

CORRECTED MINUTES

(Subject to the Approval of the Task Force)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee Room 328

State Capitol, Boise, Idaho

August 24, 2006

In attendance were: Co-chair Senator Tom Gannon, Senator Mel Richardson, Senator Tim Corder, Senator Gary Schroeder, Senator Mike Burkett, Senator Kate Kelly, Co-chair Representative Jack Barraclough, Representative Jana Kemp, Representative Mack Shirley, Representative Mark Snodgrass, Representative John Rusche, Representative Donna Pence, and ad hoc members Becky Young and Tanya Theiler. Ad hoc member Ray Flachbart was absent and excused.

Others present included Megan Ronk, Blue Cross of Idaho; Diane Demarest, University of Idaho Parents as Teachers; Connie Davis, Executive Office for Families and Children; Linda Jim, Idaho Kids Count; Mary Lou Kinney, Covering Kids and Family; Jonathan Parker; Michael McEvoy; Sherri Wood, Idaho Education Association; Steffanie Clothier, Program Director, Children and Family Services National Conference of State Legislators; Jana Jones, Annie Dalgetty and Mary Beth Wells, State Department of Education; Branden Dirg; Graci Sue Wyman, Health and Welfare; Mary Beth Wells; Beth Woodruff, Basin School District 072; Dr. Chris Loucks and Dr. Geoffrey Black, Boise State University; Dr. Harriet Shaklee; Barry Peters and Res Peters, Cornerstone Institute/Idaho Coalition of Home Educators; Christian Homeschoolers of Idaho State; Karen Mason, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children; Liz Dilley Friends of Children and Families Inc.; Lorraine Clayton and Blossom Johnson, Governor's Office; Dr. Clifford Green, Idaho School Boards Association; Rob Winslow and Marni Moore, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Christine Ivie and Dwight Johnson, State Board of Education; Steven Thayn; Byron Johnson; Eldon Wallace; Carolyn Kiefer, Health and Welfare Head Start Collaboration; Maureen Durning, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children; LeAnn Simmons, United Way; Patrick V. Collins, Idaho Business Coalition for Education Excellence; Patricia Kempthorne, Twiga Foundation; Lorna Dufur; Kerry Thomas; Nigel Thomas; Ashlee McKinney; Mr. Greg Satz; and Jim Everett. Legislative Services staff members present included Paige Alan Parker, Maureen Ingram and Charmi Arregui.

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Senator Tom Gannon at 8:31 a.m. **Senator Gannon** asked the legislative members and the ad hoc members to introduce themselves. **Co-chair Representative Barraclough** commented that the committee was open to receive information from public testimony and all the presenting speakers on the agenda. He added that there were many sides to be heard on the subject of early childhood education, many studies done, and he stated that gathering data would guide the committee's direction. The co-chairs thanked the legislative staff for all their work. **Senator Gannon** introduced the first speaker, **Mr. Barry Peters**.

A. PRESENTERS

1. Barry Peters

Barry Peters is Legal Counsel, Cornerstone Institute of Idaho, Idaho Coalition of Home Educators, and Christian Home Schoolers of Idaho. **Mr. Peters** had asked to address the committee first, and he explained that he believes there is a preliminary set of questions that the committee needs to address before getting to the issue of how to put such a program into effect in the state of Idaho. He believes that the initial questions should be: “*Should* we put it into effect? Is it a good idea for the state of Idaho?”. His conclusion was that it is *not* a good idea. **Mr. Peters** handed out a “Policy Analysis dtd 2-9-99” and “Four Questions To Assess Early Childhood Education (ECE) Proposals,” copies of which are available in the Legislative Services Office. **Mr. Peters** stressed that, in his opinion, the proper goal is a student’s *permanent*, not short term, academic improvement. He believes that the goal of a program should *not* be poverty reduction, crime prevention or nutrition improvement. He believes that there is a difference between government-produced readiness for school and home-produced readiness. He emphasized in the two studies called “Strengthening Head Start, What the Evidence Shows” and “Head Start, What do we know about what works?” that these are products of the Federal Health and Human Services Department who oversees and funds the Head Start Program. The Head Start website has reports that show that Head Start is neither effective nor efficient and does not yield a *permanent* academic improvement among students. These studies show a “fade out or burn out” after a year or two of enhanced academic performance; within a few years the effect is indistinguishable from students who did not go through Head Start. He warned the committee not to settle for anecdotal accounts of successful programs adding that, if a law is passed, it will not ensure that all the early childhood education teachers will fit into the mold of excellence. Children graduating from Head Start remain far behind the typical U.S. child and make less progress than the average kindergartner. He stated that there is “bewilderment within the Department of Health and Human Services” saying that they, themselves, cannot believe there is not a *permanent* benefit and think that the solution must be to double the program. **Mr. Peters** suggested that if the program is not working at this level, the plug should be pulled. **Mr. Peters** believes that if a government-funded program is created, it will become a magnet for parents who are currently paying for private programs and that will put the private businesses out of business. The economy all over Idaho would be impacted, he said. He was most alarmed that government ECE could give parents tacit permission to spend even less time with their own children. **Mr. Peters** believes that the cost of ECE would be massive; he said there are 20,000 students in Idaho at each age level and current spending in Idaho is about \$160 million per year for one age group. He ended by asking: “Why would Idaho spend millions of dollars every year for programs that generate no long-term academic benefit?”.

Senator Gannon commented upon the fact that we have an increasing number of children arriving at the kindergarten level who have not had enough parental attention and who do not have the learning skills to be ready for school. He has spoken with teachers who say they spend an inordinate amount of time with these students, and this is true up to 3rd grade, possibly affecting the entire class. He is concerned that these students are holding back the ones who are ready for school. **Mr. Peters** answered that data indicates that there is initial progress in these ECE programs

that dissipates fairly quickly. **Mr. Peters** stated that although parents should be educating their children in the basics at home, he suggested perhaps a direct approach might be to give those parents an incentive, something as crass as: Every parent who makes sure their child meets kindergarten-ready criteria be given \$1,000.

Senator Schroeder asked about all the parents who are not at home and send their children to day care or pre-K, and how **Mr. Peters** views private preschools as opposed to public preschools? **Mr. Peters** stated that he did not have data on that, but his instincts would be that a parent who pays \$300 for private day care is much more attentive to the success of their child in that preschool. **Senator Schroeder** asked if **Mr. Peters** was opposed to pre-K schools or just public pre-K schools. **Mr. Peters** stated that public pre-K schools are the worst possible solution to the problem, and that having children learn at home is the optimal situation, recognizing that this is not an economic possibility for many families. **Senator Schroeder** said he had introduced bills to allow school districts to have, if they choose, voluntary pre-K programs, and asked if **Mr. Peters** was opposed to public pre-K programs in which parents have the ability to determine for themselves whether their children will attend. **Mr. Peters** is opposed to this “because (1) the programs do not produce a permanent, academic benefit; and (2) they are remarkably expensive.” **Senator Schroeder** asked if this was also true for kindergarten? **Mr. Peters** had no data on that.

Senator Richardson commented that on a radio program he takes part in that many people have commented that many people who promote ECE are looking simply for child care. **Mr. Peters** stated that parents should focus more on learning than child care.

Senator Corder asked if **Mr. Peters**’ argument would have been much the same or very different a few years ago, against or for kindergarten? **Mr. Peters** stated that his argument would have been the same. **Senator Corder** said that perhaps we have a societal problem that we may not be prepared to deal with. If we ignore these kids and there are no ECE programs, the problems will get worse, specifically in rural counties. In one of his counties, without a volunteer program, many children would stay in the woods where their parents reside, some perhaps forever. He wondered if parents could be forced or be given incentives to be better parents so that others do not end up paying for a more expensive problem. **Mr. Peters** answered that he believes that the problem will get worse whether or not you address ECE with a government program, so why spend money on a nonsolution?

2. Mary Jones

Mary Jones the Program Manager for the Idaho Infant Toddler Program, Department of Health and Welfare. This multiagency, interagency program deals with children from birth to 36 months of age who have developmental delays or conditions that have a probability of resulting in a developmental delay. This program is Part C of the Infant and Toddler Program under the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A copy of **Ms. Jones** power point presentation is available in the Legislative Services Office. The program includes early intervention services, referral sources, evaluations & eligibility determination and an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The program is required to provide services in the child’s natural environment. This

program enhances that child's learning opportunities in order to maximize the child's potential. **Ms. Jones** stressed the importance of high quality child care, and how critical the years are from birth to 36 months, the time the brain grows at its most rapid pace. Last year there were 150 children on a wait-list for services, and she thanked the legislators for a supplemental appropriation increase which allowed 15 new positions. She stated that more funding is needed, but that the program has been able to respond to previously unmet needs.

3. Karen Mason

Karen Mason, Executive Director, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), has worked with families and children for thirty years. AEYC would like to see a comprehensive system of early care in education, especially birth to 36 months, when children learn at the fastest rate of any time of their lives. She emphasized that the family needs to learn about child development and education because families are the first and most important teachers of children. She stated that 60% of mothers with children under five years of age are in the workforce in Idaho. Not all day care facilities or preschools are high quality. She stressed the importance of funding and support for early care and education. She thinks it is critically important for states to take a leading role in planning and funding policies that support families and promote child development. Only 50% of children in Idaho were ready to start kindergarten last fall.

Ms. Mason addressed the importance of child care licensing stating "we are the only state out of 50 in a licensing study last year that did not have any state licensing listed." She was astounded to learn that this is for all day care. We have a state licensing statute; it is voluntary, and it is not enforceable." **Senator Gannon** stated that he thought if there were 12 or more children in a day care center they had to be licensed. **Ms. Mason** replied: "They do, but there is no consequence if they are not" (licensed).

Ms. Mason commented that through the Head Start/state collaboration, early learning guidelines, based on national research, are being developed to determine what children ought to know at different stages from birth to 36 months, so that better learning environments can be created. She mentioned the blended teaching certificate is a teaching degree that covers birth to age 8, regular education as well as special education. **Senator Gannon** asked how many graduates there were in Idaho with the blended certificate. **Ms. Mason** stated that the University of Idaho, Idaho State, BSU, and BYU Idaho offer these blended certificates; she thought that there were about 100 graduates from BYU Idaho in the blended certificate program, which was accredited last year. BSU, Idaho State and University of Idaho have less graduates in their smaller programs, but they are graduating students who are ready to work in these settings, if they could get paid.

Ms. Mason mentioned IdahoSTARS, a professional development partnership system between Idaho AEYC, University of Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and the Department of Health & Welfare, is working with young people to get training and even college degrees. She said that AEYC is also working on a quality rating system (Reaching the Stars) which would be a way to measure the quality of early childhood programs compared to national standards. This would give parents a rating system to assist them in child care selection based on quality. **Ms.**

Mason stated that Idaho is one of ten states that has no state-funded pre-K programs. Idaho needs ways to measure quality in early childhood programs. There are no requirements for people who care for children from birth to 36 months. Wages should be commensurate with education. Businesses see the need for quality early child care and education; Micron supported Block Fest because of the importance of such education. 2-1-1 (the Idaho Care Line) forwarded about 7,000 calls from parents requesting child care referrals to IdahoSTARS last year; each call impacts one or two employers. She added that employees miss work the most due to child care issues.

Ms. Mason stated that various longitudinal studies over 40 years have shown that every dollar invested by the state in quality early childhood education programs brings a return from \$2 to \$17. **Ms. Mason** recommended that Idaho adopt a comprehensive education plan. State policies should address child care licensing regulations, child care subsidies for parents based on quality of the program, school enrollment age that allows normally developing children to attend pre-K programs, and state funding that supports teacher preparation scholarships and professional development.

Senator Schroeder asked for copies of research or the analyses that corroborate **Ms. Mason's** statement that every dollar invested in quality early education returns from \$2 to \$17 and **Ms. Mason** agreed to get that for the committee.

In response to a question from **Senator Richardson** asking each of the presenters to share with the committee how they are funded, **Ms. Mason** agreed to give the committee the funding sources for AEYC.

4. Diane Demerest

Diane Demarest, Program Coordinator, University of Idaho Parents as Teachers (PAT) Demonstration Project, oversees the direct services of PAT in 13 counties in Idaho. She also oversees evaluation and research for 38 Idaho PAT programs. **Ms. Demarest** explained that PAT is a research-based parent education and family support program delivered by trained parent educators for a home visiting model. The mission of PAT is to provide information, support and encouragement to parents so they can help their children develop optimally during their early, critical years of development. PAT's vision is that every child will develop optimally and realize his or her full potential. PAT began 25 years ago and has become a model for delivering parent education throughout the world. It was introduced in Idaho in 1998 and the University of Idaho Demonstration Project began in 2000. All programs implement a research-based curriculum using a best-practice model to help parents be their children's best first teachers. **Ms. Demarest** handed out a paper entitled "Parents as Teachers in Idaho - A 5 Year View" which is available in the Legislative Services Office. According to the handout: over a 5-year period, PAT has served a total of 3,481 families and 5,011 children in Idaho through personal visits, parent group meetings, screenings and referrals; mothers and fathers actively participate; PAT parents report increased knowledge and confidence and PAT children are ready for school.

Ms. Demarest stated that the most common funding sources in Idaho are TANIF funds, PIRC (Parent Information Resource Center) which is a federal allocation, private foundation funding such

as the Albertson Foundation, Idaho Children's Trust Fund, and who provides fundraising activities. PAT is a voluntary, free program. Enrolled parents receive a monthly personal visit, typically in their home, with the parent and child together. Parent perception of the success of these visits is extremely high. PAT serves 15% Hispanic families, 15% single parent families and 10% are teen parents, 65% of fathers participate in at least some personal visits, and PAT serves families in rural areas. Curriculum is available in Spanish and English, and all handouts are printed at several literacy levels. Fifty percent of families who enroll, do so in the first year of their child's life. Over 50% stay in the PAT program until their child enters kindergarten. **Ms. Demarest** stated that over 64,000 personal visits were conducted in Idaho in the last 5 years. **Ms. Demarest** said that research on PAT nationally over the last 25 years has shown that the effects are significant and long-lasting. The impact of PAT on children's literacy skills has been measured, revealing higher standardized tests scores in math, language and reading through the 4th grade. **Ms. Demarest** strongly urged the Legislature to continue to support funding PAT and to partner with PAT to explore other sustainable funding streams so that together Idaho families can be supported in being their child's best first teacher.

Senator Gannon stated that if **Ms. Demarest's** numbers were correct, early childhood education in the public school system would cost about \$100 million to \$200 million. He asked what PAT could do with that same amount? **Ms. Demarest** answered that amount would be very significant and that she would get back to the committee with specifics. **Senator Gannon** asked how much funding PAT has. **Ms. Demarest** answered that the University of Idaho receives approximately \$600,000 per year for its demonstration project for 13 direct service sites, and for evaluation and coordination.

Representative Shirley stated that it was his understanding that PAT does not exist in many rural areas, although in Rexburg there is a fantastic PAT organization. What could be done to reach rural Idaho? **Ms. Demarest** answered that funding is one of the biggest challenges.

Senator Schroeder asked **Ms. Demarest** if she supported pre-K programs in public schools and, if so, how would those programs affect PAT? **Ms. Demarest** answered that she does support available and universal pre-K for families and children in Idaho; PAT readily engages families as early as the first year of life, for three years prior to a child having access to universal pre-K.

5. Lorraine Clayton, M.Ed.

Lorraine Clayton, M.Ed., Director, Governor's Early Care and Learning Initiative, Executive Office for Families and Children. She stated that she has worked in the field of early childhood for 18 years and has developed a successful early childhood initiative in the southeastern Idaho area. She has done specialized work with infants and toddlers, as well as children with disabilities, and has assessed child care settings throughout Idaho on a nationally recognized environmental rating scale. **Ms. Clayton** would like to see every child fully maximize his or her potential in terms of development and ability to become a contributing member of society. She distributed handouts which are available in the Legislative Services Office: "Idaho's Plan: Building the Future for Early Care and Learning; a Governor's Guide to School Readiness"; "Washington State Early

Learning and Development Benchmarks”; “Idaho Early Childhood Briefing; Idaho Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (IECCS) Implementation Project.”

These handouts show measurable objectives for every goal and focus area her group is working on.

Ms. Clayton referred to the “Governor’s Guide” handout and the fact that it gives states a map to follow in terms of developing early childhood and readiness for children. The Early Care and Learning Institute has had 3-4 years of federal funding for a Director, a support system, and has been able to provide assistance to other entities to help implement strategies. An Early Childhood Coordinating Council has been formed through an Executive Order in April, 2006. Currently there are 39 appointed members who create efficiencies and planning for all children from birth to age 8, the definition of early childhood. The Council has seven early childhood committees and a strategic communication plan.

Ms. Clayton said that there are longitudinal studies spanning 40 years showing the benefits of Head Start and high-quality preschool programs. Ninety percent of the brain development in children takes place prior to entering kindergarten. Idaho does not have well designed, consistent programs. There are about 60,000 children in preschool programs in Idaho of nonworking parents. Idaho is one of the fastest growing states in the nation and must be in a position to compete for jobs and economic stability and to add to the international market. She pointed out that electronics are replacing conversation and relationships, but that electronics are not providing the type of brain development that children need in order to learn, communicate, be literate and be productive members of society.

Ms. Clayton said that Idaho needs to consider getting early learning benchmarks and aligning with K-12; to secure assessment tools that look at developmental domains and skills for school readiness and not just on preliteracy skills; to develop a monitoring and approval system for pre-K sites that are consistent for child care and school system requirements and to attract potential educators in the early childhood field with compensation because these jobs are critical to our children. **Ms. Clayton** recommended that restrictions be removed on school districts to provide the flexibility to offer preschool programs. This does not mean that these programs are within a school system building. Working across and within communities with existing child care and preschool programs would be beneficial so that everyone learns. She thinks that education and training needs to be required for early childhood providers and teachers. A tiered reimbursement system for child care and preschool programs should also be endorsed so that there is compensation commensurate with educational training and skills. A ten-year time line should be developed to provide an opportunity for all children in Idaho to access pre-K.

In response to a question from **Senator Richardson**, **Ms. Clayton** stated that both the federal government’s Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 619, which is the preschool program, and the Part C Infant Toddler Program require that children be in their least restrictive and natural environment. Idaho has many preschool programs that are serving age 3-5 children with disabilities who do not have the opportunity to be with their normally developing peers during classroom time. **Senator Gannon** noted that there are various interpretations of that throughout the state. He asked whether federal law trumps state law and **Ms. Clayton** said that was her understanding.

6. Sherri Wood

Sherri Wood, President, Idaho Education Association, has been an elementary special education teacher for 28 years. She watched children in Caldwell come to first grade who had not attended kindergarten and in almost every case they were referred to the student assistance team because they were so far behind their first grade peers. The team had to consider putting these children back in kindergarten, even though they were age appropriate for first grade. **Ms. Wood** shared that she has seen a huge boost in readiness after a full-day kindergarten for children who were previously far from ready. The Education Association's national convention this year overwhelmingly passed a resolution that recommended all three and four-year-olds have access to high quality full-day public school pre-K. The convention also overwhelmingly passed a recommendation for a full-day, mandatory kindergarten for all five-year-old children. The convention also took a look at class size, recommending one adult for every ten children and encouraged looking at parental involvement in preschool programs.

Ms. Wood said that there should be multiple sources to assess these children, taking into account their varied learning styles, their cultural backgrounds and their learning pace. Obviously a large-scale standardized test is not age-appropriate for 3 or 4 year old children. A pre-K program should address a child's health, nutrition and family needs as part of a comprehensive network, and should include a well designed transition plan that provides support as the child enters kindergarten. Children who attend pre-K programs are better prepared for kindergarten; have better language and math skills; better cognitive and social skills; and better relationships with their peers; are less likely to drop out of school; repeat grades; need special education or remedial assistance and at an older age; are less likely to be involved with law enforcement; and are more likely to graduate from high school and complete a four-year college program, as well as earning more money over their lifetime. While these findings hold true for all children, those from disadvantaged homes tend to benefit even more than children from an enriched background. Society pays in many ways for failing to take full advantage of the learning potential of all its children in lost economic productivity and tax revenues, in higher crime rates and in diminished participation in the civic and cultural life. **Ms. Woods** opined that our democratic values are betrayed when we fail to live up to our moral and ethical obligations to safeguard the health and well-being of our young children. Helping all children to start school ready to learn is critical to the future success and the well-being of our society as a whole. **Ms. Wood** urged the committee to continue its efforts to put into place a mandatory full-day kindergarten program as well as a comprehensive, high-quality pre-K program in Idaho.

Senator Schroeder asked if **Ms. Wood** was aware of any research that indicates that pre-K causes children who attend to do better or worse in elementary school than if they had not gone to pre-K. **Ms. Wood** responded that analysts, who are high-powered business people, state that to improve economic development we need to stop building high-rise buildings and invest instead in young three and four-year-old children.

Senator Burkett asked **Ms. Wood**, as a representative of teachers K-12 throughout the state, if she had any opposition to pre-K in private settings and in religious venues and where the state assists

with a high quality teacher component as utilized in other states such as Arkansas, Oklahoma and Colorado. **Ms. Wood** answered that could be a beginning but that the future goal would be to have pre-K programs in all public schools.

Senator Gannon asked whether support for pre-K in the public school setting would that include charter schools. **Ms. Wood** answered yes, as long as they are public charter schools. **Senator Gannon** asked where Idaho would get all these teachers. **Ms. Wood** responded that to develop qualified educators, some states have (as in special education) offered fee waivers for young people or already trained educators to go back to take classes in early childhood education or in special education. A district could pay for these classes to be taken in the evenings.

In response to a question from **Senator Richardson** regarding whether this program should be fully funded by the state and, if so, whether it should be money above and beyond what is now currently allocated for K-12 and, if so, how much that would be, **Ms. Wood** responded that these are legislative issues.

Senator Corder asked about the data supporting the statement that children who go through kindergarten or pre-K are by far more successful. **Ms. Wood** cited a study from North Carolina and agreed to get that specific information for the committee. **Senator Corder** asked whether children who benefit by going to pre-K do so because the education is better or because the children are taken out of their homes. **Ms. Wood** shared that, in her 28 years of experience, the vast majority of the 550 students who attended VanBuren Elementary School in Caldwell were not retained in kindergarten because of the desire to have them in a full-day program, rather than in the home. Therefore, the children were put into first grade with much remediation. For many kids who live in poverty, school makes a huge difference. Home visits would find homes with no printed material anywhere in the home; some children had never held a crayon or had a pair of scissors in their hand and had never looked at any printed material and there were no pictures on the walls and mattresses were on the floor. Unfortunately many children do not live an enhanced lifestyle that so many are very fortunate to be able to live. Children who live in poverty definitely benefit from being at school. **Senator Gannon** wondered if pre-K was the answer for that, asking if the home situation should be fixed. **Ms. Wood** responded that in her experience, working with many parents in the special education preschool in Caldwell, the parents learned along with their children, many of whom had very negative experiences with regard to their own schooling. She certainly sees a great advantage for children, even though it's difficult to address many societal problems.

7. Rob Winslow

Mr. Rob Winslow, Executive Director of the Idaho Association of School Administrators, has been an elementary principal for 18 years in Idaho in a variety of settings. At a high income school parents with means provided great experiences at home for their children and top quality pre-school experiences. These kids were more than ready for kindergarten. At two other schools, it was a much different mix of preparation; many children needed more to be successful in kindergarten. Previously, without the accountability issues with No Child Left Behind, there was not near the pressure on the system or the school if a child came into kindergarten unprepared. As a school

system, **Mr. Winslow** believes there are many things that may be done without strictly providing a pre-K program including which includes connecting with the community and working with families to share ways to help their children with pre-K preparation. Research shows that parents prepare children for kindergarten in a very different way than do educators. Parents try to get their kids ready by teaching them such things as saying and writing their names, address, and a few academic things. Educators do not think that those things are as critical as preparing children to be ready to work and learn within a system and to have the proper social skills. Academics are important, but children without social skills cannot accomplish tasks that others can, and behavior problems often result. **Mr. Winslow** stated that many schools are providing different programs out of necessity, not because they have been given additional dollars. With challenges of the No Child Left Behind accountability measures, it is very important that children be ready for school. A big difference in kindergarten teachers, past and present, in his experience, is that they used to get kids ready to learn to read. Those days are gone. His wife teaches reading in kindergarten. Children now leave kindergarten reading, so there is now a different expectation level.

Mr. Winslow informed that the position of the Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA), is to encourage careful consideration of educational advantages of quality, early childhood experiences including mandatory and extended day kindergarten offerings. Research supports the need to establish such programs and the implementation of reduced class sizes in the primary grades. Such action requires public understanding and full financial support from policymakers, including the recognition that classroom space and staff must be provided. A well developed, developmentally appropriate early childhood program will meet the social, physical, emotional, and academic needs of our youngest learners, building a solid foundation for academic success and the meeting of Idaho student achievement standards. The IASA supports mandatory kindergarten for all children in public, private, parochial schools, or comparable instruction. The expectations of the No Child Left Behind Act and Idaho's accountability mandates a change in our current law.

In response to a question from **Senator Schroeder** regarding Idaho statutes that do not permit children younger than five years of age to be in public classrooms, **Mr. Winslow** understood that the law does not directly address children under five years of age. **Senator Schroeder** added that, unless it is a federal program of some type, the state does not allow children under five years of age in classrooms. He found it interesting that a northern Idaho district, which recently had a levy override, stated that if that levy does not pass, pre-K programs would be dropped. **Senator Schroeder** said he took as an open admission that the district was using public funds for pre-K. He noted receiving an e-mail from a superintendent last year who said he did not know the district was not supposed to use public funds for pre-K. **Senator Schroeder** asked **Mr. Winslow** how many school districts have pre-K programs that are being paid for with public funds. **Mr. Winslow** stated that he did not have that exact figure and would get it for the committee. **Mr. Winslow** commented that in talking with different superintendents, some districts fund pre-K with state dollars and some have been funded with federal dollars.

Representative Shirley asked **Mr. Winslow** what his position was on how the committee should respond to parents who commonly say that they do not favor putting pre-K children on school buses to go to a district-sponsored activity or educational experience, especially in rural areas where

traveling time is increased. **Mr. Winslow** responded that in special education programs, children as young as age three ride the bus with older kids. It is true that not all young children are comfortable riding on a bus. In his experience, parental anxiety is decreased when young children are placed with children just a few years older than themselves. **Mr. Winslow** suggested having monitors ride with those children. Some young children do have to be strapped into car seats.

In response to a question from **Representative Kemp**, **Mr. Winslow** answered that school buses were exempt from seat belt requirements.

Senator Richardson asked, given the fact that in some districts kindergarten is only a nonmandatory, half-day program, whether **Mr. Winslow** would support mandatory, full-day kindergarten. **Mr. Winslow** answered that he is supportive of mandatory kindergarten but is not saying that it needs to be a full day. Some districts by need, have expanded into full-day programs because specific students benefit tremendously from a full day program, but that had been done at the district's cost.

Senator Burkett asked **Mr. Winslow** about the requirement that children learn to read in kindergarten and what is the remediation effect of children entering kindergarten unprepared. **Mr. Winslow** answered that in the special education preschool program, curriculum addresses both the academic and the social. The kindergarten curriculum also addresses listening, sitting quietly, paying attention and changing activities. He has found that connecting to the home and parents to be successful in enriching the child's academic experiences, as well as in having them learn to focus on one task before moving onto another. Most teachers of young children are challenged in blending social and academic skills with behavioral skills.

Senator Schroder commented about the increasing number of rural schools which are going to four day weeks to save money. Currently kindergarten is not required, so a rural school could drop kindergarten just to save money. He asked how this would affect the school district in meeting the academic requirements placed on those students by the state or federal government. **Mr. Winslow** answered that he thought it would be very difficult and that they would be at a great disadvantage due to the rigorous requirements that exist. **Mr. Winslow** agreed to provide data to the committee showing the effect on children who have and who have not been to kindergarten.

8. Clifford Green, Ph.D.

Dr. Clifford Green, Executive Director of the Idaho School Boards Association, stated that although he is not an expert in the area of early childhood education he was overwhelmed with the quantitative and qualitative information supporting the need for early childhood education. As a lobbyist and Director of the Association, he is aware that there are many in Idaho who oppose early childhood education for various salient reasons. Although the Association does not have an official position on early childhood education, it does recognize the overwhelming evidence that supports the benefits. Nationally, there are over four million four-year-olds in the U.S.; that number is expected to increase 14% over the next twenty years; 19% of all children under five are below 100% of the poverty level; and the cost to provide pre-K, depending on how you calculate (half or

full-day, student-ratio, quality of curriculum), is roughly between \$6,900 and \$12,000 per child per year. **Dr Green** stated that the Meridian school district runs a full-day tuition kindergarten program for about \$200 per child per month, and suggested that Meridian testify before the committee on how this is accomplished. In **Dr. Green's** opinion, some reasons supporting early childhood education include:

- C young children are capable and eager learners;
- C 1/3 of children entering kindergarten cannot recognize letters of the alphabet;
- C 20% of children entering kindergarten are unfamiliar with the concept and the basic idea of reading;
- C children unprepared for kindergarten tax the resources of our current system;
- C children who start behind, stay behind;
- C identifying problems early and often ensures that solutions are less costly in the long run;
- C research shows that children who already know the alphabet when they enter kindergarten are twenty times more likely to be able to read words aloud at the end of kindergarten than children who did not;
- C long-term studies show that children who participated in high-quality pre-K programs are 56% less likely to require special education services throughout their school career.

Regarding federal funding provided through IDEA, the federal government promised to fund at 40% but it has never been funded over 21%. The remainder of that funding comes out of the school district's discretionary money, something to think about in terms of investment. Children are growing up in an ever smaller, competitive and more complex world; today's kindergarten is yesterday's first grade. High quality pre-K is the best answer to our nation's school readiness problem. High school reform is only one-half of the equation. There should be an up-front investment that pays dividends in the future. The investment in our children is well worth it. The association supports the high school reform efforts, and will also be supporting an initiative similar to the Idaho Reading Initiative, called the Idaho Math Initiative, placed into kindergarten through fifth grades. **Dr. Green** said that recently, **Douglas Reeves** from the Center of Performance Assessment, who is an expert in research-based solutions in education, shared his thoughts on early childhood education (ECE):

ECE has a profound and long-lasting economic benefit for the state. The definitive study, recently summarized in the January 19, 2005 edition of Education Week found that the investment of \$15,166 in a preschool resulted in a return to society of \$258,888, with \$177,473 of those dollars from crime savings.

All preschools are not alike. There is a dramatic difference between (1) preschools that are merely custodial in nature, such as day care centers staffed by minimum wage workers whose primary responsibility is to feed children and keep them from harm and (2) preschools that attend to both safety and intellectual needs of the children.

The reason there is contradictory evidence on the Head Start Program is that many preschool programs bear the same label but have vastly different educational approaches. Only those that focus on explicit cognitive development, i.e. letter identification, reading readiness, creativity, social interaction such as sharing, following directions, and

cooperating, offer long-term benefits. “[All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten](#)“ by Robert Fulghum gives a good synopsis of those benefits.

Academic preparation has long-term consequences throughout school; for example, kindergarten reading readiness is the single most powerful predictor of success in fourth grade reading and math. The converse is also true; when eighth grade students are not reading at grade level, there is an 85% probability that those students will remain below grade level throughout high school, an academic limitation with lifetime consequences. The “Journal of Education Psychology,” the premier scientifically based research journal in education, studied the primary link between kindergarten and reading readiness and fourth grade scores in both reading and math in Ohio. The research found that kindergarten reading readiness was *the most significant predictor* of fourth grade success, even more powerful than socio-economic status. People ask if the research could be wrong. The real question is what is the risk if we are wrong versus what is the risk if this is right. If the research is correct and we fail to recognize the truth, the consequences are huge.

Dr. Green discussed preschool effectiveness, academic orientation of ECE and academic preparation throughout school and how this depends on assessment. Research has cited Idaho’s reading indicator assessment. Idaho is one of the few states that has done frequent assessments, which is critical, since children have so many vastly different needs. Gathering ECE data enables educators to recognize excellence and provide enriched opportunities where appropriate. **Dr. Green** added that Idaho, despite its relatively small population, is an immensely complex state with the challenges of urban education (i.e. poverty, second language, threats to safety), coinciding with the challenges of rural schools (i.e. limited curriculum, limited access, and long periods of time on transportation). **Dr. Green** said that Idaho has a high number of students who are profoundly disabled, and he encouraged the state to identify their needs and to address them early.

“SLATE - early childhood education issue, August, 2006,” available in the Legislative Services Office is published by the association five times each year. The tables in the “SLATE” publication show the benefits of pre-K programs. The publication also includes an article about the Wilder School District’s pre-K program, as well as an article by **Representative Ann Rydalch** titled “Looking Ahead to Prekindergarten Training.”

Senator Burkett asked about the potential for 56% savings in the special needs expenditures by school districts and how much the state is spending on special needs statewide. **Dr. Green** stated that the 56% was a national figure and came from “A Policy Primer: Quality Pre-Kindergarten” (Fall 2004), by the Trust for Early Education. He will get that for the committee.

Senator Schroeder asked **Dr. Green** whether there are currently any pre-K programs in operation paid for with state funds and whether the association would support changing the law so that these programs could continue on a voluntary basis? **Dr. Green** answered yes.

9. Christine Ivie

Christine Ivie, Chief Elementary/Secondary Academic Officer, Idaho State Board of

Education (SBOE). She agreed that research shows that ECE programs have a positive economic impact and distributed statistics that are available in the Legislative Services Office. She volunteered to provide the committee with a report from the Education Commission of the state's legislative workshop last October, as well as a report entitled "The Economic Promise of Investing in High Quality Preschool" from the Committee for Economic Development. **Ms. Ivie** stated that studies of ECE programs show long-term positive effects in cognitive outcomes, education outcomes, crime outcomes, employment and earnings, fiscal savings in health and welfare, crime and education costs, and tax revenue gains. Research shows savings from \$3 to \$17 for every dollar invested in ECE programs. Idaho has a variety of programs available to students in special education, migrant preschool programs, limited English-proficient preschool programs, Head Start programs and privately funded preschool programs. Although the SBOE does not have a position regarding mandated ECE programs, **Ms. Ivie** said the SBOE would encourage this committee to ask those programs to collect data about their educational impact, as well as the fiscal impact on students so that those programs might be expanded into more school districts. **Ms. Ivie** previously was a principal at a Title I school with 45% limited English-proficient students, as well as principal of a preschool program for special education students in the Nampa School District. She personally believes that preschool programs helped to eliminate test score gaps from kindergarten through third grade. Data shows that students in Idaho struggle in grades 4-8. She does not believe that "burn-out" of students previously mentioned was a result of participating in preschool programs. In her opinion this is the result of disadvantaged students who do not get the support they need in intermediate and middle-school grades. **Ms. Ivie** strongly suggested taking a look at what is happening at grades 4-8.

Ms. Ivie said that the SBOE recommendations are:

The SBOE supports identifying best practices at all levels of education and encouraging local school districts and state agencies to adopt best effective practices in order to meet students' needs.

The SBOE is focused on improving education and has begun identifying the desired post-secondary and high school outcomes and working its way back to earlier education programs.

The SBOE would encourage this committee to examine the use of federal funds to provide targeted programs to students who would qualify (Special Education, Title I, LEP, Migrant). This should not be limited by Idaho "school age."

The SBOE would also encourage current programs to collect data and analyze that data in order to determine the impact that these programs have on the students they serve as well as the fiscal impact of their districts and/or the state.

Senator Gannon asked if Idaho were to lower the school age to under five-year-olds and allow school districts to implement pre-K programs on a volunteer basis, recognizing there may be no funding but with the possibility that schools may end up saving money, would the SBOE play a role as a clearinghouse to approve those programs. **Ms. Ivie** stated that might be a possibility. The system currently allows the Health and Welfare Department to focus on birth through 4 years old. The issue would be how SBOE would partner with Health and Welfare and the State Department of

Education. Research reflects that ECE programs need to be aligned with K-12 programs and the SBOE is supportive of creating a seamless education system for all students. **Ms. Ivie** said that SBOE could play a part in approving standards for ECE programs, along with the State Department of Education. Right now, age five by September 1st for kindergarten, and first grade age six by September 1st. does not mean that school districts cannot offer federally funded programs for younger children. But if the statute were changed, the districts should be given flexibility in how they spend their discretionary funds, adding that ideally, additional funding would help provide programs if those programs were effective in eliminating gaps and in saving money.

Senator Schroeder highlighted about the figure on **Ms. Ivie**'s handout which stated: "State spending per student averaged \$3,551 in 2005 (for pre-K programs)," adding that different figures had been shared during different presentations, and asked where she got that figure. He also asked that if the SBOE thought pre-K programs are this good, it should endorse them. **Ms. Ivie** answered that in order for the SBOE to make such a statement, it would have to first meet and discuss this. It has not done this yet. **Ms. Ivie** stated that she did have a report with the cost breakdowns from 2005 and offered to get the committee a copy.

In response to **Senator Gannon**'s question regarding information based on the federal funding for Idaho pre-K special education programs, **Ms. Ivie** said it was based on a 2005 preschool report that looks at all states not just an Idaho figure. **Senator Gannon** asked who in the state should be the certifying agency if the state ever adopted a recognition system for private preschool programs. **Ms. Ivie** answered that the SBOE, the State Department of Education, and Health and Welfare would have to meet to discuss certification. She noted that the Professional Standards Commission currently sets certification requirements. The SBOE could look at developing pre-K standards that would fit into their K-12 current standards. **Senator Gannon** asked if she thought it appropriate for the state to dictate to private preschools what they should and should not be doing? **Ms. Ivie** responded that private programs would not have to be accredited as long as they informed parents of that. The state could help private programs, but they would meet the state standards. **Senator Gannon** asked who administers the tiered recognition in other state. **Ms. Clayton** responded that she would provide that data to the committee.

10. Steffanie Clothier

Senator Burkett introduced **Steffanie Clothier, Program Director of the Children and Family Services, National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL)**, to address what is happening on the national scene. **Ms. Clothier** is based in Denver, Colorado. NCSL provides support to state legislatures and their staff on all kinds of topics.

Ms. Clothier reiterated that pre-K is clearly just one component of an ECE system. States all across the country are considering ECE and over 30 states every year propose such legislation. School readiness is a concern. Much research is being done on pre-K programs, both short-term studies and long-term studies. There is a big interest in raising the quality of ECE with regard to licensing set-up and the economic interest in the workforce. Economists with no background in child development have started to analyze ECE programs for cost-benefit including a Nobel Prize

winner, **James Heckman**, who is less focused on the cognitive side and much more focused on what, in a global economy, is needed in terms of early developed workforce skills, such as motivation, self-control and persistence.

Ms. Clothier said there was a lot of brain research available. No Child Left Behind accountability and costs have been big factors as states look at third grade test scores as well as problems with retention rates. **Ms. Clothier's** power point presentation, which is available in the Legislative Services Office, demonstrated that if there is a gap when children enter kindergarten, it just keeps growing. Families with the lowest incomes have the largest gap. If something can be done at the family or pre-K level, such as PAT programs, it would be an opportunity to make a difference.

There are currently 40 states with state-funded pre-K programs. She said that pre-K is not the answer to the problem, but it is one approach. The difference between small programs, and bigger programs is the percentage of children enrolled. There is a tremendous range in spending on preschool, much of which is related to the spending done in K-12. A study by the National Institute for Early Education Research compares state spending per child. States are not only implementing programs for ECE but have also dramatically increased their funding in the last ten years. In 2006, 27 states added new funding to pre-K, including Illinois which added \$90 million over the last three years and \$45 million on top of that in 2006 and Kansas which spent \$2 million this year in a seven county pilot program. There has been funding declines in 11 states, as a result of legislative priority with regard to ECE.

Ms. Clothier stated that states approach ECE funding differently. Some, such as Illinois, which has an EC block grant, focus on funding pre-K as well as birth-36 month programs. Some states direct all their funding through their school finance formula, Nebraska being an example. Texas approached military families; California had a ballot measure; South Carolina had to respond to school finance litigation that called for preschool.

Preschool programs are purely state designed; there are no federal mandates. If Idaho chooses ECE, the program can be designed in a way best for Idaho. Idaho can decide eligibility, which agency governs, how it is monitored, funded, and how funds are distributed. As an example, Arkansas decided to do full-day, full-week, high quality preschool program focused on low-performing school districts and children who are low income or have another risk factor and on three and four-year-old children. Arkansas has the highest quality program in the country, the only one rated a ten on a one- to-ten quality scale. Arkansas funds its program with excise tax on beer, state funds, local match and sales tax. West Virginia and New York have a requirement that 50% of the programs be in community settings. If there is concern about participation by community providers, this could be done in Idaho. Some states have built on established standards. Oregon, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Ohio have a preschool program built on Head Start. The effectiveness of this strategy is that standards and monitoring systems are already in place. There are also weaknesses in building on the Head Start model, including one being teacher quality and the quality of the programs. Another approach focuses on geographic eligibility. All the children in a school district, whether or not they go to a school or to a private child care provider, are eligible. New Jersey and Arkansas utilize this strategy.

The school finance formula can be used to start a perk program and allowing the districts the discretion to fund the program. Other states have started out with a high-quality pilot programs. State administrators in those states found that a high-quality pilot in a few places allows them to figure out how to run the program and the results. Examples are Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia and Oklahoma. Other states including Maine, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, have allowed for local control and local decision-making as long as state standards are met. Grants have also been given directly to communities. A needs assessment determines how funding gets distributed. In Massachusetts, “community partnerships” are the entities which actually get the funding. State requirements determine who has to be part of a partnership, including schools, community providers and parents. Another approach is to build on a program for children with disabilities. Kentucky is the clearest example of that approach, which is similar to Idaho.

Ms. Clothier next addressed early education governance. One way states have approached governance is to require coordination between departments. Another way is to bring all the programs that serve young children under one existing or newly created agency. Georgia, Massachusetts and Washington State are examples. This approach gets all the funding streams and the people who work with young children together, reduces duplication and hopefully improves quality and coordination. Maryland pulled everything under the Department of Education.

Ms. Clothier said that the Maternal and Child Health Bureau gave out planning grants to all states and then subsequently gave out implementation grants to a few states. The recipient states were required to put together a collaborative team and focus on these five areas (early care and education for children ages birth to 5; parent education; family support; mental health and social-emotional development; and medical homes) and to come up with data, research, strengths and weaknesses before formulating a plan.

Ms. Clothier discussed quality rating systems which are similar to hotel and restaurant ratings. The providers who meet the highest quality get five stars; providers who meet the minimum get one star. An independent rater evaluates and rates these programs periodically. Those providers who have the highest quality get reimbursed at a higher rate subsidy. Support may be provided to encourage providers to get to the next level. This system raises standards without having a one-size-fits-all for all programs. Another advantage is that this is consumer driven since the state puts these ratings on their website. Parents can shop for a center that meets their needs or pocketbook, and receive feedback on program quality.

Senator Gannon asked whether this has had a negative impact on child care for moderate or low-income families. **Ms. Clothier** answered that she has not seen this. The concern people have about quality rating systems, particularly in the ECE programs, is improving provider quality. Centers need to be able to get from one star up to five stars. Programs do not want a five-star center for only those who can afford to be at a five-star center. If supports and incentives are provided to child care providers to meet the higher standard, then they will. This requires funding. Seventy-four percent of the children in North Carolina are in four or five-star centers.

Thirteen states currently have quality rating systems, at least 23 states are looking at them, nine

states last year proposed such legislation and four states passed new laws this year or last.

Ms. Clothier spoke about public/private ECE initiatives. A number of states have put together public/private partnerships which, in her opinion, is a great way for states to partner with the corporate or private philanthropic community. The most recent state to do this is Washington which created their Thrive by Five partnership, funded by pooled money, both public and private. The Thrive by Five partnership has its own governance structure and will be a good supplement to what Washington might do in terms of other state policy. Nebraska passed an Early Childhood Endowment Fund last year. Once funded, this will support their work with children ages birth to 36 months. Minnesota's Early Learning Foundation helps fund demonstration projects. Pennsylvania has just created an initiative that is focused on a pre-K collaboration with community providers. Public/private partnerships provide a way states can expand a state's pool of funding.

Representative Barraclough asked what **Ms. Clothier** envisioned in the next two to five years for states which do not have ECE programs. **Ms. Clothier** answered that she had participated in the Council of Chief State School Officers meeting held earlier this summer. All states which do not have a current pre-K program participated, including legislators and state agency directors. There is enough state experience that Idaho can draw upon to decide on what it might want to do. She envisions new activity in a number of states, including pilot programs and studies.

Representative Pence asked for more information about the statistic relating to quality rating systems which stated that 68% of children were in programs with three to five stars. **Ms. Clothier** answered that these were family child care homes that were regulated. North Carolina does a rated license, which is not a voluntary system. Everyone must participate.

Senator Burkett stated that Montana had a quality rating system. He wondered if the funding that is implemented to cause the quality rating system to work is just based upon federal funding, or whether all those states that have rating systems added state funds in order to make those systems work. **Ms. Clothier** answered that she had not looked at what funding sources were used for the quality rating systems, but she was sure that many states use dollars from their child care block grant, supplementing those funds with other state dollars.

Representative Barraclough asked **Ms. Clothier** if she had any recommendations on one or two state programs that she would suggest that people in Idaho might learn from. **Ms. Clothier** said that some fundamental decisions need to be made before it is decided what route to take. If Idaho is going to design a school-based, public school program where funding goes to districts and the districts make decisions about who delivers the preschool programs, she suggested looking at Oklahoma since it has a very high-quality program that serves four-year-olds, and is primarily focused and delivered through their public schools. If Idaho decides, however, that more community providers need to be included and to have a mixed delivery system, she suggested looking at Arkansas where the state gives grants to communities and to providers that meet the standards. Idaho must decide first what kind of a system needs to be designed. There are many choices and great designs from which to choose.

Representative Barraclough said that he had just received an advance copy of the 2006 ACT results. In 2006, 59% of Idaho graduates took the ACT examining four areas and only 22% of the 59% that took the ACT are ready for college in those four areas. He asked how do we answer the question whether pre-K programs need to be our prominent focus, with Idaho's limited funds, rather than focusing on high school graduates. He asked if any studies could help Idaho decide where to focus first. **Ms. Clothier** answered that it seems clear to her in all the research she has done that the opportunity given in early childhood is the place that makes the most sense from an investment strategy.

Ad hoc member **Tanya Theiler** asked about the tiered rating system and if a provider achieved a five-star rating, how would the providers be prevented from raising their rates to the point they would not be accessible to the many. There are waiting lists for children with special needs and for low income families. She expressed concern since higher income families can afford whatever providers charge. **Ms. Clothier** answered that her sense was that the issue is helping providers along the way, so the center which is already at five stars would not be the only one; centers that might currently rate only one star can achieve that five-star rating. The challenge becomes having incentive funding and support for providers to help them reach different levels. This will cost money and require a support network.

11. Marybeth Wells

Marybeth Wells is the Special Education Coordinator for the Idaho State Department of Education. Her primary job responsibility is to work with the early childhood programs for children who receive special education services for children with autism and children's mental health. She provided a handout which is available in the Legislative Services Office. The State Department of Education mission statement is: "Through leadership and collaboration, the Department supports and promotes a system of public education that delivers relevant academic and life skills." Funding sources for education include: state and federal funds, dedicated fees (such as driver's education) and foundation funds. A chart showing the federal funding that is allocated to each individual school district in Idaho for preschool children ages three to five years who require special education services was provided to the committee.

Ms. Wells said that her organization had been in existence since 1991, and has 120 staff members divided into five different areas: certification/professional standards and adult services; educational improvement; special population services; school support services; and technology services.

Ms. Wells said that the Department's legislative recommendations are:

- C Adopt common standards for early childhood program outcomes applicable to all early care and learning programs. These standards must be the foundation for participation in the program. National accreditation standards must be in place.
- C Maximize current state and federal resources.
- C Do not create a new system, but incorporate early childhood education into our existing public and private structure.

- C For students not eligible for existing programs (such as special education), create a program that is voluntary for “at-risk” four-year-olds.
- C Parents are moving into Idaho from other states, requesting state funded preschool programs for their children. The state should be responsive to this need.
- C Children with disabilities should receive educational services in the least restrictive settings which is difficult to accomplish when only children with disabilities receive educational services.

Senator Schroeder asked whether public schools can pass local levies, maintenance and operation overrides, and use that money to fund pre-K for non-Title I three or four-year-olds. **Ms. Wells** apologized for not being an expert on funding and what local districts are able to do.

Representative Kemp asked whether there are rules in place now that define kindergarten standards. **Ms. Wells** answered that she did not know if rules exist, but the Board of Education has just adopted standards for kindergarten. The Department has an early care and learning task force which is looking at revising the standards for children three to five years of age so that those standards align with the K through 12 standards.

Senator Burkett inquired about the 2,807 children impacted by the PAT program and the 1,842 children impacted by the infant and toddler under 3 program. He wondered how many children are impacted by the special needs pre-K program that is administered by school districts. **Ms. Wells** answered that there are currently 4,044 students who are eligible for special education services at the preschool three to five-year-old level based on the December 1, 2005, child count data.

Senator Burkett asked if some of those services provided to special education children were in a classroom environment where there were other non-special needs children in order to provide a more balanced classroom environment. **Ms. Wells** answered that school districts try to incorporate preschool age children with their kindergarten classrooms, since that is the closest environment they have to peers; local school districts can also work with private preschool programs that are accredited. Districts have to be creative so that special needs children can have those experiences with their normally developing peers.

Senator Gannon asked about the basis for the level of federal program funding and asked how the amount given to Idaho for special needs children was determined. **Ms. Wells** responded that the funding is actually based on the December 1 child count done annually and based upon an FTE equivalent. **Senator Gannon** asked how that translates to how much Idaho gets per child in the special needs program. **Ms. Wells** said she did not know the exact formula and that the data on the handout was not current.

Senator Gannon addressed the recommendation regarding adopting common standards for early childhood program outcomes and asked whether this included the federally funded program currently in place in Idaho. **Ms. Wells** said the Department currently has standards for three to five- year-olds but is revising those standards and the infant-toddler program (birth to 36 months) standards so as to align all of the early childhood standards with the K through 12 standards.

Senator Gannon asked what the Department was going to use as a definition for “at-risk”. **Ms. Wells** answered that it will be similar to the population for Head Start, that being children with limited English proficiency and poverty. **Senator Gannon** asked whether it would be a needs-based program and **Ms. Wells** agreed. She added that it would be available on a voluntary basis. **Senator Gannon** commented that this might mitigate the concern about driving preschools in Idaho out of business. **Ms. Wells** responded that the Department believes that the state should partner with the private preschools, and it is not the Department’s intention to put anyone out of business. The Department would use the existing structure it now has. There could be combinations of buildings used and the programs would vary at the local level from district to district based on available resources.

Representative Rusche asked **Ms. Wells** to explain the headings on the columns in her handout showing district preschool funding allocations. **Ms. Wells** explained that her data person was on vacation and she did not have a clear explanation as to what each column heading meant. **Ms. Wells** offered to get clarification information. **Representative Rusche** asked what would be the consequence to the state if it is not able to provide what is deemed to be the least restrictive setting. **Ms. Wells** answered that she did not know exactly what the consequence would be. She noted that the Department is continuing to work with districts to provide technical assistance on how to provide the least restrictive settings for those students.

Ad hoc member Tanya Theiler asked, in providing those least restrictive settings, whether there was a public pre-K that those children could be incorporated into and if there is additional cost involved other than the cost of a certified teacher. She also asked whether a full-time tutor or translator would be present in an English as a second language situation. **Ms. Wells** answered that the schools would probably use a translator if a child who requires some translation because of deafness. The schools would probably also rely on Medicaid funding for those kinds of services if the child was Medicaid eligible. All possible resources to provide those services would be considered.

Ad hoc member Becky Young asked **Ms. Wells** to address how effective the Head Start program has been in the state of Idaho. **Ms. Wells** answered that the Head Start program in Idaho has been extremely effective. The Department partners with Head Start which can become the general education environment for students with disabilities. The Head Start program is considered to be a natural environment and a general education environment. She noted that many Head Start programs are full and have waiting lists, even though Head Start has a mandate to provide services to 10% of the students with disabilities. In response to **Ms. Young** regarding maximizing current state and federal resources, **Ms. Wells** answered that these funds are primarily received for special education and that Title I funds might also be available. **Ms. Young** asked for more information regarding the Title I funds and how the Department would utilize those funds for this program, if it were implemented. **Ms. Wells** agreed to get that for the committee. **Ms. Young** asked if the Department had put together any kind of projections on cost per student based on what it is currently spending and has been spending. **Ms. Wells** said the Department had not currently looked at that, to her knowledge.

Senator Corder stated that earlier someone had said quite clearly that Head Start was not helping, with testing done in the fourth grade level showing no difference between those who had or had not gone to Head Start. He asked how **Ms. Wells** was measuring the value of Head Start versus what had been heard earlier that would give the legislators confidence in believing in the Head Start Program? **Ms. Wells** responded that she believes that it has to do with the fact that children with special needs can be incorporated into the environment with their typically developing peers in the Head Start program as opposed to a more restrictive environment, such as private developmental disability agencies where all the children have to have special needs. Right now that is pretty much restricted to the Head Start model. **Senator Corder** reiterated that **Ms. Wells** used the word “believed” and he asked if she had anything concrete to show the committee in support that her “belief” is accurate. **Ms. Wells** answered that there has been much information from the University of North Carolina about best practice along the lines of her belief.

12. Dr. Harriet Shaklee

Dr. Harriet Shaklee is Family Development Specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Idaho Extension. She stated that the mission of the University of Idaho Extension is to take the university resources off campus into communities where they can be put to good use. Regarding early childhood education, the university provides ethnic assistance and help to those panels, groups and coalitions who study early childhood with survey development and analyses. **Dr. Shaklee** presented survey results evidencing what Idaho residents think about the needs of families with young children in Idaho, which is available in the Legislative Services Office. **Dr. Shaklee** said that the shared goals for Idaho’s young children and families were:

- C Resources to meet basic family needs.
- C Parenting information and resources.
- C Affordable, high quality child care, when needed.
- C Support for early learning and school readiness.
- C Access to a health care provider.
- C Resources for children’s social/emotional health.
- C Social/emotional support for families.
- C Information about services for families.
- C Coordination of services for families.
- C Involvement of state, communities and businesses.

The survey asked three questions about each of those goals:

- C Do you think that goal would be important to you if you were a parent of young children?
- C Do families in your community have access to the resources mentioned in the goal?
- C Should all families have access to the specified resources?

Dr. Shaklee said that 810 people from varied backgrounds responded to the survey including: Idahoans from all regions of the state; residents of cities, small towns and rural areas; people at all income and educational levels; a broad spectrum of occupations; males and females; parents, grandparents and non-parents; and parents in single and two parent families. **Dr. Shaklee** said the survey result is available in both Spanish and English.

Ninety percent of the people responding agreed on shared goals, demonstrating broadly shared goals in the community. The goals identified in order from one to ten were: basic needs, parenting information, child care, early learning, health care, child social/emotional health, family social/emotional health, finding services, coordinating services, and state/community/business. The survey did show a large gap between what is important to people and what is available in communities. **Dr. Shaklee** referred to this survey as a “convenience sample,” adding that this was not necessarily a representative sample of the state, but she could not find a sub-group that disagreed with the general premise.

The University of Idaho PAT Demonstration Project has 13 PAT projects around the state of Idaho, serving families in 57 communities. When it comes to parent education, only 1/3 of the communities have regularly-offered parenting education appropriate for parents of young children. Services for parents of young children are very limited, particularly in rural areas and especially for children under three years of age. **Dr. Shaklee** concluded by saying that special education preschool is a great program as well as Head Start and the infant/toddler program. The number of those who need such programs is substantially greater than the programs can accommodate. PAT serves many families around the state, but there are currently 1,000 families on their waiting list, and there would be even more if people were aware of its availability. Conclusions are always the same: Idahoans agree that services for families of young children are very important and that many more services are needed.

Senator Schroeder asked whether pre-K is viewed as day care referring back to the survey goals which listed child care as #3 and early learning as #4. **Dr. Shaklee** answered that the survey did not ask specifically for that distinction, pointing out that parents were eager for any support system (i.e., the internet or simply direction on how to prepare their children for school readiness) not necessarily in a classroom environment.

13. Dr. Geoffrey Black

Dr. Geoffrey Black, Department of Economics, Boise State University, gave a power point presentation entitled “Early Childhood Education as Economic Development.” A copy of this is available in the Legislative Services Office. His presentation addressed what economists think about ECE, and what studies shed light on the value of ECE. **Dr. Black** and his colleague, **Dr. Chris Loucks** have reviewed many studies in preparation for this presentation. **Dr. Black** said that his background has been in resource economics and specifically how natural resources can best be used to serve the state and regional interests in economic development. The thrust of his presentation was based on ECE as economic development. He began by stating that he and **Dr. Loucks** were amazed at the passion of the interest in ECE and the amount of research that has been done. There are 60,000 programs nationally with over a million children in ECE with many studies and research. The best studies were reviewed. **Dr. Black** mentioned work by **James Heckman**, University of Chicago, who won the Nobel Prize in Economics, 2000, which looked at the value of retraining programs and whether such programs were good investments. **Dr. Heckman** came to the conclusion that such retraining programs were not. That led **Dr. Heckman** back to asking what is a good investment (where one would get the most value from money spent) and the examination of

the resources being put into ECE. **Dr. Black and Dr. Loucks** also examined studies by other universities listed in his handout including Yale, Rutgers and the Federal Reserve. They were struck by the interest of the business community, which is driven by the fact that growth in the labor force has slowed down, there are fewer college graduates than in the past, there are skill shortages showing up in many sectors of the economy and many employees have poor math skills as well as poor reading and writing skills. This is harming productivity in the U.S. labor force.

Dr. Black and Dr. Loucks found:

- C Preschool years are vital for formation of cognitive and non-cognitive skills.
- C Exposure to quality pre-K improves both of these areas.
- C Benefits accrue to individuals (children) and society (economy).
- C These benefits are short-term, medium-term and long-term.

Dr. Black found that there is permanent improvement in academic achievement when quality pre-K programs are supported by quality K-3 education. There is a potential for fadeout in academic achievement, mostly in disadvantaged children, who attend a quality pre-K program for a year or two and then go back to a dismal intercity school. Quality pre-K must be followed up by quality K-12 afterwards. **Dr. Black** found that even in disadvantaged kids, going to several years of quality pre-K followed by substandard primary education, non-cognitive skills (motivation, work ethic, self-esteem, less violence, etc.) persist and there is no fadeout of these skills. When people talk about burnout or fadeout, they are referring to test scores and academic achievement that may decline for some children due to various reasons. The pre-K benefits to individuals are higher retention and graduation rates, higher wages and employment probability, less delinquency and crime, improved well-being and health, less abuse and lower teen pregnancy. These individual benefits persist even when pre-K is not supported by quality K-3 education.

Dr. Black found that the benefits to the economy are: reductions in crime, increased earnings (tax revenues), greater school system efficiency including reduction in special education, less grade repetition, higher student learning productivity, increased productivity and skills, lower reliance on public health care and welfare, and lower rates of smoking, drug use and crime.

Dr. Black stated that for Idaho, benefits from pre-K investment are real, long-lasting and contribute to a better workforce. The key component driving economic development is a better educated, more productive workforce.

There is a vast array of pre-K program types and funding options. For Idaho, **Dr. Black** emphasized that ECE is a good investment but reiterated that we need to know what types of programs are best for Idaho; we need to find what high quality means, decide about possibly different programs in urban vs. rural areas, and address what the costs will be. Costs differ widely by location and program type with programs costing from \$3,500 to \$13,000 per year, per student. To what extent can we use money we already spend (i.e. cost shifting from other state programs and targeted federal funds). **Dr. Black** offered to help the task force in any way he could. **Dr. Loucks** emphasized that if the state invests in these programs, the people who teach in these programs must

be qualified and have degrees in early childhood education. This is not a program to provide day care; it's a program to provide education. Having a qualified teacher in front of these students who meets standards and has accountability is critical.

Senator Richardson commented that his constituents often tell him that the state should do better with the money that is spent. How this could be accomplished? **Dr. Black** replied that he did not look at the funding specifics for Idaho, adding that funding needs to be examined fully, as well as to what extent targeted federal funds could also be used. **Dr. Loucks** stated that other states have shifted funds from federal programs to state programs. If all students were being considered, including pre-K, the total students incorporated into the system would be significantly increased, possibly making more funds available. There are many private agencies eager to fund pre-K programs. **Dr. Loucks and Dr. Black** agreed to provide that task force with examples of what other states have done.

Representative Shirley asked **Dr. Black** to address this high-quality teacher standard issue. How many students are currently enrolled in ECE degrees at a postsecondary level in Idaho? **Dr. Black** said he would get that information. **Dr. Loucks** emphasized that the salary issue is a major component, adding that some studies suggest that these ECE teachers teaching pre-K should be paid more because a message must be sent as to the importance of quality at this level of education. **Dr. Black** said that he has been told that most of Idaho's graduates go out-of-state to teach due to this salary issue.

Representative Kemp asked **Dr. Black** about benefits to individuals and to the economy. She has yet to hear anyone making these claims cite specific research sources. **Dr. Black** referred to references at the end of his handout. **Representative Kemp** asked which references went with which statement specifically with regard to benefits to individuals and to the economy. **Dr. Black** offered to get this specific information to **Representative Kemp** after the meeting.

14. Ms. Patricia Kempthorne

Former First Lady, State of Idaho, **Patricia Kempthorne**, representing the Twiga Foundation explained that she has worked with many of the other presenters for the last 20 years as a parent, as a former First Lady and as an early childhood provider. The subject of ECE is very near and dear to her heart. She thinks Idaho is very lucky to have so many qualified people working together on the issue of ECE. Based on where Idaho has come in the last 5 years, in her opinion, Idaho is now ready to move forward, with the help and leadership from the legislators and some other public/private partnerships. A previous legislative Early Childhood Task Force reported that there were huge issues in the area of ECE, and was not really sure as to what direction to take. The Early Care and Learning Task Force was formed to look at the issue for the Governor. The Governor's task force was a statewide committee looking at all of the issues around early care and learning, receiving a federal grant which funded two years of planning. The Governor's task force built a public/private partnership committee and went all over the state gathering various perspectives from a broad spectrum of the communities. **Ms. Kempthorne** explained some of the information that the committee received from **Lorraine Clayton** was the outcome of that work. The federal

grant was then expanded to allow the Governor's task force to implement its findings. Many other states are far ahead of Idaho in what they spend on ECE and what they do, but Idaho is not way behind. Idaho is just doing things differently. She said, in some ways Idaho is ahead because the people are really working to build a strong foundation.

Ms. Kempthorne handed out a report entitled "Building the Foundation for Bright Futures, A Governor's Guide to School Readiness" which is available in the Legislative Services Office. She suggested using the information in this report to understand better what states can do and what schools, communities, families and children can do. Child readiness is a family, community, school and state readiness issue, but, according to **Ms. Kempthorne**, the core principles start with the fact that families play the most important role in a child's life. She emphasized that those who think ECE pulls children away from the family role do not understand that family very much must retain the key role to make ECE work. The responsibility for school readiness lies not with the children but with the adults who care for those children and the systems they support. It is our job to make this work for the children. The first five years of life are a critical developmental period and the science behind the brain development says that one more year does make a significant impact. Idaho does have the responsibility to figure out what can be done with regard to ECE. Her message was for this task force to pull together all the data available using the foundation of work done previously. Idaho is ready but it cannot be done without leadership's willingness to make it happen by opening the door and taking a stance. The business community is also ready to help support ECE financially. She expressed pride and commitment to all of the work done in previous years, thanking the many people who have worked together wonderfully for Idaho to succeed.

Representative Barraclough asked if she had positive programs that are mostly volunteer that could be put together in Idaho in the near future, and if she could come up with a list of possibilities or pilot studies. **Ms. Kempthorne** answered that there are studies out there and school districts have shown what they have been able to do with volunteers. She added that there is a challenge with volunteers because part of the bigger picture is that 60% of parents work. She is an advocate of workplace flexibility, which would allow more parents to volunteer in their children's programs and schools.

Senator Gannon asked about programs that are either in existence or could come into existence but for the existing age limit restriction. **Ms. Kempthorne** is waiting for removal of the age limit restriction. She understands there will be guidelines, but leadership's permission is needed as much as funding. There are public/private funding opportunities that could at least get ECE started in Idaho. She said the Basin School District has the foundation, but time is needed to develop it further. That district has done some amazing intervention which is paying off. **Senator Gannon** asked if the state was to go that far, would there be a need for a clearinghouse to review those programs, and if so, what would be the best clearinghouse. **Mrs. Kempthorne** answered that over the years she has learned that having something come from the Governor's office, as well as from a legislative position, makes all the difference in giving credibility. There are people from the Governor's task force who have the knowledge but the state would have to pull into that the decision makers, the policymakers, and more education people to put that all together. The Executive Office for Families and Children could provide a location because there would be

accountability. She emphasized the importance of the public/private partnership within the clearinghouse so that there would be representation from all over.

Senator Richardson asked whether the Governor's Coordinating Council for Families is in a position to become a clearinghouse. He expressed concern about duplication of services. **Ms. Kempthorne** asked if he thought there would be a conflict with that Council. **Senator Richardson** said he just wondered if the Coordinating Council could be that clearinghouse. **Ms. Kempthorne** stated that would be up to the Governor and the people running the Coordinating Council. She pointed out that the council was a group of volunteers who came together to help give infrastructure direction on how organizations can coordinate across the state. This would be a new charge for them. The Governor and the council itself could accept this charge, if they chose to do so. This would be a huge job and could take them away from their other priorities. With regard to conflict or duplication, she said that the Coordinating Council was a broader council and is not early childhood-specific. The Governor's Task Force is more-early childhood specific and has worked in conjunction with all early childhood organizations in the state. She suggested that may be a place for a piece of this clearinghouse.

Dr. Black said that it was his understanding that the business organizations through their foundations, the education establishment through the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and community groups through the Governor's Coordinating Council got together and formed an Early Learning Council that then developed a vision/plan to consider projects that could be proposed to the legislature. He asked how something like that might work. **Ms. Kempthorne** answered that it would work.

B. Public Testimony

1. Mr. Brandon Durst

Mr. Durst is a stepfather of a four-year-old child who needs an Individualized Education Program (IEP). **Mr. Durst** addressed what he sees as a lack of access to pre-K education and expressed frustration at the difficulty they have had getting their child access to an IEP for a major speech problem. Most children with a speech problem will also have trouble with reading and writing in the future because of the cognitive and relay skills related to that. His child has attended Head Start in Washington but there was no room for his child in Head Start in Idaho, despite the fact that he needed IEP. His child lost six months waiting to get into a program during the most crucial time in his learning development that he can never get back. **Mr. Durst** asked for more programs in order to provide better access to Head Start. He wondered what finances from the state budget could be allocated toward these pre-K programs and what services are available in the current structure that his family can utilize. He recommended having a scale of need and addressed the fact that to be eligible for Head Start a child must be determined to need IEP or be very low income. The majority of families in a two-parent home both work and these are the families that are being hurt the worst. These families are working hard to provide for their families but then their middle-income prevents them from qualifying for services their children badly need. **Mr. Durst** recommended to the

committee that a sliding scale be put in place in both private and public entities so that child care providers can set and maintain standards by following a certain curriculum which would increase access and also allow students who need the help to get access to those programs. **Senator Richardson** asked if he had any suggestions. **Mr. Durst** replied that many people do not like a voucher program (he was not that excited about it either) but if parents were offered a sliding scale for services, that would help. Also, if a private preschool meets a certain accreditation process so that quality teachers are ensured, when these providers meet those standards, they could be reimbursed funds from the state for the services rendered.

2. **Mr. Jim Everett**

Mr. Everett is the CEO of the Treasure Valley YMCA. The YMCA's preschool program is over 40 years old and that ECE yields at least a seven to one return on the investment. He contends there is no better place to invest money since it is a business issue as well as a social issue. Quoting from an editorial in the Idaho Statesman, "it would be a wonderful world if every child were born and raised in a home with two well educated parents with means, but that is not today's reality." **Mr. Everett** said that children cannot choose their circumstances. The YMCA provides \$400,000 per year in financial assistance to low income families to participate in child care programs from early education to school age in partnership with a number of organizations including schools and hospitals with some government money. No single nonprofit can fill the need completely; there is a role for government, business and everyone working together. In **Mr. Everett's** opinion, the only way to make this happen is to pool resources to make sure that we really leave no child behind.

3. **Lorna Dufur**

Ms. Dufur is the grandmother of **Jeremy Jones**, who was 3 years old and whose brother was kindergarten age when these two boys were placed in her home due to drug addiction of their parents. **Jeremy Jones** went to the YMCA preschool program. The difference she sees in these two boys today is pronounced. One gets C's, D's and F's and **Jeremy** is an A student. She emphasized that the YMCA program was not just a child care situation. Children **are** being left behind before they even get to kindergarten. **Ms. Dufur** is incredibly proud of her grandson and of the YMCA program for what it did for **Jeremy's** education.

4. **Jeremy Jones**

Jeremy Jones spoke to the committee and he spoke highly of **Mr. Everett** and the preschool program he attended, friends he made, and the four values taught to him by the YMCA; honesty, responsibility, respect and caring. He was taught manners, and he expressed gratitude for the YMCA program.

5. **Ms. Ashlee McKinney**

Ms. McKinney said she was a young mother who, without community programs, would not be where she is today. At age 14 she got pregnant and the father chose not to be an active participant in their lives. She decided to stay in school. She attended a private school, formerly known as

Booth, and she was given the opportunity to continue her education as well as spend time at school with her daughter. She attended Booth for one year and when her daughter was three months old, she went back to a regular school. She contacted the YMCA Children's Village which was close by and was able then to attend Boise High School and maintained a 3.0 grade average. During her senior year she also took night classes at BSU's Center for Workforce Training and got her certified nursing assistant certification. She graduated from high school in 2005 and has finished two semesters at BSU pursuing a nursing degree. She believes that early preschool education is important because it teaches young children how to perform better in school. Single household families like herself do not have the resources to stay at home to work with their children. In her opinion education is the most important thing a person can have in order to support themselves and their family. She expressed thankfulness for the YMCA program and many others where children are taught when parents must work. The YMCA preschool approach is educational and is called "High Scope." It is focused on a plan-due review sequence which helps with development and is recognized by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development and prepares children for school readiness. She said that these types of programs have allowed her to accomplish her goals, of value to her as well as to society.

6. Mr. Kerry Thomas

Mr. Thomas introduced his son **Nigel Thomas**, age 12. He said he was extremely proud of his son. **Nigel Thomas** started participating in the YMCA preschool program at age 2 when the family found themselves in circumstances where they needed help with their young son. **Mr. Thomas** said that his son is now in seventh grade and is a very successful student with a bright future ahead. He attributes this to **Nigel's** early learning opportunities at the YMCA preschool program. **Mr. Thomas** expressed gratitude for the excellent educational preschool YMCA program and also for the encouragement and support given to him as a father which allowed him to play a more active role in his son's life.

7. Ms. Beth Woodruff

Ms. Woodruff is with the Basin School District. She believes that state government has driven this need for ECE. There is great pressure on schools to meet standards and the standards are not ambiguous. With limited funding, a school wants its program to be the most effective for the least amount of money. This is the push behind preschool. High quality means having highly trained teachers and a program five days per week. The Basin School District only runs three half-days per week. The District's ECE could be even more successful but concessions had to be made. Teaching is done by teachers who are not certified, but they are very well trained. An excellent program has resulted. There are 36 kids in the program at a cost of \$60,000 per year (\$1,667 per year per student). This program was started with an Albertson's grant. She added that there is a lot of parent volunteer help in this program as well. The District works with special needs kids who are three and four-years-old. The next tier is four-year-olds who will enter kindergarten, and if space allows, three-year olds are entered into the program. The District gets federal funds for the special needs children, between \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year for special education total, **not** per student. She noted an increase in the severity of the disabilities in children, including children not

communicating or not potty trained and many autistic children.

Ms. Woodruff wanted to be very clear that first, the preschool is not the only intervention the District has done. The District has high quality teaching all the way through, so it is not seeing child achievement plummet once entering school. Second, her elementary school usually has about 15 to 20 children on IEP's and maybe 80% are learning disabled children. This has had a huge impact on the way the District teaches the pre-literacy and the amount of kids getting federal funding. The kids in special education are far more severe than they used to be.

8. Mr. Michael McEvoy

Mr. McEvoy, from Middleton, Idaho, agreed that ECE was very important. He questioned where is the best place to receive ECE. He expressed concern about the focus on preschool and where it takes focus away from. We talk about excellence and what it provides, but if there are 13 years currently of excellence, why is another year of "excellence" necessary? He thinks the answer is very clear: "We have not achieved excellence in the 13 years we currently are dealing with; if it were excellent, it would be adequate. Fourteen years of mediocre will not."

9. Mr. Greg Satz

Mr. Satz is currently the chairperson for the childhood subcommittee of the YMCA Board. His background is with Cisco Systems and technology. He emphasized how much the internet is a part of everyone's life and he shared that children around the world use the internet, having many of the benefits that children do in the U.S., which is leveling the playing field. Jobs that used to be done in the U.S. are now outsourced to China and India, including his own past Cisco job. Part of what the U.S. must deal with in the next several generations is how does the U.S. stay competitive? He urged the committee to think ahead and to be cognizant, keeping in mind that minimum standards in our education system will not allow us to remain competitive. How will these students cope in the future workforce coming from a randomized setting into a very sophisticated technology world that we are very rapidly becoming? He encouraged the committee to think ahead with regard to ECE and to be prepared.

Committee Discussion

Senator Gannon made several observations: (1) at a minimum, the committee needs to make a recommendation that the school age participation be lowered to four years old in order to legalize those programs that address the federally funded programs that are restricting the peer-group students from attending; and (2) the immediate question after that is, would any restrictions need to be put on any of these programs that may come forward from private/public cooperative efforts, such as being limited to special needs children and some need-based requirements.

Senator Schroeder agreed with **Senator Gannon's** observations as well as **Representative Barraclough's** idea of lowering the age to four years to concur with the reality that Idaho has some local districts who are already using local funds for pre-K programs. He suggested that perhaps

local districts could be given the ability to use their M&O overrides or other moneys to have pre-K programs and to design them any way they want on the local level. The other issue he sees is designing some kind of program at the state level. If there is state money involved these two issues need to be divorced. The committee might make some recommendation if money is available.

Representative Rusche stated that he would like to see the existing activities be legalized, and to possibly reinforce the PAT program. He also would like to develop and articulate a vision of what Idaho wants to do with ECE. He envisions involving many more stakeholders. The Coordinating Council is in place and some of the players are there, but they have not developed a plan. He thinks there should be a process in place for Idaho to accomplish that.

Senator Gannon affirmed that there are many models to consider. The question becomes what would be the appropriate group to come up with the best fit for Idaho.

Senator Corder agreed that the task force needs to make a firm recommendation to lower the age to four. The second recommendation would be who ought to make the determination about which next steps to take and what programs to focus on.

Senator Gannon asked **Ms. Kempthorne** if she had any suggestions. She answered that she is excited that the task force is willing to address these issues. As far as a plan, she said that the Early Care and Learning Task Force has the beginnings of a plan. Its plan is not as broad as is being discussed, but it could be a starting point. That could be broadened to include policymakers and the education people. **Senator Gannon** asked whether this task force could recommend to the Governor that the Early Care and Learning Task Force perform that function. **Ms. Kempthorne** answered that the Governor probably could ask it to do that, but it would have to stick with its funding plan and follow through with the implementation.

Senator Burkett stated that, in law, this planning activity could begin with an appropriation to fund staff for the planning process, since the Coordinating Council currently is made up of volunteers. If this task force thinks this is important, then perhaps instructions from the legislature, as well as staff support, may be necessary to develop a plan and to determine what funding would be required. **Ms. Kempthorne** clarified that the Coordinating Council is made up mostly of volunteers with some staff support. The members of the Early Care and Learning Task Force have paid staff and a paid executive director.

Senator Richardson reiterated that he thinks there needs to be a clearinghouse somewhere with some authority to make decisions. He feels very strongly that pre-K should be a volunteer program. He believes that parents should be rewarded for preparing their children for school readiness.

Senator Corder stated that there are 36 names on the current Coordinating Council and it might be very difficult for a group that size to come up with a plan. The first recommendation could be made to the legislature about lowering the age to four. He suggested that this task force appoint a subcommittee to come up with recommendations. The presenters at this meeting might comprise such a subcommittee since they represent such a broad spectrum. **Senator Gannon** said he was not

sure if this task force could appoint a committee, but it could recommend to leadership that a subcommittee be formed.

Senator Richardson asked what lowering the age to four meant, requesting a more definitive answer. **Senator Schroeder** answered that currently the law provides that the children who are allowed into schools are between the ages of 5 and 21, with the exception of federally funded programs. According to state law, a normal four-year-old cannot be attending classes in a school. The proposal is to lower the permitted school age to four years. He said the legislation would not mandate pre-K or require funding. The proposal would allow school districts to use local public funds raised through M&O overrides and/or private funding to pay for pre-K programs.

Senator Burkett said that the core potential difficulty of getting legislation through the legislature is that every legislator may interpret it differently. Providing a definition is critical. If this task force is behind the legislation, then it might pass. He sponsored a bill on this, last session. **Senator Corder** thinks that the definition could be the task of a subcommittee which could develop recommendations. **Senator Gannon** said that the first step would be to recommended lowering the age to four and allow local programs to be developed strictly on a volunteer basis. He added that there has been payback for school districts from early childhood intervention. Districts are saving money at the 3rd grade level by not having to do remedial teaching through special education.

Representative Shirley expressed concern about governance, asking at what level would there be a controlling agency. He wondered if the Board of Education should not be involved, especially if control over pre-K is given to the school districts. **Senator Gannon** believes that another body needs to be asked to bring recommendations back to this task force regarding what governance model might best fit Idaho. **Senator Schroeder** asked what is the active involvement, if any, with the State Board of Education with respect to oversight of the existing pre-K programs. **Senator Corder** said he had no problem with the State Board of Education being the pre-K oversight authority, with local control.

Representative Rusche said that school districts go down to age three, but that early learning encompasses birth to 36 months starting in the home or with child care providers where the state would like to see excellence improve. He expressed concern with focusing strictly on schools and not involving all the rest of society in the early education process. A governance structure could be housed within the Board of Education or Department of Education, but it clearly needs to involve many more stakeholders. In response to a question from **Senator Schroeder** regarding state level oversight for those private pre-K programs, **Representative Rusche** responded that he did not know, adding that it would depend upon the vision of early education for the state. He could foresee an early learning entity that could provide a supportive mode for both PAT as well as for unregulated child care providers by improving their professionalism without adding regulation. On the other hand, in order to ensure that the purchasers of child care services know what they are getting, performance indicators could be part of the developed vision.

Senator Schroeder expressed concern about all the years he has spent trying to lower the age to four. He is worried that other issues may jeopardize the state taking even that very first important

step. **Senator Gannon** asked if that would be a function of the recommendations coming forth? **Senator Schroeder** said that this task force has ten legislators charged with the responsibility for coming up with something. He questioned whether identifying another group of people and asking *them* to make recommendations back to this task force was the correct thing to do. Perhaps a subcommittee could be formed, but since this is a legislative process, this task force should remain visible in the process.

Representative Kemp asked if this task force might come up with some recommendations today and perhaps form a subcommittee to follow through to draft legislation. **Senator Gannon** answered that it is under the purview of this task force to (a) make a recommendation to support the age issue with an appropriate statement of purpose to include what has generally been agreed upon and, (b) recommend that leadership allow this task force to continue next year with the authority to make recommendations on structure, governance, etc.

Motion

Senator Schroeder moved that a subcommittee be formed, made up of several legislators from this task force and other appropriate stakeholders, to formulate and agree on recommendations for consideration at the task force's next meeting. The motion was seconded by Senator Corder.

Representative Kemp asked **Senator Schroeder** if his motion would preclude this task force from talking about what their potential recommendations to the subcommittee would be. **Senator Schroeder** answered that it was his intent that this task force could have continued discussion as long as the cochairs permitted. **Representative Kemp** said she supported the motion so long as discussion continued on what the task force's recommendations might be, based on data presented at this meeting, allowing a subcommittee to build on what this task force has prioritized as important.

Senator Burkett stated that he thought this was a good process, but he wanted assurance that a subcommittee would involve those individuals in attendance at this meeting and allow them to also develop further recommendations now they have heard all the discussion. He also suggested inviting other skilled people around the state to present their possible recommendations. He would like to see more people get involved and provide specific recommendations to this task force.

Senator Gannon called for a vote on the above motion and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Senator Schroeder asked **Senator Burkett** to discuss the sideboards on his bill last session to lower the age limit to four. **Senator Burkett** stated that SB1344 basically took a bill that had been previously proposed in prior years which lowered the permissible school age to four. The sideboards were that there would be no educational support program dollars spent on those programs, that no school district would be required to have a program, that no child would be required to enroll (strictly voluntary by school district and child), that there was no state funding,

and that starting a program would not eliminate the requirement that a kindergarten child had to be age five. **Senator Schroeder** commented that the law requires kids in school to have immunizations. If the state knowingly allowed an illegal school to exist, Idaho may be liable if a child were hurt, injured seriously or killed. **Senator Gannon** asked whether such liability would differ from that already existing with the federally funded program. **Senator Schroeder** did not know and suggested these questions should be part of further discussions.

Senator Gannon said that the cutoff date needs to be defined for the four-year-old, just as with five and six-year-olds. **Senator Schroeder** said there has now been a meeting of the minds, with better understanding of not being mandatory, etc.

Motion

Representative Rusche moved that the committee recommend that Legislative Services draft a bill similar to SB1344 to allow school districts permissively and voluntarily to serve four-year-olds. **Senator Schroeder** seconded the motion and asked permission of the maker of the motion to amend the motion to include that all members of this task force and members of the standing education committees who wish to co-sponsor that legislation could do so. **Representative Rusche** agreed to amending his motion accordingly.

Senator Richardson stated that he would like to see the draft legislation sent out to all task force members so that they could better see exactly what is before them, with comments or agreement, before committing to the proposal. **Senator Gannon** clarified that the motion was strictly to have a proposal drafted, with the draft to be presented to the task force at its next meeting.

Senator Burkett spoke to the motion by stating that some of the language in SB1344 had potential to create a problem, suggesting that language might be: “that no state education support program funds appropriated pursuant to chapter 10, title 33, Idaho Code, shall be allocated to support such services.” He said either the language could be slightly different or, at least, the language could be explained. He personally did not have a huge problem with that language. If the state does ever provide funds, either for pilot projects or pre-K, the funding could go through some mechanism other than chapter 10, title 33, Idaho Code. A few states send state funds out to pre-K through a funding formula, but most states have other mechanisms to fund pre-K since pre-K is distinctly different than K-12. He said that if Idaho decides to fund pre-K, it should not be in competition with K-12. In response to a question from **Senator Gannon**, **Senator Burkett** agreed that funding issues and language to support that would need to be included in any future iterations *if* there were a more formal system.

Senator Schroeder stated that if it is even hinted that at some time in the future funding might be implied by lowering the school age, the bill would not pass. **Senator Burkett** said that by passing this legislation, the hope would be to free up school districts to the point where they could make a discretionary decision to establish pre-K in order to save remediation and special needs dollars. If so, the school districts would need discretion to use chapter 10, title 33 funds for pre-K. **Senator Schroeder** clarified that his intent was to allow districts to use moneys they raise locally from

M&O overrides, etc., to start pre-K programs. That was not included in his motion, but the school districts could come up with the money from private funds or by passing a local override levy, if they wanted to. This draft legislation will say that **no** state funding would go for pre-K education and would simply lower the age to four in order to remove the liability for schools that are currently operating. He is aware that there are schools out there using local tax dollars to run pre-K programs. Whether the committee wants to address that is another question.

Senator Gannon asked if, in the absence of any wording to that effect, would school districts be precluded from using override dollars? **Representative Rusche** asked if override dollars were chapter 10, title 33 dollars? **Senator Gannon** suggested that this discussion should be addressed later, after a bill has been drafted and after the Attorney General's office looked at it. **Senator Burkett** asked if it was the desire of this task force to have the sideboard read something to the effect that pre-K enrollment would not generate additional state funds for a school district or that a school district would receive no funds for pre-K from the state as opposed to directly referencing chapter 10, title 33.

Senator Gannon called for a vote on the above motion for Legislative Services to draft a bill similar to SB1344 to allow school districts permissively and voluntarily to serve four-year-olds, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Representative Kemp shared two ideas based on discussions during this meeting: (1) the mandatory child care licensing process that would include standards and a rating system, and (2) given the comments on the success of PAT, whether this task force might want to make a recommendation to the respective legislative committees regarding additional funding for the PAT program.

Senator Gannon commented that these private child care facilities generally fall into three categories, depending on the number of children attending. There was a brief discussion on licensing of child care facilities and **Karen Mason** stated there is no state licensing or inspections for facilities serving a small number of children, and no criminal background checks, adding that there is no statutory language to cover enforcement.

Senator Schroeder asked whether dealing with child care centers was a duty of this task force. **Representative Kemp** said that given that ECE is not just school-based delivery programs, a mixed delivery system should include an education component, not just the play and health care component, for children from birth to five years of age.

Senator Richardson said that the PAT program appears to him to be a very important program, but wondered about this task force taking a stance on asking for more PAT funding when there are so many other worthy programs.

Senator Gannon stated that the input from the stakeholders is needed to define the issue of whether there are problems with the child care licensing process in Idaho. **Representative Kemp** expressed hope that this task force would not lose sight of the licensing issue, believing it to be a

very important education domain issue. Ad hoc member **Becky Young** commented that she, as a parent, thinks the regulations for child care are important and suggested that looking at special requirements for early childhood development centers could be tied to the mission statement for early childhood development for Idaho. She suggested that this issue might be addressed in a mission statement.

Senator Gannon asked anyone desiring to be on the subcommittee to contact Paige Alan Parker or Maureen Ingram in Legislative Services by the next day. He also invited other stakeholders including those who had not attended this meeting to participate on the subcommittee. **Senator Gannon** announced that the work of that subcommittee will dictate when the next meeting of this task force will be.

Senator Burkett expressed interest in hearing a presentation from Head Start at the next task force meeting since there were many pros and cons discussed at this meeting about that program. He also suggested hearing from people who are doing things in the state right now. He asked for additional information about what is happening in Idaho City, an ongoing program in the Lakeland School District and Meridian's full-day program that supposedly only costs \$200 per month, per child. **Mr. Jim Everett** (YMCA) suggested that he could share information with the task force about public/private partnerships; BYU Idaho and other Idaho post-secondary institutions who offer blended teaching certificates for ECE could also present to the task force. **Senator Burkett** added that ad hoc member **Ray Flachbart** had previously offered to pay for a national speaker from the business community to address the task force.

Senator Gannon announced that the task force would be informed as to a future meeting date after the cochairmen had appointed the subcommittee. The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m.