

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 10, 2016

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, Anthon, 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 Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

RS 24341 **Chairman Mortimer** invited Senator Rice to present **RS 24341**, Relating to Education: Revise Election dates for School District Trustees and Provide Term Expiration for Incumbent Trustees. **Senator Rice** discussed the details of the trustee elections and term start dates. He explained that they hoped with these changes it would be easier for voters to participate in the elections. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if they should move the elections to even years when the primaries happen. **Senator Rice** answered that primary elections don't attract independent voters, and the goal is to bring in as many voters as possible.

MOTION: **Senator Nonini** moved that **RS 24341** be sent to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Chairman Mortimer** introduced Dr. Noreen Womack, General Pediatrician, who has practiced in the Treasure Valley for 15 years; she currently works for Treasure Valley Pediatrics and the Idaho Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Womack's presentation was called "The Science of Early Learning" (see attachment 1). **Dr. Womack** explained that for a long time it was perceived that children do not learn until they reach kindergarten because babies are dependent on adult caregivers for such a long time. She elaborated that the human baby brain is the least developed baby brain of the animal kingdom; humans have the longest childhood of all animals, which gives them more time to learn. **Dr. Womack** explained that advances in technology have given us an understanding of what happens inside a baby's brain.

Dr. Womack emphasized that the first 1,000 days of development are the most important in a baby's life. During the first 1,000 days, there are 700 new neural connections created every second. By the end of the sixth year of life, 85 percent of the brain is already developed. **Dr. Womack** spoke about the educational issues that Idaho faces and pointed out that graduation rates and reading levels would increase if pre-kindergarten children were exposed to excellent care. Children who enter grade school with higher reading levels are more likely to graduate from high school and pursue secondary education.

Dr. Womack referenced an economic study that found if more money was spent on education, the highest investment return would occur if money was spent on preschool programs. This makes sense because of how important those first 1,000 days are. **Dr. Womack** argued that for Idaho to have more successful graduates and employees, there should be a larger investment in preschool education or programs.

PRESENTATION: **Chairman Mortimer** asked Priscilla Salant to present in conjunction with Dr. Womack. Ms. Salant is the Director for the McClure Center for Public Policy Research at the University of Idaho. **Ms. Salant** presented "Early Learning: Where is Idaho Today?" (see attachment 2). **Ms. Salant** began by talking about the Idaho continuum of education, where she noted the go-on rate was 48 percent. She referenced Dr. Womack's presentation and the connection between pre-kindergarten investment and success later. **Ms. Salant** showed data that demonstrated that only half of Idaho's kindergartners are ready to read. She explained the majority of at-risk children come from low-income families and live in single-parent households or one in which both parents work.

Ms. Salant said that based on McClure Center studies, the majority of Idaho's young children are not enrolled in programs with professional standards led by professional caregivers or educators. **Ms. Salant** outlined ideas that create a common ground regarding early learning:

- Parents are key.
- Encouraging learning is labor intensive.
- Partnerships are essential.
- Rural locations provide challenges.
- Local solutions are important.
- Data and values should drive decisions.

Senator Patrick asked Ms. Salant about the dispersion of pre-K students who are ready to read in urban versus rural environments. **Ms. Salant** answered urban and rural locations are not necessarily indicators for pre-K preparation, but an examination of district data is more enlightening. **Senator Den Hartog** asked if either presenter knew of studies about the differences between play-based pre-K and academic focused pre-K. **Ms. Salant** said they have not looked at those differences. **Dr. Womack** explained that for young children, play and learning are interconnected. **Senator Souza** asked Ms. Salant if the McClure Center had looked into online courses for parents and young children to prepare those children for grade school. **Ms. Salant** replied they had not looked at online programs in terms of evaluating quality. She added there wasn't data on how many parents are actually using those programs in the home. **Senator Souza** hoped that the McClure Center would look into the effectiveness of online programs because it could be influential in the gaps between urban and rural settings. **Ms. Salant** said they would be happy to look into it.

Vice Chairman Thayn felt that the presentations emphasized that parents are key but focused on implementation of programs, and asked how there could be more support for parents. **Ms. Salant** clarified that the McClure Center doesn't advocate or promote any particular programs, that they just researched questions that were posed to them. **Dr. Womack** said her presentation focused on the importance of early childhood education more than childcare, and there is no easy solution for pre-K. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about solutions for parents who cannot afford to stay home with their children. **Dr. Womack** answered that quality preschool is the best option.

PRESENTATION: **Vice Chairman Thayn** introduced Jim Foudy, Superintendent of the Joint School District McCall-Donnelly, to present "Full Day Kindergarten Intervention Program" (see attachment 3). **Superintendent Foudy** explained the development of their Full-Day Kindergarten Intervention Program started with the identification of at-risk populations and provides an opportunity to enroll those children in an all-day program. The program addresses the gap of expectation of achievement in children from different families with different economic backgrounds. **Superintendent Foudy** demonstrated that after McCall-Donnelly integrated the full-day program in 2005, their reading indicator and ISAT results surpassed that state's average and they have maintained that success to the present day.

Superintendent Foudy outlined the main lessons from 10 years of the full-day program: retention efforts are actually ineffective and those programs take away time from more successful programs. Kindergarten classes are more successful if all the students are brought to the same achievement level in pre-K. The Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning are the most effective tools to determine which children are at-risk. Parents must choose, not be forced, to have their child participate in the full-day program. A positive teacher-child relationship is critical to children's success. It's best to preteach skills to the at risk population so they feel confident later in grade school. Lastly, they move children out of the full-day program as soon as the individual learning gap has been closed.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked how the children are selected for the full-day program. **Superintendent Foudy** answered they do early screening at the beginning of the school year. All children are scheduled to visit with teachers, staff and psychologists. **Chairman Mortimer** referenced the earlier presentations and noted that 50 percent of Idaho's children are not ready; he asked if Superintendent Foudy had encountered that number in McCall-Donnelly. **Superintendent Foudy** replied in the affirmative. **Chairman Mortimer** asked how many students participate in the full-day program all through the year. **Superintendent Foudy** estimated 40 to 60 percent. He elaborated that when an entire district focuses support on young children, it can be extremely successful because less support is needed in later grades. **Senator Nonini** asked if other superintendents in Idaho were copying McCall-Donnelly's successful program. **Superintendent Foudy** explained he has just begun this role as superintendent so he has not spoken with other districts yet.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked about initial costs for the program.

Superintendent Foudy answered that because the district is so small, the program required only one full-time teacher and one part-time teacher. It was relatively inexpensive for them. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if the program would work if all children went full time. **Superintendent Foudy** replied that they are able to close the aptitude gap because an intervention during pre-K and kindergarten means those students don't have to miss out on anything. After pre-K children who participate in assistance programs miss out on other opportunities. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked how they balance the amount of physical activity in the full-day program. **Superintendent Foudy** answered that the first 20-30 minutes of every afternoon session start with physical education. **Chairman Mortimer** thanked Superintendent Foudy for his presentation.

RS 24342

Chairman Mortimer invited Senator Souza to present **RS 24342** relating to education: to Remove Certain Qualification Requirements of School Electors and to Make Technical Corrections. **Senator Souza** explained that school trustees are required to live in their zone, and only people that live in those zones can vote for them. But this RS will allow everyone in the county to vote in those elections to increase participation and representation. The new voting system will also cost much less.

MOTION: **Senator Patrick** moved to send **RS 24342** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. **Senator Anthon** noted he would not oppose the bill but he shared a concern that rural districts will lose representation on school boards. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Chairman Mortimer** invited Sherri Ybarra, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education (SBE), to present on rural education centers. **Superintendent Ybarra** said she would co-present with Rich McBride, Superintendent of North Central Education Service District (NCESD). She said Dr. McBride has been the Superintendent since 2002. He received his doctorate from Washington State University and he's worked as a teacher and a coach. NCESD works to help school districts make the most out of every educational dollar.

Dr. McBride presented to the Committee "Educational Service Agencies: What's Their Story? What's the Benefit?" (see attachment 4). He noted that Educational Service Districts (ESDs) can be known by many different names across different regions. ESDs can be found across the nation with over 550 agencies. **Dr. McBride** emphasized that the goal for all ESDs is to create equity and efficiencies within school districts. The ESDs in Washington state are authorized to help districts leverage and share resources to maximize education dollars, provide equity and opportunity to all children, create significant cost savings efficiencies and adapt to specific needs of member districts.

Dr. McBride noted that NCESD is not governed by the State but by a board of seven members elected by local districts. Funding for the ESDs in Washington comes partly from core funding allocations in the state budget, which only accounts for 4 percent of their funding. Other funding comes from cooperatives, specific grants or initiatives, federal grants, entrepreneurial partnerships and direct fees for individual districts. **Dr. McBride** explained that NCESD offers a wide range of services for school districts, basically anything that schools could want to improve on. He argued that ESDs are a great option for schools because they provide flexibility to purchase only what they need, when they need it. He added they are a non-union shop and they provide availability and recruitment in rural areas. **Dr. McBride** concluded that ESDs have credibility and proximity to school districts, which makes them effective.

Senator Den Hartog asked if Superintendent Ybarra was looking at the same type of structure and governance for Idaho's rural education centers. **Superintendent Ybarra** answered that they will be modeling Idaho's ESDs on Washington's. She also mentioned that rural districts had approached her first with interest in creating ESDs for Idaho, because they need assistance. **Senator Nonini** asked what the total budget for ESDs is. **Dr. McBride** said the total budget was about \$18 million. **Senator Nonini** wanted to clarify that school districts that participated in the co-ops were able to save money on unemployment benefits and workers' compensation. **Dr. McBride** affirmed that the schools were able to save a large amount of money because they belonged to a co-op. **Superintendent Ybarra** thanked the Committee for their time.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the Committee at 5:03 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn Mohr
Secretary

Anna Roser
Assistant