

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Wednesday, February 22, 2012
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Goedde, Vice Chairman Mortimer, Senators Andreason, Pearce, Fulcher, Winder, Toryanski, Malepeai and LeFavour
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:**
- NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies, and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.
- MINUTES:** **Chairman Goedde** called the meeting to order at 3:06 P.M. and asked the secretary to take a silent roll. He announced to the audience and the committee that this would be a short meeting due to the caucus at 3:30 P.M.
- PRESENTATION** The Chairman welcomed **Diane Demarest** of the Idaho Public Charter Schools to the Committee. **Ms. Demarest** presented a handout on Idaho Charter School Facilities. **Ms. Demarest** took the committee through an overview of facilities available within a community where a charter school is located. She noted that no public funds were available for facilities for charter schools, yet there is a strong demand for these schools.
- Jackie Collins**, Principal, Idaho Arts Charter School, discussed the growth of their charter school, moving from portable classrooms to a permanent building. She also noted that they were able to save funds to provide for bonding on the open market in order to buy facilities and renovate. Using part time staff has allowed them to help save money.
- QUESTIONS** **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked her about the fees paid for financing and why they would continue to seek bonding instead of normal real estate transactions. **Ms. Collins** stated they have gone to local banks and the fear of stability of charter schools prevents them from securing certain funding.
- Senator Andreason** asked how students were selected and what kinds of classes were taught. **Ms. Collins** indicated that they fulfill all state requirements, and that students are chosen in a lottery process.
- Senator Toryanski** asked if faculty earned more or less than public school faculty of equivalent education and experience. How do they attract and retain faculty. **Ms. Collins** stated that the benefits of a charter school is that their pay scale is decided by the school, their pay is relatively equivalent to the Meridian School District, based on experience and education. Charter schools advertise positions the same way as public schools, and to retain they use professional development and other opportunities. **Senator Toryanski** followed up by asking if they have found a shortage of quality applicants. **Ms. Collins** replied they have not encountered a problem filling positions.
- Senator Pearce** asked about the funding for buildings for charter schools and the current bond rating. **Ms. Collins** stated that they were funded much like a small business, and had to get a Standards and Poor rating. The bonds were sold in the open market, and the school must report to the investors. **Ms. Collins** further indicated the current bond rating was 6.5-7%.

**PRESENTATION** **David Meyer**, Administrator of Monticello Montessori Charter School discussed the facility built by Dome Technology of Idaho Falls. The school is looking for permanent financing to pay them back. They are currently using discretionary funds to pay the lease and using federal and Albertson’s grant money for other spending, thus there are no funds left for contingency. **Mr. Meyer** stated that these were public charter schools relying on private companies to fund operations.

**Don Keller**, Administrator of Sage International School, discussed the amount of time it took to get their school open. Facilities were a key obstacle for charter schools. **Mr. Keller** said that Sage’s enrollment is climbing and 64% of entitlement funding is used to pay for buildings so they have space for the students. He also noted the outstanding academic performance of the students. The staff is predicting a large waiting list and could use more room for growth, but needs funding to accomplish facility goals.

**Joe Lovestadt** , of Pocatello Academy Charter School, said the overcrowding in their school had forced some classes to be taught in hallways. **Mr. Lovestadt** stated they had been approved for expansion because of successful programs. There is an empty school building one mile away that has been offered for sale, but that investors could not be found for purchase and renovation of the site. They are currently looking for other options.

**Cindy Hoovel**, Administrator of DaVinci Charter School, said the plans for the school were challenged by location. The board has kept a frugal budget and didn’t want to take risks, but the location was found unacceptable based on surrounding businesses. **Ms. Hoovel** stated they were able to find a community partner to hold land for them to purchase when they can secure financing. Now it is just a matter of time.

**Ms. Demarest** closed by stating that facility issues were the biggest challenge for most charter schools, and that she would be happy to answer questions.

**ADJOURNMENT** **Chairman Goedde** adjourned the meeting at 3:33 P.M.

---

Senator Goedde  
Chairman

---

LeAnn South  
Secretary