

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 23, 2012

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Goedde, Vice Chairman Mortimer, Senators Andreason, Pearce, Fulcher, Winder, Toryanski, and LeFavour

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Malepeai

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies, and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

MINUTES: **Chairman Goedde** called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM and asked the secretary to take a silent roll.

Let the record reflect that **Chairman Goedde** acknowledged the early arrival of **Senator Fulcher** and the excused absence of **Senator Malepeai**. The agenda will be reordered, **RS 21332C1**, which is a concurrent resolution acknowledging Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) and its achievements over the last decade. He is looking for unanimous consent to send that to Judiciary Rules for printing; without objection that will be done.

PRESENTATION: **Chairman Goedde** welcomed **Garry Lough**, Idaho Education Network to introduce **Rick Berrett**, History teacher, and **Misty Berrett**, Business Education teacher, both from South Freemont High School. They will demonstrate to the committee the work they are doing with their students in a blended learning format.

Mr. Berrett said with computers and portals, while the distance is 300 miles away, we can communicate face to face about the educational matters. **Mr. and Mrs. Berrett** both teach their subject matter as a blended course with approximately 60 to 70 percent being an online format. The courses are designed to be either online or stand alone.

Through video and examples they showed the committee what students see in their blended classrooms. Students can log in to the portal anywhere that internet service is available. The learning program to teach students how to "do" online learning is called BrainHoney. With this program students gain the skills necessary to move in and out of online blended learning.

In a blended class, the teacher is able to observe and interact with the students that are attending the class remotely. They can see the students' computer screen at all times and can see what they are learning. There is online discussion boards where students converse with one another regarding a certain topic or to rely on each other as a study group.

Mr. Berrett said he can track what curriculum he is teaching better and can better measure it to the state's requirement. Online has helped him to be a more thorough teacher.

They concluded their presentation demonstrating the online history book that students use. **Mr. Berrett** mentioned that it does take a bit more time to set the book up, however, it is really worth the effort. He then asked if there were questions from the committee.

QUESTIONS: **Senator Winder** asked what percentage of school students are taking online blended learning. **Mr. Berrett** replied approximately 15-20% of the students. The only thing that is holding them back is the lack of computer access. **Senator Winder** then asked if his school requested for the first installments of one to one devices. **Mr. Berrett** said yes.

H 426: **Chairman Goedde** welcomed **Representative Thayn** to the podium. **Representative Thayn** introduced his wife and his daughter, **Carly**, to the committee. He stated that **Carly** would be testifying for this bill from a student's point of view. **Representative Thayn** said when writing this bill he wanted to benefit everyone (students, teachers and taxpayers) as best as possible. He was wondering how some students were able to obtain college credits while they were taking a full class load in High School. What he found is that many take overload classes, which are online classes in the evenings, weekends, and during breaks. The goal of the bill is to help students graduate high school early and with some college credits.

TESTIMONY: **Carly Thayn**, a senior at Emmett High School, testified in favor of the bill. She spoke to the committee about her experiences with online classes through Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA). She has become a more independent learner with online courses, she knew she had to motivate herself when taking online classes. She used online classes to graduate high school a year early and then begin on her college courses.

QUESTIONS: **Senator LeFavour** asked if she has met the entrance requirements for different colleges and whether or not she felt she could go to any college or just community colleges. **Ms. Thayn** said she has looked at a few of the larger college's requirements but she wants to stay closer to her parents, so to begin her college learning she is wanting to go to a small college.

Representative Thayn then turned the podium over to **Jason Hancock**, State Department of Education, to explain the costs to the state. **Chairman Goedde** noted to the committee that there are a couple of documents in their folder: the revised statement of purpose, and draft not "officially engrossed." When the bill came to the committee it came with the acknowledgment from the House stating there was going to have to be some work on it. The draft not officially engrossed was work that was done with **Mr. Hancock** and **Representative Thayn**. If the bill is going to proceed forward it will have to go to the amending order.

TESTIMONY: **Chairman Goedde** welcomed **Mr. Hancock** to the committee. He said that he will testify in support of this bill and will review the changes that are in the draft. The State Department of Education supports this legislation with some revisions. This is the next logical step to take after establishing the dual credits for those who finish early, which is in **S 1184**. It provides that the state pay for dual credits for students who meet the criteria. The challenge with the program was students ability to move ahead. The "8 in 6" is a boost to the previous program because it helps get the students in a position where they can take advantage of **S 1184**.

Mr. Hancock reviewed the not official engrossed document with the committee. There is language saying the state would pay for college courses, but did not state who was supplying the funding. This document identifies where the sources are and it is from the moneys appropriated to the education support program: the public schools budget. This is statutory apportionment. Redundancy in the bill has been removed and specifying for students who are accelerating they can take the dual credit courses during their 11th and 12th grade years. There is wording in this legislation regarding IDLA's obligation to this program.

The fiscal impact for this program in FY 2013 is zero if IDLA's budgeted appropriation is \$5 million.

QUESTIONS:

Senator LeFavour asked **Mr. Hancock** about the Governor's recommendation for IDLA's funding. **Mr. Hancock** replied it is about \$1 million for FY 2013.

Senator Pearce asked if there were bills coming out of JFAC with some numbers for IDLA? **Mr. Hancock** replied JFAC has not set that budget yet. He thinks there is some significant interest and discussion about the need to provide a minimum funding level for IDLA. **Senator Pearce** then asked what are the state's savings the way this program will be implemented. Will it save the state any money?

Mr. Hancock said this program will save money in the long haul but it doesn't necessarily at the front end save money. It will be about three or four years before a savings is seen. He doesn't see much activity in this program. Due to the timing of the implementation of this project many current juniors and seniors will not qualify. Those students in the lower grades have a chance to accelerate. If they have the ambition they can get themselves in a position for the dual credits.

Mr. Hancock continued to outline the changes stating that there were some concerns that were raised with wording so those were better defined. Finally, the definition of a "normal school" is defined as the State Board of Education defines a day.

TESTIMONY:

Briana LeClaire, Executive Director, Idaho Freedom Foundation (IFF), testified in favor of the bill. They believe that students and families should have more control over the schooling destinies. This bill adds to the body of the school choices that are available. It allows children to accelerate through their required education with the support of their family and their community. Parents that are paying for college would save money due to the short amount of time it would take for their children to complete college. Finally, it is the funding mechanism for successful completion. If the students fails to complete the class with a C or better, the parents will have to cover those expenses. This bill has incentives for student learning and this is public policy the IFF would like to encourage.

Bert Marley, Idaho Education Association (IEA), likes the idea of saving families money. But as they reviewed the presentation in the House, IEA has some concerns. He is not here to testify against the bill. There are some questions on the fiscal statement and what the costs are to parents. If the costs are too high only affluent families will be able to afford this program. This money is coming out of general funds, so what is going to be given up to put this plan into work. IEA understands how the funding helps families but not how it helps the state save money. They make the savings at the detriment of higher education.

Senator Pearce asked **Mr. Marley** why he didn't think a student getting out of high school early would save the state money? **Mr. Marley** said he didn't think the savings were that significant. To get the overload classes done would cost at least \$4,800. He really has more questions about 8 in 6 than he has answers. He stressed again that IEA is not opposed to this, they would just like the committee to know that we have concerns.

Janet Orndorff, Trustee with the Boise School District. The biggest question from the District is what is the ten percent. Being restricted to ten percent of the school's population, how will that be chosen if greater than ten percent want to take advantage of this opportunity? Are there any numbers as to how many students are already doing this? The \$2.5 million that is spent on the program is only for the ten percent and only for those that fall in that category. If there is an additional \$2.5 million available could that money go into the public education budget and then all students in Idaho could benefit.

Chairman Goedde welcomed **Representative Thayn** back to the podium to close his presentation. **Representative Thayn** said there are some programs for the gifted and talented and there is money for the struggling kids. Now this would be a program for the exceptional student. There are currently over 10,000 overload classes out of the 17,000 from IDLA that are taken in the summer.

Chairman Goedde excused himself from committee and turned the gavel over to **Vice Chairman Mortimer**.

Representative Thayn said one of the reasons he wrote this legislation for this program, is some students really know the system because their parents know the system and are doing this already. His concern are the students who do not know the system and are disadvantaged economically; thereby they can take advantage of the opportunity. IDLA has already discussed eight courses that they could acquire scholarships for students at the cost of \$225. The State Board of Education has the goal of 60 percent of the students take secondary education and using the 8 in 6 program reduces the cost to the state in accomplishing that goal. At this time **Representative Thayn** asked for questions.

Senator Toryanski asked if the accelerated students would physically be showing up for school for the full six years. **Representative Thayn** said they have a choice. They can do the classes at home or at school. **Senator Toryanski** said he has watched the programs that in sensitize parents to encourage their children to leave high school early. That concerns him because they are only a kid once and they can only do the high school activities once. Why the hurry to get out of school? He continued by asking if there are more than ten percent in a school that are interested in the program, how are the participants selected? **Representative Thayn** said he picked ten percent to get some budgeting figures. The preference is given to the students that successfully completed at least one online course prior to this program. The students are going to have to agree to take a full course load. Currently, there is not the capacity in the system to offer to more than ten percent of the students. He responded to the high school activities by saying this bill does not require that the student leaves high school. They can do all the activities they want. His biggest concern is for those students that can't afford to go to college. This gives them a choice.

Vice Chairman Mortimer said after discussion with **Chairman Goedde** it is recommended that this bill be held and addressed on Monday. **Ann Stephens** from the Idaho Professional Technical Program presentation will be rescheduled.

ADJOURN:

Vice Chairman Mortimer adjourned the committee at 4:16 PM.

Senator Goedde
Chairman

LeAnn South
Secretary