

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, January 31, 2013

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Goedde, Vice Chairman Mortimer, Senators Pearce, Fulcher, Nonini, Thayn, Patrick, Durst and Buckner-Webb

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:**

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

CONVENED: **Chairman Goedde** called the Education Committee to order at 3:08 p.m., and a silent roll was taken. He announced that the committee would hear a presentation on Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and introduced Luci Willits.

PRESENTATION: **Luci Willits**, State Department of Education (SDE), opened with an outline of her presentation: first, the process by which the SDE adopts standards in the state and the history of adopting those standards; second, a presentation by Nick Smith on professional development – what has been done to date and what the SDE hopes to accomplish in the next budget year; and finally, a presentation by Dr. Miller concerning the new Idaho Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) and how it will look to students and teachers under the new standards.

Senator Pearce asked Ms. Willits a clarifying question concerning the difference between CCSS and "end of course" (EOC) assessments, and whether EOCs are being replaced. **Ms. Willits** replied that standards are the fundamental content that we teach to students, and an EOC assessment would measure those standards. Districts could continue to have EOC assessment on courses; the standards do not replace EOC assessments. **Senator Pearce** recalled that in prior sessions, EOCs were being utilized, and asked if they had been eliminated as a result of the 2012 propositions. **Ms. Willits** replied no, EOCs are still being used, for example, in science where an EOC would be more appropriate than ISAT. EOCs are separate from any discussion of CCSS or the propositions. **Dr. Carrissa Miller**, SDE, added that options exist in Smarter Balance to develop and use EOCs in an alternate way. She explained that EOCs are simply a different form of measure. **Senator Pearce** noted that the Boise school district has developed a lot of EOCs, and asked if the SDE was going encourage them. **Ms. Willits** replied that yes, Boise has a fully developed EOC assessment program. She again stressed that EOCs are a choice for a district to use to ensure that the material has been taught. **Ms. Willits** continued that the SDE is developing items that a district could use as an option, not a requirement. Changes are occurring with science, because the SDE wants students to be able to pass a science test before graduating high school, and believes an EOC assessment is better than the 10th grade ISAT assessment for science. **Senator Pearce** asked if the EOC assessment in science had been set out in rule, or was it simply a policy of the SDE, or did it apply to other areas of study as well. **Ms. Willits** replied that the SDE had focused its resources in science, it is not yet a rule, but the SDE may work toward a rule in 2017.

Ms. Willits began her presentation with a definition of standards: it is content; it is what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level. Before the 1990s, there was no continuity, no curricular alignment, and states did not always have achievement standards. The Idaho Achievement Standards were developed in the 1990s to ensure that students in "District A" were mastering the same information and knowledge as students in "District B." Idaho developed the ISAT in 2001 to measure these achievement standards at the end of each grade level and to track student progress. Standards exist for almost every subject and for every grade. They have been developed by Idaho Educators together with consultants on best practices, and they are reviewed on a rotating basis so that each standard is reviewed by the SDE and the legislature every five years. Every other state does the same thing. Individual districts have the option to raise the standard, but they cannot go below the state standard. Because each state handled this process individually, it was impossible to compare data or to look at data as a nation. Idaho, along with other states began to recognize that (1) too few students go on to postsecondary education and earn a degree or certificate, (2) of those who do go on to postsecondary education 41 percent need remediation once they get there; and (3) Idaho students continue to lag behind their peers in other countries on international assessments.

Ms. Willits explained that in 2009, Idaho partnered with other states to develop more rigorous standards in mathematics and English language arts that would achieve two goals: that every high school student would be college- and career-ready, and that their education would be comparable with any other country in the world. These have become known as the Common Core State Standards. Colleges, universities, business leaders, stakeholders, and the public attended presentations and provided feedback. The SDE also hosted teachers from across the state to evaluate and compare the CCSS to current Idaho content standards. Results showed strong correlation between CCSS and current Idaho standards: 70 percent match, but generally, the current standards weren't as high, particularly in math. Fortunately, Idaho has the Idaho Math Initiative and the CCSS is aligned with that initiative, and has trained 85 percent of teachers on teaching math with multiple strategies. Overall, the new standards were fewer, clearer and higher (deeper). In 2010 and 2011, the SDE and the Idaho legislature adopted CCSS. These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within K-12 grades so they will graduate from high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college or professional-technical courses and in the workforce. They also are aligned with college and workforce expectations; are more focused and coherent; include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order skills; build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards; are benchmarked against standards in other top-performing countries; and are built on extensive research. **Ms. Willits** showed various examples from math and English CCSS in her powerpoint presentation, which is attached and incorporated by reference.

Ms. Willits emphasized that, while Idaho has adopted these standards, the state does not dictate curriculum. Locally elected school boards will be responsible for adopting textbooks and other curricular materials. The SDE will rate various textbooks for districts, help them with the selection process, but do not dictate what they will use. School districts also can adopt additional standards. Ongoing professional development has been in place since 2011 to train teachers and administrators in adopting the CCSS. School year 2013-14 is the first year the CCSS will be implemented in the classroom, and in 2014-2015, a new ISAT will be delivered based on CCSS.

Senator Patrick asked about changes that the students would experience. **Ms. Willits** replied that the greatest changes will be in math because the standards are higher than those previously. However, she reminded the committee that at any time, the state has the authority to alter standards. Idaho will learn, be flexible and stay committed. At this point, the standards need time to percolate. Every five years the standards each will go through review rotation. She felt that it was proper to embrace these standards and go forward with optimism. **Senator Buckner-Webb** commented that she had attended a discussion on CCSS. What had captivated her were the teacher's focus on the depth within math and English, and the fact that many answers to a question exist, not just one. **Ms. Willits** agreed. The CCSS teaches creativity and critical thinking skills and offers more than one path to the right answer. **Chairman Goedde** voiced his perception that the teachers do not have a problem with the standards on a grade by grade basis; the real issue is the higher thinking skills that will require teachers to change how they teach. **Ms. Willits** agreed: "that is the ultimate goal."

Senators Durst asked about how the standards work in a classroom with differentiated students. **Ms. Willits** replied that professional development is one of the keys. First, teach the standards, and then teach strategies for differentiation within the classroom. **Chairman Goedde** asked the likelihood of implementing the standards on schedule. **Ms. Willits** said that a lot of work has been done, and the awareness of CCSS among teachers is high, as well as the anxiety because it is different. Idaho was wise in teaching these standards before they were implemented, but professional development needs to continue. The SDE is committed to the time line and the legislature can aid the process in funding professional development. **Senator Thayne** asked if the teachers are going to be ready. **Ms. Willis** replied yes, as long as proper resources are available. Some larger districts are ahead of smaller districts, though not yet fully competent. **Senator Thayne** asked if the teachers were feeling threatened or worrying about repercussions if the results are disappointing. **Ms. Willits** stated that she wanted to be perfectly clear: "We will see a dramatic dive in test scores when students are first tested, and that's okay. It's not anybody's fault, not the teachers' fault, not the students' fault: it is a higher standard...and it is the right thing to do." That students will struggle at first must be discussed with administrators, teachers, parents, students and the general public. Kentucky tested their students, and scores decreased 20 percent. **Ms. Willits** said that Idaho could expect at least that much of a decrease and maybe more. But the teachers seem to like the CCSS because it is something they can do well and creatively, and when shown some of the test questions, the teachers gave overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Continuing the discussion of standards versus curriculum, **Senator Nonini** asked if districts are required to meet some standard or guidelines. **Ms. Willits** replied that the SDE reviews course materials and grades them according to the percentage that they match CCSS, knowing that there is not 100 percent match anywhere for these textbooks. Textbook publishers do not write them to align with Idaho standards. The SDE provides the list; if a district does not like the list, they can petition the SDE for a waiver. **Senator Nonini** asked if the SDE would always grant the waiver. **Liz Glasnick**, SDE, stated that several requests had been put forth in the preceding months and all were granted. **Chairman Goedde** asked her to explain the process by which a textbook is adopted or graded. **Ms. Glasnick** replied that nineteen people serve on the nominating committee, including superintendents, teachers, parents, and content specialists to vet course materials. The materials are reviewed in June and then placed on an adoption guide. **Senator Fulcher** noted that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program received criticism that it forced teachers to "pull up" lower performers to the detriment of higher performers. He asked if a similar pattern might develop with CCSS. **Ms. Willits** responded that all students deserve high standards, and Idaho is particularly

fortunate to have the Five Star Rating system which holds districts accountable for growth, not proficiency. This accountability system, where students are measured on growth, ensures that regardless of level of proficiency, a student will be judged on growth. The problem with NCLB is that it addressed children who were behind in their level, but did not address those who were already proficient. **Chairman Goedde** stated that in his district in Coeur d'Alene, reading scores are two grades ahead, and keeping them two grades ahead doesn't mean anything from a growth standpoint. **Ms. Willits** explained that the SDE provides a materials guideline which helps align to the standards because if the materials are not aligned, students with not meet the standards and grow. **Senator Nonini** asked if a problem still exists with textbook alignment. **Ms. Willits** responded that no textbook is yet fully aligned to the standards, and the districts are seeking other materials to fill the gap. She believes that textbook alignment will improve in the future.

Ms. Willits summarized her presentation by reviewing what CCSS means for Idaho. In math and English language arts Idaho now has common standards, and those standards are comparable to other states and to other countries. The content is far more rigorous than in the past; it is aligned to college and work expectations, it allows comparison of student achievement with other states, and it will provide a common scale so that textbooks can be produced for our standards. CCSS will also provide multiple opportunities for professional development. **Chairman Goedde** thanked Ms. Willits for her presentation and introduced Nick Smith.

PRESENTATION: **Nick Smith**, SDE, stated that he would preview what has been done in implementation of CCSS, what kind of professional training, support and resources have been offered, and the vision moving forward. The SDE has focused its efforts in five areas: professional development training, which is the largest portion; communications and publications to inform the public about CCSS; lesson plans, curriculum material development and sharing information with rural areas; building capacity and regional support; and higher education partnership with various groups and higher education.

The SDE has been working since 2011 to prepare teachers and administrators and to provide professional development. They have worked with the Idaho Science, Technology, English and Math (ISTEM) conferences, the Best Practices Institutes, sports and health organizations. Every teacher can truly educate and support the CCSS. The SDE has provided regional implementation training, helping them to build capacity within their districts and to design their own plan to implement the CCSS. They have also worked with districts on corelated assessment literacy, trying to make sure they are prepared for the higher level questioning which will come, workshops with BSU, both state universities and Northwest Inland Writing Project, making sure that teachers are prepared to teach the new English language arts standards and writing components. They have worked with high schools as well.

Communications and publications encompass a large area of focus to help educators see the relationship between the old content standards and the new CCSS, how they differ, and how they are alike. Lesson plans and curricular development are part of Schoolnet, which is an instructional management system. One of the goals is to create content lesson plan materials so that teachers can use it to build lesson plans. In addition, Schoolnet contains 53,000 assessment items that are aligned to CCSS. Schoolnet professional development "in a box" allows educators to take the training, and they can replicate that training in their districts themselves. Building capacity and regional support is continuing in the districts to support Schoolnet. Colleges and universities are working to infuse their teacher preparation programs with both CCSS and Schoolnet to produce teachers and administrators who are ready for the new standards.

Next steps, which depend on budget support, are to focus on professional development in English language arts and mathematics, create and post models for district replication for professional development; train district teams for Idaho curriculum in math – unpacking the standards, discerning the similarities and differences to understand what curriculum and content needs to be adopted. This process is one of the most valuable portions of professional development as teachers dig in to the standards, and understanding them at a deeper level. The current Mathematics for Critical Thinking programs is well aligned implementation of CCSS and sets the stage for digging deeper into the yearly progression of knowledge that students and teachers will face. Moving forward, the SDE hopes to see six regional trainer consultants for English language arts, and six regional trainer consultants for mathematics because ongoing support and follow up will ensure that changes and implementation are on track. These regional consultants will be out in the classrooms giving feedback and instruction to teachers after initial professional development training has been completed. Ongoing support and follow through is the best way to ensure change. Finally, the SDE is partnering organizations and agencies to focus statewide such as Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), colleges and universities. They will look for innovation grants that might be available to help improve upon professional development, curricular materials, etc., to work directly with school districts in implementation. Additional communications and resources will aid teachers and districts in involving the public. They will continue the Master Teacher Unit Planning program which are the lesson plans within Schoolnet that teachers can access to build the bank of tools which match the standards so that a new teacher can access those plans instead of starting from scratch. There being no questions from the committee, **Chairman Goedde** introduced Dr. Carissa Miller.

Dr. Miller began with the background of Smarter Balance, a consortium of 25 states, which was funded by a four-year U.S. Department of Education grant to develop new assessments (tests) that are aligned to the CCSS. The goal of the tests are to (1) provide a rigorous assessment of progress toward "college and career readiness"; (2) provide common cut scores across all consortium states; (3) track both achievement and growth information; (4) be valid, reliable and fair for all students, except for those with significant cognitive disabilities; (5) be administered online; (6) use multiple measures, and to be operational in 2014-15 school year. The importance of the common cut scores among the states will be developed after the first tests have been administered, and will then be determined by the consortium. Idaho currently participates in pilot testing, involving 20,000 students, which calibrates Idaho scores but also gives an opportunity to experience the technology and demonstrate the testing experience. Idaho has shown great cooperation and positive feedback. Next steps will include field tests, and then the operational tests will be given in Spring of the 2014-15 school year. **Chairman Goedde** asked if Idaho has the bandwidth and hardware in our schools to administer the tests at this time. **Dr. Miller** replied that Idaho now has a Technology Readiness Tool (TRT) where schools can put in all their hardware and bandwidth and it is matched up to the minimum specifications that are needed for the test. Results are very good. **Senator Fulcher** noted that in looking at the consortium of states, Idaho is vastly different than Florida, or California or North Dakota, and asked what is the appropriate way to "set the bar" when linking very different states. **Dr. Miller** replied that this question has certainly been raised. The consortium is very committed to not having the standards lowered because a state may worry about its ranking among others states. Once the states agree upon a base level of knowledge that a student should know at the end of a given grade, the test can be administered, a score given, and a ranking set. If a states wishes to prepare its own exit exam, the state may choose a higher or lower standard on their own. **Chairman Goedde** noted that a second consortium exists and asked whether the cut scores will be the same. **Dr. Miller** replied that the second consortium, Partnership for Assessment

of Readiness for College and Careers Consortium (PARCC), consists of some of the states which are not part of Smarter Balance. One of the key differences is that they will not use an adaptive test. Adaptive testing means that if a student answers a question right, the next question will be harder; if the student answers wrong, the next question gets easier. Without that, a student could answer every question wrong, and no information about that student would be known. However, a commitment exists between the two consortia to have comparability.

Dr. Miller then provided slides detailing the content specifications for mathematics and English language arts, such as, "Students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency," and "Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasing complex literary and information texts." She also provided and explained several sample questions. These questions are process oriented, and can take more than one day to complete as the student builds on continuing information which s/he discovers. Dr. Miller's powerpoint presentation and data are attached and incorporated by reference. **Chairman Goedde** thanked Dr. Miller, Ms. Willits, and Mr. Smith for their presentations.

ADJOURNED: Being no further business before the committee, **Chairman Goedde** adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Senator Goedde
Chairman

Elaine Leedy
Secretary