

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Monday, February 17, 2014
- TIME:** 9:00 A.M.
- PLACE:** Room EW41
- MEMBERS:** Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman Nielsen, Representative(s) Shepherd, Wills, Bateman, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Horman, Mendive, VanOrden, McDonald, Pence, Kloc, Rubel
- ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None
- GUESTS:** LeAnn Simmons, Idaho Voices for Children; Rod Gramer, Idaho Business for Education; Penni Cyr, IEA; Rob Winslow, IASA; Phil Homer, IASA; Elli Brown, IVC; Robin Nettinga, IEA; Matt Compton, IEA; Jason Hancock, SDE; Tom Luna, SDE; Karen Echeverria, ISBA; Marilyn Whitney, SBOE; Camille Wells, SDE
- Chairman DeMordaunt** called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.
- H 504:** **Rep. Clow** and **Rep. VanOrden** presented **H 504** which will provide leadership premium payments for public school educators. Rep. Clow said the legislation would give local school districts the opportunity to identify teachers serving in a leadership capacity to receive the award. This measure, he said, would satisfy the "Leadership Awards" component of the career ladder recommendation of the Governor's Task Force on Improving Education. Rep. VanOrden explained the specifics of the guidelines for leadership priorities. She also explained the reporting requirements and the information to be collected by the Idaho State Department of Education and presented to the Legislature each year.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Bateman** made a motion to send **H 504** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.
- In response to questions regarding reporting, **Jason Hancock** from the State Department of Education who explained that the word "may" in the legislation grants a general authority to the Department to request information from districts and "shall" requires the Department to report. With the grant of authority to request information the Department will be able to gather the information, they need to provide an accurate report. He stated the word "may" also gives the Department some flexibility to not request reports from districts information they already have, but would still have the ability to get the information they need.
- In response to a question regarding the stipulation allowing for the rulemaking, **Mr. Hancock** stated this legislation also provides a general grant of authority to promulgate rules. He further stated it does not mean the Department has to promulgate rules, but simply that they can if rules are needed.
- In response to questions regarding negotiation and collective bargaining, **Rep. Clow** explained the awards are outside the negotiation process. He further explained school districts make the determination separately and these awards cannot be included as a part of collective bargaining.
- In response to concerns regarding how this legislation fits with the recommended career ladder, **Rep. Clow** explained this is the first piece of the recommendation. **Rep. VanOrden** added there will be separate ways to address the other goals of the recommendations, and gives local school boards flexibility to use a variety of tools to reach those overall goals.

Penny Cyr with the Idaho Education Association, **Rob Winslow**, Executive Director of the Idaho Association of School Administrators, and **Karen Echeverria**, Executive Director of the Idaho School Board Association testified **in support of H 504**. Ms. Cyr stated she supported the concept of career ladders and the efforts of the State to allow teachers to stay in the classroom. Ms. Echeverria stated she supported these leadership premiums and the career ladder concept in conjunction with a 1% base increase in teacher pay.

Tom Luna, Superintendent of Public Instruction, also testified **in favor of H 504**. He emphasized this is just the leadership incentive portion of the overall recommendations. He explained that the other components of teacher evaluation, and student achievement, will also be included in the completed structure, but this is simply a focus on leadership. He further stated the current system does not fairly reward the work of teachers going above and beyond to improve education and assist the students.

In response to questions regarding the implementation of Common Core and its effect on this program, **Mr. Luna** stated there could be an influence in the future on English and math emphasis. However, he stated with the strategic plans districts will have in place, the districts will need to show how they are using the leadership premiums to achieve the goals of their strategic plans. **Chairman DeMordaunt** added, this legislation is providing a tool for board members to focus on certain areas to promote improvement and achievement of goals in the strategic plans, which the districts will be held accountable.

In response to a question regarding what other changes may occur, **Mr. Luna** stated if this is the only change made, there would be no improvement in the overall system. He explained this is simply one part of a larger package.

VOTE ON MOTION:

Motion carried by voice vote. Rep. Clow and Rep. VanOrden will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Rod Gramer, President and CEO of Idaho Business for Education and **LeAnn Simmons**, Executive Director of Idaho Voices for Children, gave a joint presentation on reading literacy to the committee. Mr. Gramer explained that reading is the foundation of all learning. He said a survey of nearly 500 business leaders showed that by 2018, 61% of all jobs in Idaho will require a post-secondary degree. Currently, only 35% of adults in Idaho have a college degree while 35% have a high school diploma or less. He further explained that the survey showed, in five years only 21% of jobs will require a high school diploma or less. He added, in 2013 only 46% of students went on to college in the fall. Mr. Gramer stated Idaho needs more students to go to college for further studies. He explained that 90 schools across the state had less than half of their students score more than 500 on the SAT for reading, which is considered the benchmark for college readiness, while only 11 had more than 50% of their students with a score higher than 500. He said Idaho is currently average in reading proficiency when compared to other states. He said there is general agreement that action needs to be taken, but there is not agreement as to how to move forward. He discussed the goals of the Idaho Campaign for Grade Level Reading which include quality teaching for each child, community-driven efforts, and an outcome-based system. He stated policy makers need to know that a third grade reading proficiency is essential and achievable. Starting early matters, and there is not one right solution or fix-it-all tool. Common Core standards set the bar, but any lasting solution requires a comprehensive approach. Early identification and the participation of families and communities are key factors in success. He stated the best formula for success is assessment, diagnosis, and intervention. Lastly, he explained there must be oversight and accountability including; training and professional development, set standards, monitoring, regular public reports, and an annual Legislative report.

Ms. Simmons concluded the presentation. She gave additional statistics which include that more than 60% of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate. She estimated the cost of illiteracy to businesses and the taxpayers is close to \$200 billion a year. She explained 10.5% of Idahoans are illiterate. As a part of the Idaho Voices for Children, she is working to help broaden this debate by building upon strengths and requiring an evidenced-based focus. She said they want a commitment to child outcomes and closing gaps in results, to ensure quality teaching in every classroom, and promoting community driven efforts and accountability to ensure all districts have the tools they need to address literacy problems. She explained that Idaho needs to focus on improving the outcomes for struggling readers while raising the standards for all of the states children. Ms. Simmons stated Idaho does a good job with screenings and Statute requires intervention. She further stated that there must always be ongoing improvement in any system and the gaps in Idaho's current system need to be addressed. She said Idaho needs to ensure that teachers have access to highly effective reading specialists for those students who need the most intervention. She explained that parents, advocates, teachers, and policy makers alike need to hold each other accountable. She asked the members of the committee to accept the Governor's Task Force recommendations and give early literacy the attention it needs. She stated it is time to evaluate and improve the current system of literacy through identification and intervention.

In response to questions regarding the role Preschools can play in early childhood literacy, **Ms. Simmons** explained that it is an important step for many children in preparing them for school and fostering learning. **Mr. Gramer** also stated that the business community has long supported and promoted preschool as a part of early education to ensure a strong K-3 program.

In response to questions regarding the Idaho Reading Initiative (IRI), **Ms. Simmons** stated the IRI does need to be addressed and is part of the Governor's recommendations. She said a committee needs to get the stakeholders together and address the issues and come up with solutions. **Chairman DeMordaunt** added it is the intent of the Committee to go forward with the recommendations and address the issues with the IRI program.

In response to questions regarding other states that excel in reading and how they had achieved such success, **Mr. Gramer** stated Massachusetts and Florida have shown strong programs and that strength seems to come from strong assessments, individualized intervention, and frequent reassessment.

Jamie Esler, 2014 Teacher of the Year Recipient, addressed the committee. He explained he came to offer an insider's perspective on the current state of public education in Idaho. He stated teachers are a diverse community of passionate, professional, committed, resilient, and resourceful workers. He said he had talked to many of the educators around the state and those discussions had one common theme when looking at ways to improve the quality of public education in Idaho; the public education system is in great need of the Legislature's confidence and support. He showed a video and described the Confluence Project he has established in a collaboration with his high school, universities, and other partners to promote scientific involvement and interaction by allowing students to actively work and engage in field work and analysis. He explained these types of projects rely heavily on outside funding to ensure their sustainability and continuity. He further explained that it takes a great deal of hard work and a considerable amount of time to get external support, which leaves less time to focus on other aspects of teaching. He said Idaho must be willing to invest in and support programs that encourage such positive experiences and development. He also discussed several other areas that he felt were in dire need of help. These areas include increasing class sizes, dwindling building budgets and special education paraprofessionals, and a rise

in the use of supplemental levies to make up for funding gaps. He stated these supplemental levies are no longer supplemental, but critical to district survival. He said all the stakeholders must work together to improve public education. He asked that the Committee consider the restoration and reinvestment of operational funding.

In response to a question regarding how he encouraged his students to read, **Mr. Esler** stated he encouraged his students to read about what they were interested in. He added, in the science discipline, he has a vast amount of resources from books, internet web sites, blogs, and articles to send his kids to try and find the answers for their questions.

Katie Graupman, Milken Award Recipient for 2014, addressed the committee. She is an English and Journalism teacher for thirteen years in Spirit Lake, Idaho. Ms. Graupman gave examples of what it means to be a teacher and the work it takes to help students achieve their potential. She told the Committee about the change that has occurred in the profession including more teachers leaving the field or discouraging others from becoming teachers. She stated it can be difficult to find teachers, especially in the more rural areas that will stay long term. Teaching requires constant growth and refining of abilities and skill not just for students, but also for teachers. She explained that Idaho students need and deserve the very best educators and the very best education. She further explained that Idaho educators need the support of the State Leadership in all their various capacities. She said the quality of a students education should not be dependant on where they live. She said she supports, and asked the Committee to support, the Task Force recommendations for improving education. She gave examples of specific task force recommendations which she felt would be especially beneficial. She said if these recommendations were implemented and properly funded they would have the ability to positively and permanently impact the students of Idaho.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Kaela Becklund
Secretary