

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 25, 2016

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, Anthon, 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: Because Chairman Mortimer was participating in an announcement from the Governor, **Vice Chairman Thayn** called the Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

PRESENTATION: **Dr. Cheryl Charlton**, CEO and Superintendent, Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), introduced her colleagues Dr. Sherawn Reberry and Ryan Gravette. She gave a brief overview of the educational areas on which IDLA concentrates their efforts. She called on Dr. Reberry to give her part of the presentation.

Dr. Reberry, Director of Education Programs, IDLA, reported about the partnership they have developed with the Idaho Technology Council, Code.org, Boise State University and University of Idaho to provide free professional development in the field of computer science for teachers, K-12. She expressed IDLA is eager to be a part of **H 379**, which will advance computer science education. She spoke about the work they are doing with area elementary schools to further computer science learning.

Dr. Reberry reported about the online course selections and the number of students they have served in the past year. The teachers are highly qualified and engage with each student individually. She emphasized the courses are updated to meet national quality standards. She explained each of the different programs IDLA oversees.

Mr. Gravette, Director of Technology, IDLA, reported they have experienced almost a 10 percent growth in all types of schools in the State. He explained a new program called Custom Sections, in which IDLA works with school districts to provide education in a subject areas for which it is difficult to find teachers. He said they use predictive analysis to increase the pass rates of students.

Mr. Gravette explained how IDLA has provided a digital portal for school districts. He described how the districts are using the tool and how it is benefiting students in their coursework and career/college planning. He showed the Committee what students see when they log in. He explained the different programs that are available through the portal (see attachment 1).

The Senators asked questions regarding enrollment numbers, courses offered and the funding model. **Dr. Charleton** and her staff answered each question to the satisfaction of the Senators.

RETURNED THE GAVEL: Vice Chairman Thayn returned the gavel to Chairman Mortimer.

Chairman Mortimer explained to the Committee that he was in the Governor's Office for the announcement of a new public-private partnership to create Idaho's first four-year medical school at Idaho State University's Meridian Health Science Center.

PRESENTATION: **Matt Young**, Director of Strategic Compliance Think Through Math (TTM), introduced the founder and Executive Vice President of TTM, Louis Piconi, and Marisa Alan, Director of Implementation, Idaho.

Mr. Young explained that the TTM system for success begins with motivating students to work on math. There are live teachers, personalized learning pathways and actionable reports that align with Idaho core standards. He reported about the statewide implementation, which included professional development and support. He said they reach over 40,000 students, which is 126 percent of what is required in the current contract with the State.

Mr. Young announced That new to TTM is the Quantile Assessment, which is a measurement for each student on a common scale and a measurement for math skills and concepts. He reported to the Committee the results of student achievements in a TTM cycle. He said the scores show improvement in skills taught. He said teacher feedback is positive (see attachment 2).

Senator Den Hartog asked if they are contracted with the State or individual school districts. **Mr. Young** replied they contract with the State.

H 476

Jessica Harrison, Communications and Government Affairs Director, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA), presented **H 476**, Relating to Education: Statewide Average Class Size. She explained the "use it or lose it" funding dollars for staffing formula, which is based on average class size. During the recession that formula was adjusted and has remained in place. This legislation would allow for comparisons of school districts based on their student enrollment. It would use the student enrollment breakdowns already found in § 33-1002, Idaho Code, that are currently used for funding.

Chairman Mortimer asked if she knew the State's average class size. **Ms. Harrison** said they have not received this year's report.

Vice Chairman Thayn said this issue will probably be revisited. This funding formula seems to be a common sense approach for the different sized school districts across the State.

MOTION:

Vice Chairman Thayn moved to send **H 476** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Anthon will carry **H 476** to the floor.

H 459

Marilyn Whitney, Senior Special Assistant for Education and Government Service, Office of the Governor, presented **H 459**: Relating to Higher Education Stabilization Fund, Provide for the Community College Start-up Account. This legislation deals with the creation of a startup account in the higher education stabilization fund for the establishment of a community college in eastern Idaho. She explained the benefits of community colleges around the State.

Ms. Whitney said this is a one-time transfer of \$5 million into the fund as requested by the Governor. She said that amount is based on the commitment made to the College of Western Idaho (CWI). There has been discussion among community leaders, business and industry leaders, as well as the institutions of higher education with respect to transforming Eastern Idaho Technical College (EITC) into a community college. It is the Governor's position that the current infrastructure will make the transition relatively seamless.

She reminded the Committee that this funding is all based on whether the voters in eastern Idaho decide to form a taxing district for the community college. **Ms. Whitney** explained the State Board of Education would oversee the funds and appointment of the initial trustees.

Senator Patrick stated his approval for the recommendation. He wondered how the funds would be combined with those of EITC. **Ms. Whitney** replied that is to be determined. She explained the process to become a community college. If the community college were to happen, EITC's funds could be appropriated there.

Senator Nonini asked if there were any startup funds for North Idaho College. **Ms. Whitney** replied she didn't know but would get that information.

Senator Den Hartog asked what the funding process was for the CWI. **Ms. Whitney** replied CWI was acted on from the ballot. She explained what, at that time, the Governor had committed to any community looking to start a community college. She stated that local leaders in Idaho Falls are working hard to gain community support to get the taxing district proposal on the ballot.

Senator Den Hartog asked if the costs for a community college in eastern Idaho would be the same as they were for CWI. **Ms. Whitney** replied that because EITC already has the facilities the new community college will have a head start. The transition will be very involved, from the establishment of classes to creating a board of directors. The biggest hurdle will be getting accreditation.

Senator Den Hartog asked if there will be intent language for additional funding. **Ms. Whitney** replied the funds will have to go through legislative appropriations. The funding in question will provide startup money if the community chooses to approve a taxing district.

Chairman Mortimer disclosed that he has a real interest in this legislation and asked that the legislation start its process in the House. He explained his involvement and the timeline of the discussions. EITC was a great opportunity when it began; however, educational needs have changed and it seems appropriate that EITC transition into a community college. All area institutions of higher learning are in support of making EITC a community college. The community is in the preliminary stages of putting together a feasibility study. He said he has donated money to this process.

Senator Souza moved to send **H 459** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion.

Senator Den Hartog said she appreciates the community's desire for a community college in eastern Idaho. It feels like a bribe to voters in hopes that taxpayers will create a district. She hopes that they will create a district, but without this enticement. She said she will not be supporting the motion.

Senator Nonini said he views the issue similarly to Senator Den Hartog. He would like more study on feasibility. He thinks the voters should form their own taxing district first, then come to the State for funds. He explained that when North Idaho College was formed in the 1930s there was no seed money. He said he will not be supporting the motion.

Chairman Mortimer said as a legislator he has fully supported all the State's community colleges. The funds will be held there and not expended until a taxing district is approved.

Vice Chairman Thayne said the fiscal statement says this is a one-time transfer of \$5 million. **H 459** does not state that money will actually go there; it must first be appropriated. This legislation just sets up an account.

H 459 The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Senator Den Hartog** requested to be recorded as having voted nay.

Senator Mortimer will carry **H 459** to the floor.

ADJOURNED: There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn Mohr
Secretary