

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee  
January 20, 2005  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Courtroom, Borah Office Building  
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Senator Shawn Keough called the meeting to order at 12:25 p.m. Attending the meeting were Senators Bert Marley and Kate Kelly, and Representatives Margaret Henbest and Donna Boe. Representatives Maxine Bell and Debbie Field joined the meeting shortly after it started. Also present were staff members Rakesh Mohan, Director, and Margaret Campbell, Administrative Coordinator, and all other OPE staff.

Co-chair Keough welcomed Senator Kate Kelly to the committee filling the vacancy left by Senator Marti Calabretta. She also welcomed those in attendance, and acknowledged Senator Mel Richardson and Representatives Jack Barraclough, Stan Bastian, Pete Nielsen, and Steve Smylie. Also in the audience were Ray Ineck, Legislative Audits, Jason Hancock, Budget and Policy Analysis, Randy Tilley, Division of Financial Management, Steve Allison and George Judge, Office of the State Controller.

#### MINUTES

**Representative Henbest moved to accept the minutes of the December 3, 2004, meeting. Senator Marley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **REPORT RELEASE: *PUBLIC EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES***

**Representative Henbest moved to accept the report on Public Education Technology Initiatives. Representative Boe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

Mr. Rakesh Mohan, Director, said the committee had directed the office to conduct an evaluation of public education technology initiatives with a focus on fiscal accountability. Overall, Idaho compares well to other states. He said the report offers nine recommendations to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements, improve statewide planning and data management, reduce district reporting requirements, direct management focus to results, and clarify requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Mr. Mohan thanked the following people for providing valuable input and assistance to OPE in conducting the study: Senator Mel Richardson, Chair, Idaho Council for Learning in Technology; Rich Mincer, Dawn Wilson, Dan Hawkins, Tim Hill, and Myrna Hallgate, Department of Education; Nancy Szofran, Board of Education; Craig Olson and Wayne Rush, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation; Randy Tilley, Division of Financial Management; Jason Hancock, Budget and Policy Analysis; and Steve Allison and George Judge, State Controllers Office.

Mr. Paul Headlee, Senior Performance Evaluator, and Rachel Johnstone, Performance Evaluator, presented a summary of the report findings and recommendations. In committee discussion of current technology support, members observed that some districts offer tremendous training in the classroom and, where possible, had students who were able to maintain equipment. Also, some districts used parent volunteers in “filling the void.”

Representative Henbest said Idaho had made a big investment in hardware and software, but the state was beginning to see the investment become outdated. She said that compared to other states, we were not maintaining upgrades, perhaps a result of funding issues. She asked how, combined with the technological disappointment of ISIMS, Idaho would be able to finance the next step to upgrade equipment and achieve some vision of data connectivity.

Mr. Mohan said that Idaho had accomplished a great deal towards putting computers in the classroom, but now it was time to focus on a balance between computers and the support necessary to maintain the quality of the investment. Representative Bell agreed and said there were finite dollars available for technology, and it would be very difficult to increase funding to improve the technician-to-computer ratio. She said choices would need to be made in how funding was used.

Representative Boe noted the report conveyed a sense of surprise and confusion among district personnel. Senator Keough added that work done in the report validated comments she had heard from her districts—that technology improvement was good, but when it reached the districts, it was nevertheless a challenge because funding had not been provided to meet the needs of staffing.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

In other business, Mr. Mohan said the current Committee Rules indicate advance copies of reports shall be provided to the Committee, representatives of the agency, and the Governor. Mr. Mohan proposed to modify the rules to include advance copies to relevant germane committee chairs, the Speaker, the Pro Tem, and JFAC co-chairs.

**Representative Field moved to adopt the proposed rule changes. Representative Boe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

Mr. Mohan said the Committee had asked for draft legislation in conjunction with the report, *Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement*. He said the office was working with Budget and Policy Analysis to develop changes and will work with the Office of the Governor to finalize. He will present the draft legislation at the next meeting.

Mr. Mohan introduced Misti Rutledge and Courtney Haines, interns from the Psychology Department at Boise State University. Both will be working with office staff during the next few months on various projects.

Representative Henbest thanked the office for the quality of the technology report. She said the usefulness of the recommended methods in the report will assist legislators with a better

understanding of technology funding. Representative Bell said the state was not going to be able to fund a line-item for technicians, and said she expected districts will continue to see their equipment become antiquated and will continue to be frustrated. She asked how JLOC could help this report make a difference.

Senator Keough acknowledged the importance of Representative Bell's question, and noted that OPE had made good suggestions that could provide direction for how money was spent at the district level. Senator Marley pointed to the recommendations directed to the Idaho Council for Technology in Learning, including models used for evaluating technology integration. He pointed out that he serves on the Council and remembered very few discussions in areas addressed by the report. He said the focus of the Council had been on the distribution of grants. He noted how many computer technicians are available to serve the Legislature compared to the statewide shortage of technicians in school districts, including his own. He said there were gains to be made by implementing recommendations to improve planning and management focus.

Senator Keough said Senator Marley's membership on the Council would help JLOC follow through on report recommendations. She suggested the Committee co-chairs write a letter to the Council, approved by the Committee, strongly encouraging implementation of the recommendations, and ask the germane committees to put forth a resolution which could be considered by the entire Legislature.

Mr. Mohan added the need for balance between a classroom where every child has a computer but no technical support, and a classroom with five students sharing one computer with technical support. He said the recommendations were aimed at encouraging the Council to consider ways to economically address the need for additional computers and staff, rather than just keep adding more money.

Mr. Mohan noted that issues surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act do have price tags and have an impact on districts, and encouraged policymakers to question the Department of Education when new initiatives are proposed on the basis of federal requirement. Representative Field suggested the Committee give more consideration to federal mandates, and use OPE staff to verify federal mandates.

**Representative Field moved that OPE conduct a follow-up study and report in a year what had been accomplished on report recommendations by the State Board of Education, the Idaho Council for Learning in Technology, and the State Department of Education. Senator Marley seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

Senator Marley commented that whether it is a No Child Left Behind mandate, a mandate from the State Board or Department of Education, or a mandate from the Legislature, when it gets to the district, regardless of where it came from, it is still a mandate. Noting the Eighth-Grade Technology Standards were not backed with funding, he expressed concern, as an educator, that we were not funding state or federal mandates.

*The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.*