

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 11, 2015

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Keough, Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, 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 Mortimer** called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

PRESENTATION: **Kevin Kempf**, Director, Department of Correction (DC), introduced his colleagues: David McCluskey, from the Correction Board, and Julie Johnson, Education Program Director. He presented the mission, vision and values of DC and emphasized that the goal of the DC is to reduce recidivism. He explained the work of the DC as follows: retention of officers, alignment of resources, Justice Reinvestment, GED attainments, treatment care, and environmental updates to facilities (see attachment 1). **Director Kempf** reiterated his experiences in school and learning. He emphasized to the Committee the importance of teachers and named two teachers who took him from being a remedial student to one with a degree.

Senator Patrick asked how the web-based reporting is monitored. **Director Kempf** replied the program has its risks. It is important the staff assess the prisoner correctly to make sure those that are in the program meet the qualifications for the program. There is an auditing system in place to spot check the prisoners.

Senator Souza remarked the GED test has changed so dramatically that students taking the new test will not be able to pass. She asked what is DC's stance in regards to the new GED. **Julie Johnson**, Education Program Director, replied there is concern, however, as the instructors become more familiar with the new test they will be able to administer it better. She is confident the success rate of students will go up with more professional development. A year from now, she expects things will be different.

Chairman Mortimer asked approximately how many of those incarcerated do not have either a GED or a high school diploma. **Ms. Johnson** replied 45 to 50 percent. In the 20 years she has been with the DC that number has been constant. **Chairman Mortimer** asked what courses are offered for the GED and other educational courses after the GED. **Ms. Johnson** replied the focus of the educational program is on the lowest grade level usually sixth grade. The goal is to get prisoners ready for release and as prepared as possible with computer skills, career readiness, personal inventory, and vocational choices. Post secondary education is slim, she emphasized there are not many courses available. **Chairman Mortimer** asked in relationship to that is there a demand for post secondary education. He listed school options. **Ms. Johnson** said yes there is especially with the younger age offenders. On any given day there are 300 to 350 offenders that qualify for special education or Title I services. Research shows that group is difficult to work with due to some preconceived notions on education that caused

them to drop out in the first place. If the DC is able to reach them, they benefit the most of any age group that is incarcerated. In regards to recidivism, the group needs vocational skills training when they are released.

Chairman Mortimer asked her to list the most needed items wish list for educational choices. **Ms. Johnson** said it would be access to the Internet. She continued saying there are so many opportunities for education on the Internet. Because the DC does not have the ability for offenders to be on the Internet, they are missing some great educational opportunities. She also stated they could use more staff to deliver more classes to the lower level learners. **Chairman Mortimer** asked how many education staff members are employed at the DC and how could that staff be augmented with digital or blended educational opportunities. **Ms. Johnson** replied statewide there are 30 certified instructors and 25 support staff. She continued stating three years ago the DC was awarded a grant from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation for Kahn Academy Light, which was an offline version. This is a blended course and has been very successful.

Senator Nonini asked how does the pay level of certified staff at the DC compare to school districts in the State. **Ms. Johnson** replied it is comparable for the first three years then much lower. The DC loses many good teachers and others chose not to work for the DC because of the pay level.

Chairman Mortimer asked what would be the educational opportunities for those on parole. **Director Kempf** replied there are more opportunities for parolees. He explained the vocational rehabilitation programs across the State. **Chairman Mortimer** explained that there are ways to help, and he would like to work on dialogue towards educational goals.

PRESENTATION: **Terry Ryan**, President, Idaho Charter School Network (ICSN), introduced his colleagues in attendance. He presented the work his organization is doing in Idaho and brought handouts to the Committee that highlighted the work of Idaho charter schools that are doing innovative teaching (see attachment 2). He reminded the committee there are 48 charter schools in Idaho serving almost 20,000 students. He introduced Jason Bransford, Director, Idaho Distance Education Academy (IDEA). Mr. Bransford began his presentation reciting to the Committee a Vince Lombardi quote "*Gentlemen we chase perfection and we will chase it relentlessly knowing all the while that we will never catch it. But in the pursuit of perfection we will catch excellence.*" This quote is what he has followed while getting IDEA to its strength. He explained the process of development, challenges and successes at IDEA. He reported with the statewide SAT, IDEA has been ranked in the top ten in the State. He then reported to the Committee on the challenges facing many statewide charter schools those were: replication of programs, funding of facilities, and a lack of flexibility for innovation. He then highlighted the opportunities: innovative solutions readily available, national recognition to state charter schools from national foundations, and powerful solutions to solve educational problems. He stated the future is bright because of this rising generation.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked how is blended learning working with direct instruction and discovery learning, especially in preschool to kindergarten. **Mr. Bransford** said blended learning is a very broad umbrella category; blending the adaptive technology programs with the face-to-face instruction. He explained the many strategies to do blended learning well. He specified the times for each type of learning.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked Mr. Bransford to send him a list of specific things that inhibit charter schools flexibility.

Mr. Ryan explained that he was in Salmon Idaho and had an opportunity to see the charter school. He showed the Committee a video about Carmen Charter School. After the showing of the video, he explained to the Committee how the charter school and the district are working together for the benefit of all area students. He explained the problems of small rural high schools not being able to give high school students the programs necessary for them to obtain a degree. He believes more technology may be the solution.

Senator Souza said she is so pleased about the blossoming of the charter school concept. She believes the charter schools have helped the public schools raise their standards. She asked if he has found that to be true across the State. **Mr. Ryan** replied in the affirmative. He stated charter schools and district schools can all come together to better serve students. A new style of learning is emerging.

Chairman Mortimer asked Mr. Ryan for his charter school wish list. **Mr. Ryan** replied facilities are a big issue for charter schools. They are not looking for direct funding; instead they are hoping for a revolving loan fund where charter schools can get a loan and repay the State. Another wish would be for talented teachers and a strong talent pipeline such as developing more with the institutions of higher education or Teach for America. The final wish is to be able to streamline the compliance issues for charter schools.

RS 23532: **Senator Patrick** presented **RS 23532**, Civic Test for Graduation. He explained the methods of teaching civics and current affairs. He suggested that with the push of STEM, social studies requirements have lessened. This test is the current test that is used for the naturalization of citizens in the U.S. He reviewed the requirements of the test and how students would be able take the test.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Thayne** moved to print **RS 23532**. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

RS 23542: **Vice Chairman Thayn** presented **RS 23542**, Alternative Testing for Graduation. He explained that this is in reference to the rule requirement from the State Board of Education stating that students must pass the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). This legislation asks that school districts provide an alternative plan, which is already in rule, if parents believe their student would not benefit by taking the ISAT.

Senator Ward-Engleking asked if federal dollars would be at risk by not administering this test. **Vice Chairman Thayn** responded that if there is a risk, it would be minimal. He referred the question to Representative Harris.

Representative Harris said he wasn't sure about the funding, and he would have that information if they chose to print the resolution.

Senator Ward-Engleking stated from her experience as a classroom teacher if a student was absent during testing it did count against the percentage. She concluded by stating she knows of no one who likes to take high stakes tests and believes this could open the door where no students would be taking the ISAT.

MOTION: **Senator Patrick** moved to print **RS 23542**. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

RS 23544: **Senator Souza** presented **RS 23544**, Election of School District Trustees. She explained this resolution requires candidates to file sunshine reports which allows for transparency in elections.

Senator Ward-Engleking stated this could be work for county clerks and county prosecutors. She asked if there are costs incurred to the counties with this legislation. **Senator Souza** replied that she spoke with the Kootenai County clerk and was told there would be no additional cost to them.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Thayn** moved to print **RS 23544**. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:17 p.m.

Senator Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn South
Secretary