

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, March 02, 2016

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

**PLACE:** Room WW55

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

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Patrick

**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 3:14 p.m.

**PRESENTATION:** Bob Lokken is the Board Chairman of Idaho Business for Education (IBE), which consists of 148 CEOs of businesses across the State. **Mr. Lokken** indicated he's concerned about the future workforce in Idaho. He said he first wanted to share 2015 Idaho SAT Data. He clarified that the data is a reflection of the communities' priorities and is not a reflection of teachers' competence. **Mr. Lokken** explained that the goal should be to prepare at least 60 percent of high school students for a postsecondary degree. The statewide results showed that 20 percent of high school students score above 500 on each subject area. He noted there was discussion with some of the technical schools that 500 was too high of a measure. But if the achievement rate is dropped to 470, it only raises the percentage of passing to 27 percent. **Mr. Lokken** stated the gap exists no matter which way data is gathered: not enough students are ready to go on to postsecondary education.

**Mr. Lokken** elaborated on some of the bright spots where Idaho schools are doing well. He said these successes are important because it's evidence that focus and effort yields results. He added that Idaho cannot wait until students are in the eleventh grade to prepare for achieving high SAT scores. He concluded that local conversations get people thinking about how they value education, and he asked that Senators start those conversations in their own districts (see attachment 1).

**Senator Ward-Engelking** thanked Mr. Lokken for his promotion of education and asked how one reconciles the low SAT scores with the fact that many Idaho high school students are taking college credit and doing well. **Mr. Lokken** answered there are no clear predictors for college success. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if the cultural bias of the SAT has been taken into account because there are many immigrant families in Idaho. **Mr. Lokken** stated the SAT is not a perfect test, but imperfect data is better than no data. He added that the State Board of Education (SBE) provided the data. **Senator Ward-Engelking** said that they should be careful in how the report is used because it's just one measure of the schools. **Mr. Lokken** reiterated that they needed a point for people to focus on and he understands that it's just one aspect of schools.

**Senator Souza** noted the success of a charter school in northern Idaho and asked what can be done to publicize the successes of schools to raise the value of education in communities. Specifically she wondered if IBE and SBE can support that idea. **Mr. Lokken** agreed that the IBE would support that type of promotion. He said that Idaho School Boards Association spends too much time on the mechanics of schools rather than the achievements. He highlighted that changes made in the Statehouse need to affect the students or it's not worth it.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** shared a phrase: What gets measured, gets done. She hoped that in showing the data on SAT scores, Mr. Lokken was trying to invoke a systemic change in priorities surrounding education in Idaho. **Mr. Lokken** affirmed and said that transparency causes alignment to a singular goal. Data is an equalizer to rally around.

**PRESENTATION:** Sharon Harrigfeld, Director, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections (IDJC), introduced Jim Pannell, Education Program Director. **Mr. Pannell** gave a presentation on the IDJC. He told the Committee about the fully accredited schools in IDJC and he explained how the schools and agency are funded. **Mr. Pannell** detailed the background and credentials of the principals at each of the facilities. He spoke about the difficulty of finding staff because their salaries are no longer competitive. At IDJC, 50 percent of students suffer from emotional disturbance versus 5 percent in public schools (see attachment 2).

**Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if they have the funds or the ability to partner with business to provide career/technical opportunities for students. **Mr. Pannell** answered that in the past they have been unable to, but they are looking into grants that would give them access to more funds to pursue such opportunities. **Chairman Mortimer** thanked Mr. Pannell for his presentation and encouraged him to continue to speak out regarding the needs of his teachers.

**H 451**

**Representative VanOrden**, District 31, presented **H 451**, Relating to Education: to provide for reading instruction and intervention. She stated that parental involvement in childhood literacy makes a huge impact in a child's education.

**Representative VanOrden** explained that this legislation would add code to emphasize strong reading intervention with required parental involvement in the process. The bill calls for a reading plan for all deficient readers in kindergarten through third grade. It requires districts to report to the SBE on progress.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** asked how reading deficiency is determined.

**Representative VanOrden** answered that it's determined through the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). **Vice Chairman Thayn** inquired how that test would be applied to kindergarten. **Representative VanOrden** said that it is administered in the first six weeks of school. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked what score would qualify a child for an educational plan. **Representative VanOrden** said that all students who receive "basic" or "below basic" would receive an individual plan. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked how much manpower would need to be involved in implementing that plan. **Representative VanOrden** replied that only a third of students can read on grade level. **Blake Youde** of SBE came forward with more specifics; he said there are about 36,000 students reading below grade level.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** asked what would happen if a parent is unable to meet the level of involvement required for their child. **Representative VanOrden** replied that the initial notification of a child's need will determine the level of parent involvement. The legislation allows for a "good faith effort" from schools to engage parents.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** asked how those children might receive extra help if a parent doesn't respond. **Representative VanOrden** answered the student would still be put on a plan and the school would carry it out.

**Senator Souza** asked if the IRI is the best tool for evaluating reading ability. **Representative VanOrden** said there's a working group looking into the IRI to determine if it should be changed or replaced.

Don Coberly, Superintendent the Boise School District, was invited before the Committee to answer questions. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if teachers can accommodate the number of students who need assistance. **Mr. Coberly** answered that most schools and districts already have a reading plan in place when the students arrive. **Vice Chairman Thayn** inquired as to Mr. Coberly's views on the IRI. **Mr. Coberly** replied that he helped develop the IRI in the initial stages and said he believes it to be adequate.

**TESTIMONY:** Rob Gramer, President and CEO of IBE, came before the Committee to testify in favor of the bill. **Mr. Gramer** said that reading ability is essential to learning. Strengthening reading levels will improve outcomes of education. He noted that it's important that the bill requires SBE to come back and report on the progress to the Legislators every year.

Alejandra Cerna, Idaho Voices for Children, came before the Committee to testify on **H 451**. **Ms. Cerna** said that parents are truly a child's first teacher. She emphasized that children's success relies on their ability to read at grade level, and that relies in part on parental involvement. She said this bill will help increase accountability for adults in a child's life. **Ms. Cerna** stated that more details about the IRI and a child's reading level, as well as strategies to improve, are helpful to parents.

**MOTION:** **Senator Nonini** moved to send **H 451** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. **Vice Chairman Thayn** noted that he would support the bill but he wanted to focus on the results at the third-grade level. **Senator Anthon** said he supported the bill. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Nonini will carry **H 451** to the floor.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:31 p.m.

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Chairman Dean M. Mortimer  
Chair

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LeAnn Mohr  
Secretary

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Anna Roser  
Assistant