

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 10, 2015

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Keough, Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, Buckner-Webb and Ward-Engelking

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None

**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 Mortimer** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:02 p.m. He explained to the audience that some Committee members may be leaving from time to time for scheduled photos or meetings. For this reason and with the Committee's approval, Chairman Mortimer modified the agenda so that the meeting minutes approval could be heard while a quorum was present.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Buckner-Webb** moved to approve the Minutes of January 27, 2015. **Vice Chairman Thayn** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Vice Chairman Thayn** moved to approve the Minutes of January 28, 2015. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Souza** moved to approve the Minutes of January 29, 2015. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**Chairman Mortimer** welcomed Beth Oppenheimer and her colleagues from the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children.

**PRESENTATION:** **Beth Oppenheimer**, Executive Director, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), introduced herself to the Committee and acknowledged her associates in the audience, including representatives from the Head Start Program.

**Ms. Oppenheimer** referred the Committee to her handout (see attachment 1). She said AEYC works to improve the quality of early learning programs in Idaho and also advocates for children and families.

**Ms. Oppenheimer** pointed out that 90 percent of a child's brain has developed by the age of five years. Thus, those first five years are a critical period for cognitive, social, and behavioral development and lay the foundation for future successes in school and throughout life. She said Idaho is just one of six states that do not invest in early learning.

**Ms. Oppenheimer** reviewed the costs for child care, the quality of which is inconsistent. She reviewed the quality learning resources available in Idaho, which are: AEYC, IdahoSTARS, Ready! for Kindergarten, and Head Start. She described AEYC, which has 19 statewide nationally accredited programs. She said these programs are the gold standard for early learning across the country. She also praised Head Start and said there are 13 federally funded programs in Idaho, serving 60 communities in 39 Idaho counties, and over 5,000 children.

**Ms. Oppenheimer** concluded by emphasizing that the recent national attention on early learning provides Idaho with an opportunity to fully explore the resources available for its youngest learners.

Committee members asked about: specifics of the Head Start program, Idaho's early learning opportunities, and reasons why Idaho is one of those six states not investing in early learning.

**Ms. Oppenheimer** deferred to the next presenter for more information on the Head Start program. Relative to Idaho's opportunities, she said AEYC is continuing to look at the best approach for Idaho. She said legislation will see some of those opportunities going forward. Regarding the question about why Idaho is not offering early learning, **Ms. Oppenheimer** said the legislative process can take Idaho off that list.

**Chairman Mortimer** thanked Ms. Oppenheimer for her presentation and welcomed William Strength to the podium for his presentation on Head Start.

**PRESENTATION: William Strength** introduced himself as a representative of the Pocatello/Chubbuck Head Start program. He described his early childhood and young adult life coming from a poor environment. He said homework was traumatic, his education did not go beyond the first month of the tenth grade, and he was repeatedly in trouble with law enforcement. He said with the help of Head Start, he received his GED and started college. His wife is a preschool teacher, and he and his family are self-sufficient, contributing members of their community.

**Mr. Strength** concluded his presentation by emphasizing that early learning is the foundation for success.

**Beth Ann Fuller**, Director, North Idaho College Head Start, discussed the federally funded Head Start program, which was established 50 years ago. She was not able to provide specific data for Idaho at this time. However, she said 50 years of studies have proven that Head Start is effective in strengthening school readiness for kindergarten through third grade. **Ms. Fuller** offered to share specific data with the Committee when she has it. **Chairman Mortimer** asked Ms. Fuller to send him any information she can provide and thanked her for the information.

**ADJOURNED: Senator Mortimer** thanked the presenters and adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

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Senator Mortimer  
Chair

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LeAnn South  
Secretary

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Jeanne' Clayton  
Assistant