

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 10, 2016

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman VanOrden, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Mendive, McDonald, Dixon, Kerby, Pence, Kloc, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Wills

GUESTS: Mary Lou Kinney, self; Kathy Bayless, self; Russell Newbold, self; Maria Fuentes, self; Sara San Juan, self; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural School Administrators; Phil Homer, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Tim Corder, State Department of Education; Erica Compton, Angela Hemmingway, STEM Academy; Jodi Lovie, Teresa Weadick, Tom Corkery, NIC Head Start; Kathy Scott, AAUW Idaho; Blake Youde, State Board of Education; Clark Corbin, Educational News

Chairman DeMordaunt called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Superintendent Ybarra introduced **Rich McBride**, Superintendent of the N. Central Educational Service District in Washington. She explained the State Department of Education has a request for funding of \$300,00 to start rural education centers, such as those in Washington. They can assist school districts, especially small ones, in getting the most services for their funding, and she believes these rural education centers will be a huge cost savings for Idaho schools. Over 70% of schools in Idaho are in rural areas.

Mr. McBride explained he assists 29 school districts in a four county area. The districts range in size from 8 students to 8,000 students. The Educational Service Districts (ESD) have many names, and Washington is similar to Idaho. Sixty percent of its school districts are in small rural areas, some of which are in remote areas. The mission of the ESDs is to create equity and efficiencies for school districts. The statutory authority can be found in Section 28A.310.010, Section 28A.310.200 authorizes the ESDs to do anything requested by school districts, as long as it is not in conflict with other laws. The ESDs maximize education funding and provide equity and opportunity to all children, at a significant cost savings. They can adapt to the specific needs of each district.

Mr. McBride said the ESDs are not governed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Instead, a seven-member board is elected by board members on local school boards. They serve a staggered 4-year term, and cannot serve on both the ESD and the local school board. The board members are not compensated. It is a volunteer position. Each of the nine ESDs receive core funding of \$500,000, which is approximately 4% of their total funding. Other funding comes from grants from companies and the federal government, and charging fees for services, such as training. The funds are used to pay for the superintendent, clerical support, a fiscal director, space rental, travel and overhead.

Mr. McBride explained the ESDs provide support to the State Department of Education on eleven key initiatives. They work with other ESDs and provide direct service to school districts on behalf of the State Department of Education and the legislature. The ESDs provide wide-ranging services for the needs and requests of school districts, such as grouping districts with similar problems to provide service as needed, such as a school nurse for one to two days a week.

Benefits of creating ESDs, said **Mr. McBride**, are that they provide flexibility for school districts, who can purchase only the services they need. The school districts have access to high quality personnel, because they work full-time for the ESD, when each school district might only be able to hire certain staff on a part-time basis. The ESD can also bring bargaining power to smaller school districts, because it represents many school districts to vendors.

In response to questions from the committee, **Superintendent Ybarra** said the \$300,000 line item request was for Idaho to create Educational Service Districts which will best serve Idaho's needs. For example, math nights of hands-on learning for students and parents have been difficult for districts to continue, due to inconsistencies in funding and leadership, and loss of materials.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. McBride** said the fee for services from the ESDs includes 9% to cover the overhead costs. The ESDs understand the unique challenges of each district and find ways to connect districts with similar problems. The ESDs can help prevent consolidations of small school districts, because they create consistency and equity no matter what size the school districts are. Some superintendents work for the ESD and serve more than one school district. This way, even small school districts can attract quality administrators. This is also true of IT staff. Smaller districts can have higher quality IT staff when they share the full-time staff from the ESD. The \$500,000 funding in Washington is for each ESD; although, there is some variation in areas with higher costs of living. Of the \$15 million total budget, the amount from the state can vary from 8% to 20%.

Superintendent Ybarra concluded that the State Department of Education would hire someone to be the director of the ESD, and the State Department of Education would offer support. Today, she is asking for the support of the committee members for the line item budget request of \$300,000 to establish an ESD.

Dr. Noreen Womack, St. Luke's Children's Treasure Valley Pediatrics, gave a presentation on the science of early learning. She explained the evolutionary advantage of brains which start out undeveloped, such as in humans, is to allow for more learning and adapting. Animals with a long time of dependency on their parents do not have to expend energy on survival, and can expend more energy on brain development.

The first 1,000 days of a child's life are the most important, said **Dr. Womack**. Every second, 700 new neural connections are formed, and this degree of growth only happens during the first couple of years of life. The reason pediatricians measure head circumference is to measure brain growth. By the time children enter kindergarten, 85% of their brains are developed. The governor has proposed \$10.7 million for K-3 education, but there is no state funding for pre-k education, she added. If time and resources are invested the first three years of a child's life, the child learns how to learn and develops confidence. The biggest return on investment is in pre-k education funding, where \$6-8 are returned for every dollar spent. Nationwide, two out of every three women send their infants to day care.

Priscilla Salant, McClure Center for Public Policy, said the recent focus of the McClure Center is education, agriculture and natural resources. The Center became involved in early childhood education when the Andrus Center asked it to co-host an Early Childhood Convention. According to the Fall 2014 IRI scores for children entering kindergarten, 50-69% of children are prepared for kindergarten, but there is a huge variation across the state, from 15% in some areas to 92% in other areas. In single-parent households, 24% of children are prepared for kindergarten. In low-income families, 40% of children are prepared for kindergarten, and in families with two parents working, 55% of children are prepared for kindergarten.

The common ground all stakeholders can agree on, added **Ms. Salant**, is that parents are important, encouraging learning is labor intensive, partnerships are essential, and rural areas have fewer resources. People also agree that local solutions are good, that data and values should drive decisions, and that there is a lack of services for parents who don't qualify for federal programs, but whose income is too low to afford quality day care.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Salant** said toxic stress and adverse living conditions can change and disrupt the brain connections. Early pruning of neural connections can lead to schizophrenia. Some pruning is natural and important, but too much can lead to mental illness.

Chairman DeMordaunt commented that the amount budgeted for early childhood education for FY15 was \$104 million.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary