

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 25, 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 (Committee) to order at 3:03 p.m., and a silent roll was taken.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT HEARING: Donald J. Soltman of Rathdrum, ID was appointed to the State Board of Education (Board) to serve a term commencing March 1, 2014 and expiring March 1, 2019. This appointment was made subject to confirmation by the Senate. Mr. Soltman appeared before the Committee.

Mr. Soltman stated that he has served on the Board since 2009, and his current term expires on February 28, 2014. **Senator Nonini** commented that since 2009, Idaho has experienced some difficult times, and asked Mr. Soltman to comment. **Mr. Soltman** stated that in 2010, Superintendent Luna came forward with the Students Come First legislation which passed and was then repealed by referendum in 2012. At that time, the Board was asked to organize a task force, which was led by Board member, Richard Westerberg. Since publishing the task force recommendations, informal meetings have taken place, and the Board wishes to move forward with additional subcommittees to further the work of the task force. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked Mr. Soltman to describe some of the work that lies ahead. **Mr. Soltman** replied that priorities include the 60 percent goal for postsecondary certificates or degrees, the Complete College Idaho program to encourage more students to go on to college, remediation and how it is delivered in various settings, and the "15 in 4" program that guides students through their course of study to graduate in four years. Accessibility and affordability surround these areas. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** complimented the Board on its work on articulation and competency.

Senator Pearce asked about the working relationship between the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) and the Board. **Mr. Soltman** stated that for some time, the Board was focused on higher education, but with the work of the task force, more time will be spent with K-12. **Senator Pearce** restated his question and asked whether the Board is a "rubber stamp" for the Superintendent's policy, or whether the Board will set the agenda for the new Superintendent. **Mr. Soltman** replied that the Superintendent is the constitutional officer, and as such, his agenda will come to the Board. However, the Board is a policy board and most K-12 issues are policy. Many times policy issues have gone back and forth between the Board and the Superintendent. The issue over required minutes of physical education was a recent push back to the Superintendent.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked Mr. Soltman to outline his background. **Mr. Soltman** replied that he was born and raised in Grangeville, ID and attended the Air Force Academy. During his 10 years in the Air Force he attended Baylor University where he earned a master's degree in health administration. He recently retired from Kootenai Health in Coeur d'Alene, ID. He has been a member of the Lakeland Joint School District #272 for 13 years.

Senator Patrick stated that he had served on the committee which is studying tiered licensure and asked if that study would continue. **Mr. Soltman** said that he, too, served on that committee, and felt that the work was very productive in studying other state models.

Chairman Goedde asked Mr. Soltman to comment on outcome-based funding. **Mr. Soltman** replied that the Board was studying a metrics based system to pay institutions using pay for performance. At the same time, the Governor requested zero-based budgeting. During a Board retreat, Richard Dickenson presented a model for program prioritization, and the Board subsequently asked the four, four-year postsecondary institutions to prepare a report using the Dickenson model. Those reports are expected by fall, and upon review, the Board will be in a better position to look at performance funding. **Chairman Goedde** asked about professional technical programs and the problems that North Idaho College had experienced in the approval process. **Mr. Soltman** replied that the Board has worked to remove obstacles and streamline the process.

PRESENTATION:

Ann Joslin, the State Librarian and Director of the Idaho Commission for Libraries (Commission), introduced her staff: Stephanie Bailey-White, Read to Me (RMT) Project Coordinator; Jeannie Standal, school library consultant; and Teresa Lippis, public relations specialist. **Ms. Joslin** explained the role public school libraries play in K-20 education. Recent studies show that technology and the internet are changing Americans' reading habits. What has not changed is Americans' love for books, and the important part libraries play in their communities. Public library programs and attendance have increased circulation of materials to the highest level ever reported. Even with internet use, the primary role of libraries is still filling the need for information in their communities.

The mission of Idaho libraries is to build the capacity to better serve their clientele. They do it in the following ways: maintain a library of current online resources; provide professional development opportunities; and develop, pilot and scale library programs. The Commission does the research and development, then packages the programs with public information and staff training. They continue to leverage national initiatives that support their work. The Commission was recently awarded one of 17 grants as part of the "Smart Investing @ Your Library" program.

The most important predictor of school success and high school graduation is grade-level reading by the end of third grade. Idaho libraries have a long history of providing early learning services. The RTM program is in its 17th year and helps to level the playing field so any family can raise a proficient reader. Through RTM, the Commission provides resources for public and school libraries to advance early literacy services in their communities. A variety of RTM program elements have been reviewed by an independent evaluator and were found to be efficiently administered and change parent and caregiver behavior to more actively support early learning. A current focus of RTM is increasing access to books for young children who are unlikely to have them at home. When kids have access to books, they read them.

A September 2012 Elementary School Library Study showed that most school districts have inadequate or non-existent budgets to provide quality books for their students. Since 50 percent of Idaho school children live in poverty, many are not likely to have age-appropriate reading material at home and do not have convenient access to reading materials.

Ms. Joslin indicated that there were three RTM initiatives for increasing access to books for kids. The first is "Routes to Reading" including "Books to Go". Books were packaged around a theme and placed in over 300 bins around the State. The first year parents indicated that they increased the amount of time spent reading as a result of the program. The second is the Summer Reading Program. This program has resulted in approximately 100,000 Idaho kids who keep reading over the summer to minimize the summer reading slide. During the summer of 2013, "Literacy in the Park" was created as a joint effort between the library and the Idaho Food Bank's Picnic in the Park program. Also, Meridian, Kuna and Garden City libraries provided books for the Ada County Boys and Girls Club library, with librarians bringing weekly summer reading programs on site. The third program is the RTM mini-grants which increase funding to elementary school libraries for the purchase of more books. All grant funds must be spent on books with at least 40 percent on non-fiction to help introduce kids to science, technology, engineering and math ("STEM") concepts. The school libraries must also let the students check books out to be taken home. The K-2 age students must be allowed to check books out as well. Children who are not reading on grade level by the end of first grade have only a 1 in 8 chance of catching up with their peers. Early reports indicate that teacher use of library resources has soared, and students are "obsessed" with the nonfiction books.

A new initiative piloted "Make It at the Library: Where Idaho Makers Meet," a project that supports the creation of a "maker" culture in Idaho public libraries. Teams from five public libraries were invited to learn about the makerspace culture, with a focus on their teen programming in STEAM: science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Outcomes have been successful and the pilot program is being expanded for a second year.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked how involved the Library Commission had been with the Governor's Education Task Force recommendations. **Ms. Joslin** responded that they had not been involved at all to date. They have talked with Superintendent. Luna about early learners and asked to be at the table when discussions about literacy were held. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked how young people find out about summer reading programs. **Ms. Bailey-White** said that promotional efforts were focused on parents, caregivers, principals or anyone involved with children to make them aware of the information. Summer programs have served at least 60 percent of low income children. They are trying to keep the school libraries open over the summer to help get test scores up. **Chairman Goedde** inquired whether other states were keeping libraries open during the summer. **Ms. Bailey-White** responded that Idaho is modeling their program after other states.

Jane Wittmeyer, Coalition of Charter School Families, Inc., introduced two charter schools: Inspire and ICON. **Marcia Rowe**, a board member and parent of students in the Inspire Charter School, stated that Inspire is in its 9th year of operation with 800 students in K-12 classes. Her son's previous school was not a good fit for her family. Her son suffered from frustration and low self esteem. With the flexibility Inspire provided, her son has flourished. She thanked the Committee for giving choices in education to her family and to so many others who have received their education through a charter school.

Dana Higbee said that Inspire was good for both of her sons. They had different challenges, but Inspire was able to meet their different needs. It also provided a solution to their education when her husband had to go to Seattle for a bone marrow transplant for five months. They were able to pack up their children and take their education with them. They maintained the stability of friends and teachers as if nothing changed.

Braedon Higbee said that he is in 9th grade and has been at Inspire for three years. He indicated that he had the flexibility to move as quickly as he wants to with some classes and take more time for the ones he struggles with. It's his choice. He gets help with those classes that he struggles with and feels that the teaching becomes personalized to his needs. **Senator Pearce** asked what Braedon was going to major in and if he was planning on graduating early. Braedon said he was considering medical school or nuclear physics. He may graduate early and if so, will go right to college and get a head start on his postsecondary education.

Vickie McCullough, a leader for Idaho Connects Online School ("ICON"), said that ICON is a public, virtual charter school serving students in grades 6-12 across the State of Idaho. **Ms. McCullough** stated that choice is all around us and gave many examples of the choices we make every day. In some areas of Idaho there are very limited choices for families to make in regard to their children's education. ICON offers three ways for students to use their services: They can go to school full time from their home environment; they can school part time with ICON in addition to their local school of choice; and they can choose to school with ICON while getting support in various residential treatment facilities. **Caitlyn Dovel** said that she had taken advantage of all three ways to use the ICON approaches to education. She made all of the choices work for her. Caitlyn shared the many life skills that she had learned while using the ICON program in addition to her educational accomplishments. Caitlyn is on target to graduate from high school in June.

David High, Chairman of the Board of ICON Charter School, emphasized the importance of innovation and experimentation, with Caitlyn Dovel as an example. When students are enrolled in ICON, they can earn credit and build self-confidence as they complete their treatments in residential facilities. Students who attend ICON are not the average student. Approximately two-thirds of their students are in the "at risk" category. ICON's flexibility and choices give these students the chance to be successful. The student/teacher ratio is low. ICON quickly found that expanded advisor functions helped the students in planning their education and motivating them to complete their plans. ICON has tried many different ideas, some have worked and some haven't. When they have found success, they share it with the greater community of charter schools.

Senator Nonini thanked Mr. High for being innovative and finding ways to help make "at risk" students successful.

Senator Thayn asked if the students could progress at their own speed at ICON. **Mr. High** replied the students can learn when it works for them due to the online curriculum. This is advantageous for students who are working, traveling with their parents or who have a need to take an extended time off. The flexibility is tremendous. The challenge is to keep the students going.

ADJOURNED:

Having no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Goedde** adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

Senator Goedde
Chair

Elaine Leedy
Secretary

Sharon Pennington
Asst. Secretary