

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 26, 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 3:03 p.m., and a silent roll was taken.

Chairman Goedde announced that the committee would be travelling to Idaho Falls via robot to visit the Compass Academy Magnet School who had presented its innovated project-based approach to education earlier in the session.

PRESENTATION: **Alex Macdonald**, Director of Instructional Technology, State Department of Education (SDE) introduced "Vego" (VGO), a robot the size of a 5-year old child. VGO technology allows interaction between a computer and the robot. For example, it allows a child who, perhaps for health reasons, cannot come to school to interact and participate with his class. Mr. Macdonald showed a short video clip illustrating this point. In the video, a child sat in front of his computer at home. His live image was displayed on the VGO robot which was in the classroom. The robot, in turn, provided live video feed back to the child's computer. The child could actively participate with the class, raise his hand to ask or answer questions, as if he were present in the classroom. The robot runs on WiFi or any 4G network at full speed of approximately two miles per hour, either indoors or outdoors.

Mr. Macdonald then established the live video interaction with VGO in the Compass Academy classroom, where **Matt Bertasso**, Director, invited Chairman Goedde to "drive" the robot around the room to visit various student project groups as they worked on a science-English project involving hydroelectric energy. One student described their online learning platform which, by logging into their computer, showed class schedule, projects, status of assignments, grades, and allowed students to email their instructor. In another part of the classroom, a teacher conducted a 15 minute workshop about bias, the pros and cons of an argument, a concept which would become relevant as the students explored hydroelectric energy and then wrote an essay either in support of or against such energy use.

Chairman Goedde next guided VGO to a six-member student panel which took questions from the committee. Noting that Compass Academy blends subjects, such as English and science into one class, **Chairman Goedde** asked the students how those subjects worked together. They replied that one of the English standards requires learning new vocabulary, in this case, a science vocabulary, and also requires writing in the context of that vocabulary. Another student offered that in one project, the students read a science fiction book about outer space; they learned about the laws of motion, and then wrote an essay. With several groups meeting at once, **Senator Thayn** asked if they had difficulty concentrating due to the noise. The students all agreed that noise was not a problem as long as they concentrated on the conversation of their group. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked their opinion of the differences between Compass Academy and their former traditional high school. The students responded that Compass Academy offered more freedom in learning. In traditional classes, they were told specifically what to do; at Compass Academy, "it's not just memorizing names and dates, but using yourself to figure it out," and ensuring everyone is "on the same page" with resource applications and knows the same thing. Collaboration between the students influences how the project is presented and graded. "You really want that A."

VGO next facilitated an interview between the committee and six teachers. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked them to compare their teaching experience between traditional high school and Compass Academy. One teacher replied that he had been frustrated in the traditional high school setting. He felt as though he were teaching to the lowest common denominator, where fast learners were bored and slow learners still were behind. At Compass he teaches to a higher level. Fast learners can soar with nothing holding them back, and he can spend more time with slower learners. The math teacher said that in traditional schools, she taught drills and practice with occasional story problems. At Compass Academy, the application problem is discussed first so that students understand how math is being applied. Then they work several problems using the same concept. Grading at Compass Academy is 50 percent content, and the remaining 50 percent is a combination of other professional skills, such as collaboration, communication and resource application. Students learn to use language, science and math in the real world.

Vice Chairman Mortimer also asked the teachers to compare teacher preparation. The teachers all agreed that they spent more time on preparation; however, every hour in the classroom was more productive and enjoyable, so they are willing to put in the extra time. The teachers were excited about their projects, and the students were excited as well. **Senator Fulcher** asked about interaction and responses from parents. The teachers replied that parents had concerns at the beginning, but that concern has diminished with time. One teacher said that he felt that education in general was not doing enough to empower parents to help their children. He thinks about ways to help, such a parent workshops. Prior to Compass Academy, he never would have thought along those lines because he had no power to be heard. At Compass Academy, everyone on staff has a voice. The committee thanked the teachers for their comments and their outreach to students, parents and the community.

H 65

Chairman Goedde announced that, due to lingering questions on funding, **H 65** would not be heard until a later date.

S 1098

Chairman Goedde welcomed Robin Nettinga, Executive Director of the Idaho Education Association (IEA) to present **S 1098**. **Ms. Nettinga** stated that **S 1098** represents a compromise between the various stakeholders: the Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA), the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA) and the IEA. The legislation is broken into three parts. Section 1: adds one word "publicly" to the definition of negotiations in § 33-1272. Section 2: (1) requires that all negotiations are held in public and are open to the public, (2) requires all documents exchanged between parties be subject to public disclosure laws, and (3) requires that notices of meetings be posted as early as practicable (24 hours, and on the front page of the district website). Section 3: is an emergency clause to assure that, if approved, the practice of open negotiations will be in place for this year. **Karen Echeverria**, Executive Director of the ISBA, testified that the ISBA supports public negotiations.

MOTION:

Senator Patrick made a motion to send **S 1098** to the Senate floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. Senator Patrick will carry **S 1098** to the floor.

PASSED THE GAVEL:

Chairman Goedde passed the gavel to **Vice Chairman Mortimer** who called Chairman Goedde to the podium to present **S 1087**.

S 1087

Chairman Goedde explained that **S 1087** came as a result testimony by a driver's education teacher at the joint committees' second Listening Session. Currently, a student under the age of 18 must provide proof that he attends school in order to obtain a driver's permit and driver's license. **S 1087** adds a section that requires a statement that the student also is making satisfactory academic progress. The new section does not define academic progress; it is intended the local districts will make that determination themselves, thus accounting for differences between urban and rural districts. Page 2 of the existing section provides for a district to waive the requirement for hardship. The purpose of this legislation to acknowledge that a driver's license is a privilege, not a right, and it may encourage students to more actively participate in their education.

Senators Durst, Buckner-Webb, Patrick, Thayn, Nonini and **Vice Chairman Mortimer** asked several clarifying questions. **Chairman Goedde** responded that the provision would apply to home schooled students by a statement from whomever was providing the home teaching; online courses could be measured by task time on the computer which is regularly tracked; and the provision would not place any additional burden on private schools over public schools. If a student dropped out of high school and later started a General Education Degree program (GED), the provision for academic progress would apply. If a student reached the age of 16 and did not want to go to school, then he would fail to meet the attendance requirements for a driver's license. Districts regularly submit attendance information to the Department of Transportation so that students can obtain permits and licenses. **Chairman Goedde** reminded the committee that the definition of academic progress would be determined by individual districts, just as attendance requirements are determined locally.

MOTION:

Senator Patrick made a motion to send **S 1087** to the Senate floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Mortimer** seconded the motion. In discussion, **Vice Chairman Mortimer** wanted to ensure that this legislation did not place undue burden on the districts or the Department of Transportation. He felt that students should be making academic progress and was comfortable with leaving the determination to the districts. **Senator Fulcher** expressed concern with the impact on private schools and stated that he would not support the bill. **Chairman Goedde** called for a **roll call vote**. **Senators Patrick** and **Durst, Vice Chairman Mortimer** and **Chairman Goedde** voted **aye**. **Senators Pearce, Fulcher, Nonini, Thayn** and **Buckner-Webb** voted **nay**. The motion failed.

**PASSED THE
GAVEL:**

Vice Chairman Mortimer passed the gavel back to Chairman Goedde.

ADJOURNED:

Having no further business before the committee, **Chairman Goedde** adjourned the meeting at 4:11 p.m.

Senator Goedde
Chairman

Elaine Leedy
Secretary