

MINUTES
JOINT MEETING
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, January 27, 2014

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Lincoln Auditorium (WW02)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Goedde, Vice Chairman Mortimer, Senators Pearce, Fulcher, Nonini, Thayne, Patrick and Ward-Engelking

Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman Nielsen, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Bateman, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Horman, Mendive, VanOrden, McDonald, Pence, Kloc and Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Senator Buckner-Webb

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 Joint Senate and House Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:02 p.m., and a silent roll was taken. He explained that the focus of this day's public "listening session" was the Governor's Task Force (Task Force) recommendations, and areas of interest other than Common Core State Standards which previously were covered in depth.

PRESENTATION: **Karen Echeverria**, Executive Director, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA), speaking for the ISBA, the Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA), and Idaho Education Association (IEA), (Associations) stated that the three Associations had met on several occasions to discuss Task Force recommendations and found all three to be in general agreement. **Ms. Echeverria** stressed that the Associations support the recommendations as a package, and do not support breaking the recommendations up and implementing some parts but not others. Some areas will be easier to implement because work is already underway. Others will take more time to assure proper implementation.

In making this presentation, **Ms. Echeverria** explained that the Associations had divided the Task Force recommendations into three categories: (1) those that are currently being addressed by school districts; (2) those they believe can be implemented next year; and (3) those that are ready for input and work to see them succeed. She then discussed the twenty Task Force Recommendations in detail within this framework. Her complete presentation is attached and incorporated by reference.

Senator Thayn questioned the advantage of an enrollment model of funding over average daily attendance (ADA). **Rob Winslow**, Executive Director, IASA, replied that funding needs to be tied in some way to attendance. The enrollment model, or Average Daily Membership (ADM) starts with the number of students in a district and computes the amount of money required to run the district, whether or not all students are in class on a given day. **Senator Nonini** asked about progress toward training trustees. **Ms. Echeverria** replied that approximately 80 percent of school boards have participated in some training over the past four years. Strategic planning is most needed, but the hardest to schedule because it takes a day or more. The private sector is involved. **Senator Patrick** commented that everyone wants the recommendations taken as a whole, but asked what would happen if some did not work out as anticipated. **Ms. Echeverria** replied that time is needed to "put meat on the bones." She is very supportive of the committees being formed to flesh out the details. It may take five years to fully implement the recommendations. Addressing autonomy, **Senator Goedde** said that the State Department of Education (Department) could be of assistance in sorting through the various pieces in Idaho Code to aid in pulling them together. He added that he and Chairman DeMourant have jointly requested funding for the continued task force committees. The Associations agreed that each would be providing members on the committees.

Senator Thayn raised the criticism that the Task Force recommendations had come from the top down and that not many changes have come from the bottom up. **Ms. Echeverria** replied that the Task Force was made up of a very disparate group of legislators, associations, business leaders, and teachers. **Robin Nettinga**, Executive Director, IEA, added that the Task Force contained a large number of parents. **Rob Winslow** said the process was not top down because over 100 topics were considered, and the group kept refining the focus from the bottom up.

Addressing restoration of operational funding, **Chairman Goedde** asked if the Associations would favor designating specific funds for mentoring and segregating health insurance as line items. **Ms. Echeverria, Mr. Winslow and Ms. Nettinga** all strongly supported full restoration of operational funding before any discussions of segregating items had begun.

TESTIMONY:

Ausencio Flores, a citizen, stated that he believed more money needs to be spent on middle and high school education and not on pre-school. **Mr. Flores** noted that the State currently has "first grade," then kindergarten, and now there is discussion of State-funded pre-school. He believes children need to learn naturally through play. Someday, Mr. Flores wants to open his own business, and he will want employees who have learned critical thinking skills which are taught in middle and high school. **Mr. Flores** favors more money for education, but does not want it spent on pre-school education.

Don Keller, speaking as a citizen, but also with Sage International School, asked the Committee to consider how schools are funded and allocated. **Mr. Keller** pointed out the great disparity between per-pupil funding which ranges from a low of \$4,900 to a high of nearly \$18,000. He suggested that Idaho look at the Canadian model which combines state tax funds with property taxes that provides a per-pupil funding level given to each district. Combined with local referendums, districts enjoy a stable funding source that improves their autonomy. **Representative Rubel** asked if any states now do this style of funding. **Mr. Keller** replied with examples of Canadian states.

Mike Vuittonet, speaking as a citizen, but also a school board member in the Joint School District #2 (Meridian), strongly supports all of the Task Force recommendations, particularly the recommendation for a mastery based system. He believes that Idaho's current system, which allows a passing grade of "D" or "C", does not prepare students for the rigors of college. **Mr. Vuittonet** also favors the recommendation for autonomy, He gave an example of a pilot program which has created a vertical strand of feeder schools to one major high school. Principals in nine schools are involved and the project will affect 5,400 students. **Chairman Goedde** agreed with the vertical alignment pilot concept. **Senator Thayne** asked Mr. Vuittonet to define "mastery." **Mr. Vuittonet** replied that mastery means proficiency and understanding of content, and the ability to explain content. Just because a student has a birthday does not mean he is ready to move on. **Senator Patrick** asked about differing skill levels in the same classroom. **Mr. Vuittonet** replied that our school system has become very proficient at remediation, while most students will move forward with higher expectations.

Victoria M. Young, a citizen, believes that standardized systems produce narrowed curriculum and limited learning opportunities. She is concerned that not all districts are ready for Common Core. **Senator Thayne** asked how she thought students were best engaged. **Ms. Young** replied that teacher preparation and mastery is a high priority. She believes operational funding should be restored and would like to see a gap analysis studied on the current standards, rather than changing them. She expressed concern for teacher accountability based on test scores.

Steve Berch, a citizen, stated that "there is a difference between being frugal and being cheap." He believes that Idaho teachers are leaving the state, leaving their districts, or changing professions because the teacher pay scale is too low. He suggested that since education is the largest part of the state budget, cuts in education occur first. He said that children can't wait – every year counts, and that failure to recognize education as an investment will keep Idaho last. **Senator Patrick** commented that he was involved when cuts to education were made, and that K-12 was the very last thing cut after all reserves had been used. It had been difficult to raise taxes during that time period because unemployment was high. **Mr. Berch** replied that any surplus now should be put toward education, not toward corporate tax relief.

Jane Wittmeyer, representing Coalition of Idaho Charter School Families, Inc., said that she agreed with Don Keller's statements. She supports adequate school funding, especially for charter schools.

ADJOURNED: Having no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Goedde** adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Senator Goedde
Co-Chair

Elaine Leedy
Secretary

Representative DeMourdaunt
Co-Chair

Jean Vance
Secretary