

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee

February 16, 2015

Room EW42, Capitol, Boise, Idaho



Cochair Senator Cliff Bayer called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Attending the meeting were Senators Steve Vick, Michelle Stennett, Elliot Werk and Representatives John Rusche (cochair), Maxine Bell, Gayle Batt, and Elaine Smith. Also present were Rakesh Mohan, director, Margaret Campbell, administrative coordinator, and other OPE staff. Audience members included the following:

Representatives Neil Anderson, Lance Clow, Steven Harris, Wendy Horman, Ryan Kerby, Lynn Luker, Ron Mendive, Donna Pence
Sherri Ybarra, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Pete Koehler, Interim Chief Deputy, Will Goodman, Associate Deputy, Department of Education
David Fulkerson, Interim Administrator, Division of Human Resources
Brad Foltman, former administrator of the Division of Financial Management
Rob Winslow, Executive Director, Idaho Association of School Administrators
Robin Nettinga, Executive Director, Idaho Education Association

Approval of meeting minutes from February 9, 2015

Representative Smith moved to approve the minutes of February 9, 2015. Senator Werk seconded the motion, and the motion passed by voice vote.

Report release: *The K-12 Longitudinal Data System (ISEE)*

Representative Rusche moved to receive the report. Senator Vick seconded the motion, and the motion passed by voice vote.

Cochair Bayer called on Rakesh to introduce the report. Rakesh said JLOC directed the OPE to conduct an evaluation of Idaho System for Education Excellence (ISEE). This study was not about broadband, IEN, or WiFi, but rather about the longitudinal data system. He said the OPE was also asked to review Schoolnet as part of the study and will release it separately in mid-March. To cover the entire evaluation, the presentation would be made at a high level of detail. He said the OPE believed the planning and implementation of ISEE fell considerably short. He referred to the 2006 evaluation of ISIMS, which he said was still relevant. He indicated many recommendations and the checklist would have helped the development of ISEE. He thanked the school districts who worked with the office. Without their help, the report would not have been possible.

Lance McCleve, Hannah Crumrine, and Jennifer Tomlinson presented the report. Evaluators reported that technology was not presenting the challenges with ISEE and ISEE was a step in the right direction. They said that many of the mistakes made in the development of the state's K-12 longitudinal data system were similar to the mistakes made in the failed Idaho student information management system (ISIMS) in the early 2000s. The Department of Education had not established appropriate roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, and it had not involved stakeholders to understand their views, needs, and resources. Districts and charter schools reported they were struggling under heavy data collection requirements. The burden not only affected staff resources, but in some cases also affected funding if districts did not submit



data correctly. Districts reported spending about two weeks of every month preparing for the ISEE upload, with a significant amount of that time preventing and correcting data errors.

Evaluators said the department had flexibility to develop a K–12 longitudinal data system tailored to its goals. It planned and implemented the data system in relative isolation with little input from department program areas or districts—essentially the development and ongoing management of K–12 data collection has been IT centric.

The department had been using data it collected more for federal reporting and state funding calculations than for answering longitudinal questions. Evaluators recommended the department justify its data elements in light of the burden, feasibility, and cost of district collections. Evaluators said that if the data system was to be sustainable, the department must strengthen its management strategies and collaborate with stakeholders. Although the department had improved its communication to districts since the early years of ISEE, evaluators cautioned that sustainability would always be at risk until stakeholders had a sense of ownership and saw value in the ongoing success of the system.

Representative Batt asked how authorization for the P–20 Workforce system was acquired. Hannah said the longitudinal systems for postsecondary and P–20 Workforce were outside the study’s scope, so she was not thoroughly informed about acquisition. However, she said Idaho’s Board of Education was in charge of the application. Senator Bayer asked whether the systems were redundant. Hannah said the programs collected data for their student populations and data were not duplicated. Lance said the board conducted a needs assessment to avoid duplication. Data sharing occurred between the systems as much as needed to marry the data.

In response to Hannah’s comment that Idaho did not have to submit data to the federal government, Representative Batt asked whether Idaho had submitted data. Hannah said the department’s website posted data for two school years as required, but she was unaware of whether the department had submitted the data to the federal government.

Senator Werk asked when the department started providing regional coordinators to districts. Jennifer said the department initially hired coordinators in October 2010 and the first boot camp was held in August 2013. Boot camps were now being held annually in each region. Senator Werk clarified that between 2010 and 2013, the department did not provide structured training to districts. Jennifer said the department’s ISEE manager was trying to help districts throughout the process, and the regional coordinators tried to help as they were hired on, but districts experienced a lag time for help.

Representative Rusche asked if districts’ business managers worked with the department’s IT staff to improve quality. Jennifer said that when issues occurred, the IT staff would report back to the department. Representative Rusche asked if common issues were reported. Jennifer said the department did not have a formal structure for communication. Lance said communication was not standardized to get problems fixed. If districts had a problem, the burden of proof rested on the districts to demonstrate a fix was needed.

Representative Rusche asked if the department used vendors to develop ISEE. Lance said several contracts comprised ISEE development. The department hired one consultant who supervised other ISEE contracts. The overall project manager was a department employee within the IT division.

Senator Werk left the meeting early to attend Senate floor debate.



Cochair Bayer invited a representative from the governor's office to respond, but no one was available.

Cochair Bayer invited Pete Koeler, Interim Chief Deputy, to respond to the report. Mr. Koeler said that, as the Nampa district superintendent, he had approached Representative Darrell Bolz with concerns over the ISEE system. He and Superintendent Ybarra were in absolute agreement with the study. It was thorough and accurate.

Representative Smith asked whether the department had formed a working group to address the issue. Mr. Koeler said no. Representative Smith asked whether the department would be pursuing a formal governance structure comprised of stakeholders. Mr. Koeler said the department would follow through on report recommendations, but it had first wanted to see the results of the report release. Representative Smith asked when the first evaluation of ISEE would be completed. Mr. Koeler said the first step had already been done. The department had looked at federal and state mandates to determine which data elements were needed.

Representative Bell said her district's superintendent had been informing her of this problem for two years. She asked if the department was in a good position to improve the governance structure. Mr. Koeler said Ms. Ybarra wanted the department to be a service agency, not a compliance agency. She wanted to make ISEE a tool for districts and the state.

Representative Bell asked if districts could count on the system looking different when school started in the fall. Mr. Koeler said he was reluctant to say it would be fixed by fall. The department would have a better understanding of what would be needed by summer but would likely not have fixes made before school started. He said his greater worry was districts' lack of faith in the system; restoring that faith would take some time.

Rakesh said follow-up work on the project would be beneficial to the department and policy makers. He suggested that JLOC hear a status report in one year and then determine whether a follow up was needed in six months or one year. He said the OPE will be presenting the report to the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday and a shorter presentation to the House Education Committee on Thursday. The OPE may possibly present to JFAC later in the session.

Representative Smith said an update in the fall could help policymakers with decisions. Cochair Bayer asked about timing and management for a fall update in light of the OPE's workload. Rakesh said early fall was a hard time to have a meeting. He said the OPE could release a report in November or December, which would give advanced notice to lawmakers before the start of session.

Representative Batt asked if follow up would include visits to districts. She said she wanted to be sure that after elements were removed from the report, districts would be able to upload the report. Rakesh said the team would go into the field. Because the report was heavy on qualitative analysis, the team could not sit in the office to conduct a follow up. He said he may need a two-step process of looking at progress and then getting direction from JLOC.

Representative Rusche said the report was very good and hit the seed germ—it wasn't an IT project but a business project. He said he was disappointed the state had not learned from past mistakes. He asked whether there was some way to find out how state governments have learned from others' experiences.

Rakesh said several of the state's large IT projects had not involved stakeholders. He asked who should be accountable when projects fail—the department, the board, or policymakers. He said



that if JLOC thought the OPE should look at big contracts, he had a smart staff to accomplish the task.

Representative Rusche said the OPE's report on contract management provided many components that should be part of the state's business transactions. He asked how agencies can incorporate findings of that report into their management of contracts to avoid making similar mistakes.

Cochair Bayer suggested thinking about specific verbiage for follow up to the report, and members could discuss the intended direction at the next meeting. Rakesh said he would work with individual members and germane chairs about how they thought this project and the AG project should move forward.

Cochair Bayer said the chairs begin announcing topic selection and gathering requests for consideration.

Representative Rusche moved to adjourn and Senator Stennett seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 4:49 pm