

February 19, 2015

Senate Education Committee

Good afternoon and thank you for your time today. My name is Robin Gilbert. I am currently the Director of Instruction and Student Achievement for the Middleton School district. I am certified as an elementary k-8 teacher, school principal Pre-K -12 and as a District Superintendent. This is my 35th year as an educator, serving all those years in Idaho Schools.

- 17 in various teaching positions
- 18 as an administrator
- Last 5 also teaching as an adjunct professor for C Of I and NNU in the graduate programs

During graduate studies, my research focused on the conundrum of how to best provide professional development to teachers for lasting impact. This is important because the **only** way to improve student achievement – the purpose of schools – is to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers. We all know that the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the determining factor on the learning for children. That is why we

- Measure student achievement
- Rate and rank schools
- Evaluate teacher effectiveness and
- Incentivize high performance

In the Public School system there are many inherit issues for providing quality professional development for teachers.

- TIME -
 - teacher contract days without students are limited and have declined
 - pulling teachers from the classrooms includes costs of subs and forfeits quality of instruction for the day
- COST
 - Experts in field are expensive to bring in or to travel to, limiting the number of teachers affected
- MULTIPLE LEVELS OF FOCUS
 - Federal programs – Title I, English Language Learners, Special Education
 - State – CCSS, SBAC, Math initiatives, Civics instruction?, technology integration
 - District – Professional Learning Communities, Assessment Literacy, Standards Based Grading
 - School – Positive Behavior Intervention Support, Response to Intervention, Textbook adoption
 - Teacher – annual goals and professional needs

- VARIED LEVELS OF PROFESSIONALS WITHIN A SCHOOL OR DISTRICT
 - But the biggest hurdle in providing quality professional development for sustained learning – is meeting the needs of every teacher in the room. In the room we have new teachers, master teachers, basic teachers, retiring teachers, PE teachers, elementary, secondary, Vocational, teachers with Master’s degrees in reading, Counselors, Music, Foreign Language, etc. How do we meet the learning needs of all these participants?
 - Think of this like a gym which millions of Americans joined in January. Inside the gym are people in various levels of physical fitness and knowledge with different desired results. Some are already fit, others overweight, older needing movement, body builders, cardio freaks, and beginners and advanced. What if we could only provide one type of class each year? One year focus on proper lifting techniques or flexibility program like Yoga? Maybe strength training or cardio work in targeted heart rate range. Who would benefit the most during any given year? How could we accurately measure the success rate of the gym based on the fitness assessments of their members?

Knowing that the key to student achievement lies in the quality of the teacher in the classroom, our State has implemented many initiatives to encourage, measure and reward exceptional performance.

- Teacher recertification requires ongoing credit or professional development hours
- Licensure places emphasis on State determined areas of need – Literacy, technology competency, math initiative
- Teacher observation/ evaluation systems are now consistent, monitored and reported
- Teacher and school evaluations are based on student achievement scores
- State Leadership dollars follow leadership roles of mentoring and coaching others
- Tiered Licensure / Career Ladder

All of these are well intentioned programs to encourage and support teacher quality, but none of these provide the necessary training to move teachers toward targeted improvement to reach master teacher levels. If we want ALL students to be learning every day, we need ALL teachers to have access to improvement of practice.

Last year the SDE provided us – provided me with a resource that allows EVERY teacher in my District, and every teacher across the State, a personal trainer. This personal trainer provides quality professional development that is individualized for the teacher and implemented with local control over the scope and format. This tool incorporates accountability as well as aligns to teacher goals and administrator observations of need. This tool was not a substitute for previous systems but was given to us in addition to the other necessary professional development initiatives. In the gym scenario – we didn’t take away the treadmills, Zumba or spinning classes – but rather added a personal trainer to provide individualized training when needed so that the member can continue to improve fitness levels.

If we want to improve learning for **all** students – we need to continue to improve learning for **all** teachers.