

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 23, 2015
TIME: 3:00 P.M.
PLACE: Room WW55
MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, Buckner-Webb and Ward-Engelking
ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Keough

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 to order at 3:09 pm

PRESENTATION: **Tamara Baysinger**, Director, Public Charter School Commission (PCSC), said the PCSC is Idaho's largest charter school authorizer. She explained how many students are currently enrolled and the future plans for expansion. She explained PCSC's board members come from all areas of the State and are from many different professions. **Ms. Baysinger** said in 2013, in response to the charter school legislation that passed, PCSC and stakeholders worked on a framework to evaluate charter schools. She reported the outcomes: academic, mission specific, operational, and financial. She defined what the PCSC looks for in each of those areas. Beginning in 2015, this evaluation will be applied annually. The results from the evaluation will then place each charter school in an accountability designation: Honor, good standing, remediation, or critical. **Ms. Baysinger** defined each designation. She then illustrated to the Committee the graphs and charts which marked the progress of charter school students. They were been measured amongst charter and public schools' students. She concluded the presentation by stating the goals of PCSC (see attachment 1).

Senator Patrick asked how many students are currently enrolled in the State's charter schools. **Ms. Baysinger** said approximately 14,900 students.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked her to explain what it means when PCSC states that it is trying to increase the flexibility of charters. **Ms. Baysinger** gave the example of the reporting burden and stated the PCSC is looking to see how they can better accommodate charter schools' requirements. The PCSC also has encouraged new charter school petitioners to attempt unique education ideas.

Senator Souza asked how many times during the year must the schools report to the PCSC. **Ms. Baysinger** said that the reporting has been cut back to three reports a year: dashboard report, financial update, and mission specific goal data.

Senator Nonini asked her to please explain how the replication and expansion in the honor school designation is executed. **Ms. Baysinger** said there are various ways that can happen and gave examples of a replication possibility. **Senator Nonini** asked if the PCSC would dictate how to make replication occur. **Ms. Baysinger** said it is up to the school. The PCSC's role is to review to ensure that it is a reasonable proposal.

Chairman Mortimer asked what kind of feedback the PCSC is getting regarding the annual reports and what is the response time. **Ms. Baysinger** stated the response period is three weeks to a month. The responses are contextual for finances. The schools have responded positively, however, some are not happy with the framework.

Senator Den Hartog asked how the PCSC views its relationship and role with the charter schools. **Ms. Baysinger** replied the PCSC is an oversight body whose role is to authorize and help make some high stake decisions. She outlined the threefold mission of PCSC and stated that one of them is to protect the autonomy of the public charter schools. The schools have all the freedom that the law allows with the educational decisions. It is the role of PCSC to focus on the outcomes in order to protect the students and the taxpayers.

PRESENTATION: **Michael Chartier**, State Program Director, Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, presented School Choice and Educational Savings Accounts. He explained that school choice is when a child's public education money follows them to the school of the parents' choosing. He addressed the school voucher system, the tax credit scholarships, and educational savings account (ESA). He gave examples of each of these programs and which states have implemented the programs. He concluded his presentation saying that school choice has existed before the turn of the last century and has expanded to 50 percent of the country. He encouraged Committee members to go to www.edchoice.org for more school choice information (see attachment 2).

Senator Den Hartog stated there are over 15,000 students in Idaho attending private schools. She asked would it be a cost increase to the state if private students qualified for vouchers. She didn't understand how there could be a cost savings to the State. **Mr. Chartier** explained the savings and tax credits outlining the avoidance of costs issues to the State. **Senator Den Hartog** asked when a state distributes public dollars to a private school, what are the state's expectations of the private schools. **Mr. Chartier** said voucher programs have more regulation for the private schools. He indicated there may be no oversight in curriculum or teaching methods, just measurement of outcomes. Regulations will vary by states.

S 1086: **Vice Chairman Thayne** introduced **S 1086** and explained that this bill is a culmination of the work of many agencies. He stated there is a lack of alignment between Professional-Technical Education (PTE) courses in the State's different high school and postsecondary institutions. He turned the presentation over to Dwight Johnston, Director of Professional-Technical Education to present.

Mr. Johnston presented **S 1086**, relating to Professional Technical Education. He explained the purpose of the legislation is to amend Idaho Code § 33-2205. The legislation is two-fold: 1) to improve the transferability of dual credit PTE courses, and 2) to promote access to PTE programs by increasing the availability of numerous online courses (see attachment 3).

Senator Souza asked if there is a remedial component in PTE when students move from high school to the advanced courses. **Mr. Johnston** replied he didn't know the specifics and said, generally, it is less than what is experienced with the general population. He said applied learners seem to do better in their courses.

Vice Chairman Thayne concluded the presentation and said there is value in this bill. It is giving the will of the Legislature to the PTE Director to say to PTE departments across the State that this type of education is important, and the Legislature is working to make it materialize.

MOTION: **Senator Patrick** thanked Vice Chairman Thayn for the bill because this has been an ongoing issue to get continuing education and dual credits. **Senator Patrick** moved to send **S 1086** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed with **voice vote**. Vice Chairman Thayn will carry the bill on the floor.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Mortimer passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Thayn.

S 1087: **Chairman Dean Mortimer** presented **S 1087**, relating to public charter schools and preferred admission privileges. He stated the bill had been drafted because of a request from the PCSC since there are limited grades in many charter schools. He explained the bill and the obligations that students and schools must meet to obtain the enrollment priority.

TESTIMONY: **Keith Donahue**, Development Director, Sage International School, supports the legislation. He stated this bill creates a K-12 pathway for parents to see the options of choice schools. It also will promote collaboration among charter schools. He continued to explain the benefits of having the additional guidelines for enrollment (see attachment 4).

Tamara Baysinger, Director, PCSC, expressed the support in favor of the bill.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **S 1087** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Chairman Mortimer will carry the bill on the floor

PASSED THE GAVEL: Vice Chairman Thayn returned the gavel to Chairman Mortimer.

ADJOURNED: There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:06 pm.

Senator Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn South
Secretary