adopt last session's rules as the current rules to use during the next two years. Representative Bell seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 14, 2012

Representative Smith moved to approve the JLOC minutes of November 14, 2012. Senator Werk seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

REPORT RELEASE: WORKFORCE ISSUES AFFECTING PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

Senator Bayer moved to receive the report *Workforce Issues Affecting Public School Teachers*. Representative Smith seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Mohan said that JLOC had asked OPE to look at recruitment and turnover issues last March. In light of the interest in public education reform, he said the report will be a good resource for all policymakers and education stakeholders to inform their policy discussions. Mr. Mohan said the report would not have been possible without the assistance of the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the educators who responded to survey. Lance McCleve, senior evaluator, presented the report.

Mr. McCleve said he and Maureen Brewer, principal evaluator, examined existing data at the Department of Education, and they surveyed all district and school superintendents, principals, and teachers for their perspectives on critical education issues and what educators felt was important to communicate to policymakers. They received more than 2,800 survey responses representing 72 percent of districts and charters and analyzed more than 1,500 comments from the respondents. The comments revealed a strong undercurrent of despair among teachers who perceived a climate that disparages their efforts and belittles their contributions.

If 72 percent of districts and charters responded to the survey, Senator Bock asked which 28 percent were not covered. What was the methodology for creating an unbiased sample? Mr. McCleve said the team attempted to send the survey to all educators. The 28 percent not represented were the ones who chose not to respond. He determined district representation by the responses of the principals and teachers. He did not track districts by superintendent responses because doing so would not protect the anonymity of respondents. He said he did not find any distinct patterns of who responded and did not respond.

Mr. McCleve discussed recruitment and retention struggles. Survey results indicated that administrators largely attributed these struggles to teacher compensation packages. Representative Ringo commented that turnover may have also been affected by the economic climate. Mr. McCleve said he did not try to determine to what degree the economy affected turnover. Contacting those teachers would have been difficult and data at the department did not lend itself to determining why teachers left.

Mr. McCleve said the average class size was 24 students per class, and the average teacher in Idaho makes \$43,000 per year. Representative Batt asked if the figure was salary only or included benefits too. Mr. McCleve said it was the average salary for full-time instructional staff and did not include benefits. Representative Batt asked what constituted full time. Was it measured by the number of days? Mr. McCleve said he calculated it by each full-time equivalent. *He would report back to her the average contract hours of a full-time equivalent.*

Mr. McCleve reported that administrators felt most new teachers were prepared to teach. Even so, administrators said they would like to see more new teachers with multiple endorsements, classroom management skills, and an ability to integrate technology into the classroom. Senator Bock asked whether administrators increase the pay of teachers with multiple endorsements. Mr. McCleve said that administrators recognized the high demand and value that multiple endorsements bring.

Mr. McCleve said the most common recruitment challenge cited by administrators was compensation. The second most common recruitment challenge was having a remote or rural location. Given that some districts supplement state funding with local taxes, Representative Ringo asked whether rural districts have a bigger compensation challenge than urban districts. Mr. McCleve said he asked districts whether they felt salaries were competitive with other districts and nearby states. He found that smaller districts, on average, paid less than larger districts except for the first few years, where salaries were about the same.

Senator Bock asked how the interview questions for educators were developed. Were they developed after the survey results? Mr. McCleve said the team first conducted background research and then interviewed various stakeholders. Using stakeholder input, the team randomly sampled districts with a questionnaire to determine a format for the surveys.

Mr. McCleve concluded his presentation by reviewing four key findings of the study: class size was a concern, turnover was not as bad as reported, compensation was a concern, and an undercurrent of despair was detected among teachers.

Representative Ringo said that administrators were an important part of the education team. The report indicated that administrators weighed in on how well teachers were prepared. She asked whether the evaluators asked teachers how prepared administrators were—teachers need confidence that administrators are well prepared. She said the despair teachers felt also relates to the influence that administrators have over their jobs. Mr. McCleve said the open-ended questions did not reflect concerns with the administrators and the survey did not ask that question.

Mr. Mohan said the report had responses from the Governor, the State Superintendent, and Board of Education. The methodology of the study was described on pages 2–3 and 49–50.

Senator Werk complimented the staff on the exhaustive report. He said the Department of Education should be collecting a reasonable amount of data in quality and quantity. He asked about the usefulness of the data. Mr. McCleve said the department was collecting an extensive amount of data—the data was useful but had limitations. Because districts report the data, the department was at the mercy of the districts for data accuracy.

Senator Mortimer invited anyone representing the Governor’s Office to respond to the report. No one was there to respond. Senator Mortimer called on Tracie Bent, State Board of Education, to respond to the report. Ms. Bent said she reviewed the final report and was included in processes throughout the study. She said OPE did an excellent job, particularly putting together a survey that the board did not have the resources to do.

Senator Mortimer called on Luci Willits, Department of Education, to respond to the report. Ms. Willits thanked OPE for fabulous work on a massive project. She said she appreciated a fresh eye on these issues. Senator Werk asked her whether the department could adjust its database queries to track class sizes. Ms. Willits said the department collected certain types of data. More data points provide ability for more queries. The department’s challenge is to make sure districts understand which information needs to be entered and the importance of quality information. Districts record the reasons why teachers leave, but the biggest issue in reporting is the quality of those reasons. The department wanted to make sure quality was achieved before expanding the database.

In response to Senator Mortimer’s question about committee action, Mr. Mohan said the report was different from others because it was entirely policy analysis rather than a compliance

review. Follow-up action could include a survey in a year to see how things have changed. The committee could also ask for an in-depth focus on particular findings.

Senator Werk said he did not know whether a survey in a year would provide useful information. Any redesign efforts would not start for another year, and if the state started a redesign project, what would a survey measure?

Senator Bock said his take on report was simplistic. “It is what it is.” He said he would want to hear from the education committees before he presumed to take action on the report. He asked about alternatives the committee had for action.

Senator Mortimer said the committee had multiple opportunities for action. He pointed to Senate Werk’s comments, saying the state was in the process of making changes as well as listening to stakeholders. As things change, the report will have more or less importance. The report gives the education committees information—it’s a tool and now is the time to use the information in making policies.

Representative Ringo said the report was absolutely excellent. It brought to the state’s attention the question of the preparation of administrators within districts. As far as classroom management for new teachers, questions came up about teacher preparation. Should student teaching take place over a longer period of time? The state could reconsider a mentoring program for a teacher’s first three years. She said an additional survey would not be productive.

Representative Ringo moved to present the report to policy committees and wait for their direction. Senator Bock seconded the motion.

The committee discussed whether to close the report and wait for further direction. Senator Werk suggested leaving the report open and revisit it in the future. Senator Bock agreed and said the report had a lot of quality information. On the other hand, JLOC was not in a position to say whether issues were completely done. Let the germane committees decide whether JLOC should pursue a follow-up.

The motion to present the report to policy committees and wait for their direction passed unanimously by voice vote.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Senator Mortimer said the committee had two more reports to release in January. The next proposed meeting to release a report on state contracts was Monday, January 21 at 4:30 p.m. and the second proposed meeting to release a report on state employee compensation was scheduled for January 30 at 4:30. With no major shaking of heads, Senator Mortimer said both meetings would be scheduled as announced.

Senator Mortimer asked Mr. Mohan to speak to 24-hour reviews. Mr. Mohan said that all evaluation work OPE does is requested by legislators and brought to the committee for review and approval. The committee then approves a set number of requests based on relative interest to

the legislature and office resources. However, many legislators have interest in topics where OPE can help. Mr. Mohan said he came up with an idea to do a 24-hour review. This review must be limited to three business days of research and does not have any recommendations.

Mr. Mohan said the genesis of 24-hour reviews began shortly after he was appointed as director. He had sent out a letter to legislators introducing himself and how he could help. He received the same letter back with a handwritten note from a senior legislator saying JLOC and OPE had no relevance to him. In a meeting, the legislator said he had asked JLOC to approve a request and was unsuccessful. In thinking about this dilemma, Mr. Mohan talked to the cochairs and adopted a policy that when legislators are only asking for information and not an evaluation and if the request can be answered quickly, the office would conduct a 24-hour review.

Senator Werk moved to adjourn, and Representative Bell seconded the motion.

Representative Bell noted the presence of a new staff member. Mr. Mohan introduced Tony Grange. Mr. Grange came to OPE from the Department of Correction and Ada County Juvenile Services. He has a PhD from Loyola in experimental psychology.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.