

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 29, 2014

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Goedde, Vice Chairman Mortimer, Senators Pearce, Fulcher, Nonini, Thayn, Patrick, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

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.

CONVENED: Chairman Goedde called the Senate Education Committee to order at 3:02 p.m., and a silent roll was taken.

RS 22450C1 **Marilyn Whitney**, Chief Communications and Legislative Officer, State Board of Education (Board) said that this bill amends Idaho Code dealing with the Public Charter School Commission (Commission) and its laws. This change in the bill would add the words "or his or her designee" so that the director has some separation in the event that the Board hears an appeal from a school that is authorized by the Commission. This would help eliminate a conflict of interest, or the perception of one. Other changes clarify the Board's oversight and annual reporting, which are current practices. **Senator Goedde** clarified that the bill replaces a previous version, which would have relocated the Commission to an independent agency. **Ms. Whitney** agreed. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked for clarification of the words "make recommendations regarding oversight...". He understood that this section does not change the Commission. **Ms. Whitney** agreed.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Mortimer** made a motion to print **RS 22450C1**. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Sharon Harrigfeld**, Director, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections (IDJC), introduced her staff and presenters. **Jim Pannell**, Education Director, outlined for the Committee the successes, challenges and needs of the IDJC. The 3 IDJC facilities in Lewiston, Nampa and St. Anthony, serve 328 students ranging from 10 to 21 years of age. They offer high school diplomas, GEDs, and high school equivalencies, college credits and career readiness certificates. **Joseph Buckles**, Teacher Specialist and "Teacher of the Year" recipient from the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS), described his typical day: Juveniles are placed in treatment programs based on treatment needs rather than education needs. Once in the program, they live, eat, take classes and participate in counseling together. Due to the wide variety in ages, class subjects range from simple math to calculus. The IDJC in Nampa has teachers for math, English, science, and vocational studies. All teach social studies. In addition, all instructors must deal with safety and security, which requires additional training. Instructors respond to fights, escape attempts and self harm.

Senator Patrick asked how many students go on to further education. **Mr. Panell** replied that 2 years ago, 38 percent continued after release from the system. **Chairman Goedde** asked about the class schedule. **Mr. Buckles** replied that students are in class from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and then participate in counseling or other programs. Answering a question from Senator Buckner-Webb, **Mr. Panell** stated that all therapeutic staff were licensed clinical social workers. He also stated that juveniles participated in the IJDC programs for 12 to 14 months. **Mr. Panell** detailed some of the success stories achieved by students, including many poetry awards. **Mr. Panell** also stated that 71 percent of students who did not have a diploma or GED when they were released for IDJC returned to a public school, and 58 percent of juveniles, 17 or older at release, are receiving a taxable wage 3 to 6 months post-release. Many students are continuing post-secondary education programs.

PRESENTATION: **Brent D. Reinke**, Director, Idaho Department of Corrections (IDOC) introduced Chief Shane Evans and Doug Kellis, who he described as an exemplary example of achievement among Idaho inmates. He then explained the mission and vision statement for the IDOC, focusing on improving recidivism rates, safety, and promoting staff success. **Director Reinke** explained some of the unique ways in which connections are established between inmates and staff. He then focused on the increase in resources needed to train correctional officers, most of whom are overburdened by the large caseloads with which they are entrusted. Lastly, **Director Reinke** focused on the impact to the State for assuming operations at the Idaho Correctional Center.

Doug Kellis detailed how the IDOC education system had changed his life for the better. He began by describing how he had been involved with correctional facilities in California since the age of 15 and continued to find himself on the wrong side of the law after moving to Idaho. Upon being released from Idaho corrections in 1998 he found work and eventually obtained a master's degree and was subsequently pardoned by the State. He reiterated that his success was due to the value the IDOC places on education and treatment, along with a family that never gave up on him. When asked by Chairman Goedde what he had studied, **Mr. Kellis** replied that his degree was in Materials Science and Engineering. **Mr. Evans** responded that the GED programs were based on standards developed by the IDOC.

Chief Shane Evans explained that the transition from a classroom-based GED program to one taught exclusively online was not easy. Despite this difficult transition, a record number of GEDs were obtained by inmates in the latter part of 2013, which gives them access to better wages. **Chief Evans** said that the goals of the GED program for the current year are to improve technology and software for the underserved populations of inmates since they are generally last to realize advancements in education. These goals will enable more inmates to access electronic learning programs that focus on many subjects, such as Khan Academy, when online access is accessible, and KA Lite when it is not. **Senator Thayne** questioned whether the GED programs were based on competency or time spent in class. **Chief Evans** replied that competency is based on IDOC standards.

PRESENTATION: **Luci B. Willits**, Chief of Staff, State Department of Education (Department), introduced the Committee to the history and goals of state-wide assessments in Idaho Schools. In 1998, Idaho adopted its first set of standards in core subjects, and shortly thereafter, developed an assessment called the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). The ISAT was revised in 2006 to align with new standards in the form of a Direct Writing and Direct Math assessment and was a performance test, which meant students had to show their work. In 2010, Idaho adopted higher standards in math and English language arts (ELA) and also joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). In 2013, approximately 120 schools pilot tested the SBAC, and in spring 2014, every school will field test the SBAC.

SBAC is a state-held organization. States are the only members, and because of this, Idaho actively participates in the decisions of the consortium. Superintendent Luna sits on the governing board, former Department member, Carissa Miller was Co-Chairman, and Ms. Willits has been elected to the executive committee. The K-12 leads and higher education leads work to ensure that the tests accurately measure the standards that are acceptable to higher education institutions. In developing the assessments, over 100 Idaho teachers and administrators develop and review items, and develop the bank for professional development. Twenty additional faculty members and members of the Department at the State Board of Education (Board) participate as well. It is a collaborative effort, not only in Idaho, but among other states as well.

Ms. Willits described the difference between the ISAT and the SBAC. The ISAT is a "summative" test – the sum of what a student has learned that year. Teachers from all over the country have asked for more information, not just at the end of the year. The SBAC is a system, not just one test taken at one time. The foundation for the SBAC is the standards. The role of the assessment is to measure the standards. The focus of the standards is to ensure that every student who leaves high school is college and career ready and does not need remediation.

While the old standards were good, they were not college and career ready, and they did not require students to learn the kind of reasoning skills that are present in the new standards. Teachers from all over the country want critical thinking, not rote memorization. The standards in math require that students learn to reason, to connect, and most importantly to communicate. English and literacy have been combined into ELA which includes writing skills to enable students to inform, argue and analyze a point of view. So how shall Idaho measure this deeper knowledge? Idaho needs an assessment that matches and aligns with the standards. Under the ISAT, 90 percent of questions were multiple choice and required only low level thinking. On the SBAC, 70 percent requires higher level critical thinking, and only 30 percent includes lower thinking skills.

Ms. Willits explained the three processes of assessments by which Idaho will achieve the new standards. First are teacher resources for formative assessment practices to improve instruction. Teachers in Idaho are creating that right now – a bank of tools for teachers to use to engage in formative assessments on a daily and weekly basis at the classroom level. This library bank is available for purchase and is completely optional to each district. Second are interim assessments which are done periodically, such as an end-of-course (EOC) assessment. A bank is being developed for this as well. Finally, summative assessments measure college and career readiness on an annual basis.

The SBAC utilizes computer-adaptive testing, which Idaho has used before. This means that the computer adapts to the student's answer. If the student answers correctly, his next question will be harder. If he answers incorrectly, he will receive an easier next question. It measures how high or how low a student can go. The SBAC test, developed with broad input from Idaho stakeholders, contains both multiple choice and short answer questions, plus performance tasks that measure higher level thinking skills. Unlike the ISAT which is taken in the 10th grade and is considered a graduation requirement, passing the SBAC in the 11th grade guarantees admission into any public university in Idaho without need for remediation. Passage of the SBAC certifies that students are college ready.

Senator Buckner-Webb asked whether passage of the SBAC in 11th grade would de-motivate students to stay in school for their senior year. **Ms. Willits** replied that additional course credits might still be needed, but acknowledged that it is possible for a student to attain all of their required credits and graduate early. **Senator Patrick** asked how the ACT and SAT tests fit in with the SBAC. **Ms. Willits** assured Senator Patrick that his question would be answered later in the presentation.

The amount of time required to complete the SBAC varies with grades, and can be taken over multiple days or weeks. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked if the performance ELA section needed to be performed on the computer. **Ms. Willits** replied that the end result needed to be entered on the computer.

Senator Fulcher asked how SBAC will measure improvement, since all variables are changing at the same time – instructional, curriculum, core standards and assessment. **Ms. Willits** acknowledged that math and ELA are changing, just as they did in 2006. She said that improvement will be evident when students go to college without needing remediation. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** clarified the question: If you raise the standard and change the test, how do you measure improvement versus raising the standard, using the previous test and recognizing achievement. **Ms. Willits** replied that the ISAT is not aligned to the new standards. If ISAT is applied, it would not align to what students are being taught. **Senator Pearce** asked where the SBAC has worked. **Dr. T. J. Bliss**, State Department of Education, said that considerable research has been conducted about performance tests, which is the new component being added. Multiple choice and short answer have been used in Idaho for a long time. The performance aspect also has been used for a long time, but not in Idaho due to costs. Idaho did try with the Direct Writing and Direct Math tests, which produced some benefits, but the logistics outweighed the benefits and those tests were eliminated. Performance tests to measure deeper learning and deeper thinking also have been occurring for a long time in the educational measurement community, with teachers and principals asking for it. Superintendent Luna made a promise to bring the performance aspect back to assessment because it addresses higher order thinking. **Senator Pearce** continued to voice his skepticism, referencing No Child Left Behind (NCLB). **Ms. Willits** stated that performance tests work because that is what happens in the classroom. This is not foreign to students when they need to read passages, analyze and write paragraphs. **Superintendent Luna** stated that Idaho has been evaluating students' writing ability with multiple choice tests, which is not the best way to measure how students write and express themselves. Idaho was limited because the ISAT was multiple choice. The Direct Writing test was eliminated because of the expense of boxing up written papers, sending them to Boise, and training teachers to review and grade them over a week's time. The Department promised it would bring back a performance measure when it was feasible. Technology now allows it because the tests are on computer. NCLB worked to the extent that it introduced standards and required that students were measured against that standard. The first time students were measured against standards, only 50 percent were proficient in math and ELA. Last year 90 percent were proficient in ELA and over 80 percent in math. The standards have been changed and raised again, and we have a better method to measure student achievement.

Chairman Goedde asked Superintendent Luna to explain what happened in Kentucky. **Superintendent Luna** replied that Kentucky was the first state to implement the core standards. Prior to that time, only 34 percent of Kentucky students went on to college and did not need remediation. After the first year of teaching the standards and measuring against them, that number jumped to 47 percent, and the next year it increased to 54 percent. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if Kentucky used the SBAC. **Ms. Willits** replied no. **Senator Ward-Engelking** said she believed the Direct Writing and Direct Math assessments were "authentic" and thought it admirable that Idaho was going to performance assessments because the ISAT never measured what students really knew. However, she is concerned about the timing of SBAC when the standards are just being introduced. She also asked if every school had high speed internet and wireless access because the tools are just becoming available to teachers in 2014. **Superintendent Luna** replied that the Department is doing a three-year phase-in for the test. Last year, 120 schools piloted the SBAC. The Department surveyed

them, learned from them, and is moving now to the field test this spring when all schools will participate. More will be learned from the field test, and in 15 months, the first operational test will be conducted. It will be five years from the introduction of the standards to the first operational test. The time to phase in the standards, and the time to test the SBAC was very deliberate. The Department will learn from the field test how long it actually takes. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked for assurance that teachers would have some leeway in their performance accountability when the tests become operational since scores are anticipated to be lower the first year. **Superintendent Luna** agreed, but added expectations will increase in a reasonable manner each successive year. Tennessee and Louisiana, for example, developed a 10 year plan from implementation to proficiency. The same will happen in Idaho.

Senator Fulcher commented that these standards and assessments are the result of national organizations where the gestation period took place. While he is not against increasing performance, he takes issue with how it is accomplished. He believes there is a tendency to "teach to the test", whether it be SBAC or some other. He fears that we have no control over the test content which is part of an "agenda" for centralization and uniformity, which he further believes can create a "lid" on performance. Without control over the test, Idaho does not have control over what is being taught. **Chairman Goedde** commented that it could be perceived as a "floor" as well. **Superintendent Luna** replied that it is not a lid, it is a floor. Standards do create uniformity and Idaho's Constitution dictates that we have a uniform system of education. **Senator Fulcher** countered that he was referring to the content, not the standards. **Superintendent Luna** said that he believes the State has an obligation to guarantee that every child, no matter where they go to school, has a uniform system and that the schools are common. In other words, every child is given the same opportunity to learn at the same high level as any other child. Prior to standards, what was taught in third grade in one school might not be taught until fourth grade in another, or perhaps not even taught at all. This was a detriment to the children.

Superintendent Luna again stated that he had been involved from the very first day, and it had become clear to him that by states not taking the lead toward standards, they were leaving a void of leadership that the federal government was continually trying to fill, which is why NCLB was developed. Thus, the states decided in a very clear way that, if they worked together, they would not only define the states' role in education, but would define the federal government's role as well. By working together, the participating states created a push-back against federal involvement and control in education. As a result, Idaho has considerable influence over the content of the SBAC; whereas, it has none over the SAT or ACT. The Department can look at every item before students see it; Idaho teachers helped develop it, Idaho sits on the governing board, and it is a voluntary project that they choose to do. **Superintendent Luna** sincerely believes that the children will reap the benefits of knowing that when they receive their high school diploma they are ready to go on. **Senator Fulcher** acknowledged that "the debate is healthy", but stated that he did not see the level of state control that Superintendent Luna and Ms. Willits see.

Ms. Willits then detailed and showed example math and ELA test questions from the SBAC. **Dr. Bliss** noted that the ELA writing portion on the SBAC is designed to mirror the process used in classrooms of discussion, notetaking, reviewing sources, answering short questions and then writing an essay appropriate to each grade level. Neither Direct Writing or the ISAT could evaluate this process. **Ms. Willits** explained that the reason Idaho has not previously done this type of testing is because of the expense of development and grading. The SBAC affiliation is useful, because it offers economy of scale and will be cost neutral for Idaho. After the pilot test, a survey was conducted. The results showed that both teachers and educators felt the test was easy to use when adequate network connectivity was available. The 2014 field test carries new goals: to determine cut scores, calibrate test items, improve logistics, offer students experience, and provide a test aligned with the Idaho Core Standards. Most students in grades 3-11 will take the field test. In 2015, Grades 3-8 and Grade 11 will take the operational test, and school accountability will be based on the 2015 scores. Passing the Grade 11 test will fulfill the graduation requirement. Test results will be available in tendays, and Idaho teachers will be involved in scoring the tests. Superintendent Luna has asked six superintendents, six principals and three testing coordinators from each region of the State to form a Smarter Balanced Advisory Committee to compile feedback from across the State. Star Ratings will not change in 2014. In summary, **Ms. Willits** said that the essential elements for a quality assessment system in Idaho is: (1) full alignment to Idaho Core Standards, (2) computer based summative assessments, (3) computer based interim assessments, (4) formative assessment tools for teacher development, (5) state involvement in development and quality assurance, (6) sole ownership of student data, (7) data availability to Idaho for further analysis, (8) cost neutrality or savings, and (9) extensive accommodation and accessibility options. The SBAC offers all nine. Neither the ACT or SAT can offer these items because they are college entrance exams and not aligned to standards. **Senator Patrick** asked if students can be expected to do well on college entrance exams if they do well on the SBAC. **Ms. Willits** replied that she believed so but that will be answered in the future.

Chairman Goedde asked if home schooled students have any association with either the standards or the SBAC. **Ms. Willits** replied that home schooled children are not subject to the standards and testing because the standards are only for public education. There are no requirements for standards or testing for homeschooled students.

Senator Nonini asked about the expense of the SBAC. **Dr. Bliss** replied that if Idaho were to attempt to do this on its own, it would be roughly double the cost of the SBAC. Utah was part of the SBAC, then withdrew due to political pressure. They were unable to create a common core aligned assessment beyond a multiple choice test. Washington, which developed a performance test, estimates the cost at about \$50 per student, whereas Idaho's SBAC is estimated to cost approximately \$27 per student. **Senator Nonini** asked for cost comparison with ISAT. **Dr. Bliss** replied that the cost would be comparable, depending on which pieces of the assessment package are purchased. If just the summative test is purchased, the cost would be approximately \$500,000 less than the ISAT, and if the Department purchases the other teacher support and interim assessment pieces then the price would be approximately \$500,000 more than we are currently spending. **Senator Nonini** summarized that Idaho would benefit if spending \$500,000 more meant that students are college ready versus spending \$500,000 less and finding that high school graduates still need remediation in college. **Dr. Bliss** agreed.

Vice Chairman Mortimer asked what the federal government requires Idaho to do in testing both this year and next. **Dr. Bliss** replied that, had Idaho chosen to develop an SBAC-type test on its own, field test one and phase out another, it would be necessary to double-test the students with the ISAT and the SBAC field test in order to meet federal requirements. However, states together said no, we are going to do one test. Idaho chose the SBAC, and will not double test. Individually, states would not have had the influence to accomplish that, but when a number of states pushed back collectively, then they collectively obtained a waiver to transition smoothly and not double test. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked what Idaho would be reporting under the waiver. **Superintendent Luna** replied that they will not be reporting any results. This transition period is similar to when Idaho changed to the ISAT several years ago. By testing the test now, Idaho will be able to provide a reliable assessment and provide accurate student performance information based on the 2015 operational test. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked about the feasibility of using the ISAT for two more years. **Superintendent Luna** replied that testing on the ISAT would not be aligned to the standards that teachers are using in the classroom. Additionally, if the ISAT were then used as a tool of accountability, some legal issues could arise. The ISAT is no longer aligned with the standards. The window for using SBAC starts in 60 days. This is not new: Idaho is in the third year of a five-year process for implementing both the standards and the test to measure against those standards. **Superintendent Luna** recommended that the field test proceeds because he believes that many of the questions from the Department, the districts and the Committee will be answered by the field test.

Chairman Goedde asked how much time would they need and how much would it cost if Idaho used the SBAC next year and put out a bid for a new ISAT that would align to the new standards. **Superintendent Luna** said it would be twice what we are currently spending and twice what the SBAC would cost. **Ms. Willits** added that additional costs would be incurred for developing, field testing, and sensitivity review. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** said his question was not necessarily about developing a new ISAT. They are measuring students by the higher standards that are now in place, and the ISAT would measure increased performance if increased performance existed. **Ms. Willits** replied that if Idaho gave the traditional ISAT this year, some growth from the standards might be seen. But offering the ISAT would most likely be in violation of federal law because the ISAT does not align to the new standards being taught. **Superintendent Luna** added that the ISAT is not adaptive and students would bump up against a ceiling, and that it would not show adaptively how high or how low a student is. Teachers have wanted an adaptive test for a long time. **Senator Thayn** commented about the test question concerning the "pennies". He thought it was an appropriate exercise in a classroom, but found it troubling that research items were limited to those in the prompt. **Superintendent Luna** replied that the point of the exercise is to show that students can identify sources that they use to support their position. **Senator Thayn** restated that he is concerned about the format in a multi-state assessment. **Ms. Willits** replied that what the Committee was shown were practice test items, and these items will be reviewed with the field test. **Senator Fulcher** asked how Idaho would be violating federal law by not using the SBAC. **Ms. Willits** replied that federal law requires that states have a test that aligns to the standards that are being taught in the schools. The state chooses the test. **Senator Fulcher** stated that the standards were teaching to the test. **Superintendent Luna** replied that teachers always have used tests to find out what students know and don't know in order to make changes to instruction. "We test what is being taught, and what is taught must be aligned to the standards. It is circular." **Chairman Goedde** suggested that if the Committee had further questions, they should direct them be to the Department, and the Department should share those with the Committee. He added that the subject of assessments will be revisited again.

ADJOURNED: Having no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Goedde** adjourned the meeting at 5:14 p.m.

Senator Goedde
Chair

Elaine Leedy
Secretary