

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Thursday, March 03, 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.

**PRESENTATION:** **Jeff Church**, Chief Communications Officer, State Department of Education (SDE), presented the Leadership Premium Report as found in § 33-1004J, Idaho Code. He explained the reasons that a teacher could receive the leadership premium as outlined in Code (see attachment 1). He gave each member of the Committee the Leadership Premium Report outlining the distribution results. The report showed each school district in Idaho, average dollar amount issued, the highest dollar amount issued, lowest amount issued, as well as percentage of instructional staff receiving the premium, total amount given, and the reason why the funds were given to teachers (see attachment 2).

**Mr. Church** reported the number of teachers receiving leadership premiums, the teachers and pupil staff that were eligible to receive premiums and what that percentage amounted to. To better illustrate how the premiums are used, he gave a perspective from the Preston School District (see attachment 3).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Nonini** said that his legislative area houses the number one school in the State and it is one of the top schools in the country. They are only giving 36 percent of the teachers in their district the premium while lesser performing districts are giving to 100 percent of their teachers. **Senator Nonini** asked why the top performing school in the State is only giving 36 percent of the teachers the leadership premium funds. **Mr. Church** said distribution of the premium is decided by the local board of trustees.

**Senator Nonini** suggested the SDE review the Idaho Business for Education (IBE) Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) findings from the March 2 presentation and see if there is a correlation between scores and premiums.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** commented the districts that promote dual credits and associate degrees for their students have higher scores. He will be reviewing the information to see if those districts are giving leadership premium dollars.

**Senator Souza** said the reports that the Committee has received in the last couple of days allowed them to see if there is a correlation between leadership premiums and SAT scores. As Legislators there is the responsibility to assimilate the data to show that educational spending is effecting student achievement. She highlighted those schools in the report whose premiums were over 50 percent and the SAT passage scores were 20 percent. **Senator Souza** said the crucial question that the Legislators should be asking is why the educational data statistics aren't being compared to each other, so that there can be a better understanding as to how dollars spent correlate with student learning.

**Chairman Mortimer** stated this information is new and many assumptions can be made from the information. He cautioned the Committee not to draw any conclusions until they have really studied the report.

**Chairman Mortimer** observed that some districts have paid out more in leadership premium dollars than they received from the SDE. This suggests that some districts are matching the funds, using West Ada School District as an example. He said this is great information and will help the Committee see how the premiums are actually used and he listed those different options.

**Senator Den Hartog** said she appreciates the local control given to the school districts to decide how to allocate the leadership premiums. She asked if the districts and the SDE are having any conversations as to why those districts have given 100 percent of their teachers the premium. **Mr. Church** replied based on the statute, the distribution is given to the school districts and then they have the control of how those funds are allocated.

**Senator Nonini** said he will be discussing this report with the school districts in his district.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** asked if there is autonomy from the school districts and the individual schools in the district regarding how they can designate the funds. **Mr. Church** said not having been a teacher or administrator, he cannot answer specifically. But based on the statute's specifications, it is a local decision as to how the dollars are spent.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** suggested that a premium could be placed on a hard-to-fill position in a rural community, but for that same position in an urban area there would not be the need for the premium. She asked him to speak to those differences. **Mr. Church** asked Tim McMurtrey from the SDE to address that question.

**Mr. McMurtrey**, Performance Officer and Strategic Planner, SDE, said that each district has qualifiers they use to determine how the premiums are spent. As the former superintendent of the Mountain Home School District, he explained how they distributed the leadership premiums.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked him if a school district is giving 100 percent of the money to 100 percent of the teachers with no variations, should that be questioned. **Mr. McMurtrey** stated it is a local control issue, and it is their decision to use the funds that way. However, districts were asked not to distribute the premiums in that fashion. **Chairman Mortimer** asked Mr. McMurtrey to tell those districts that is not how the Legislators expected them to use the premiums.

**Senator Nonini** asked if it is difficult for principals to determine who gets a premium and who does not. **Mr. McMurtrey** replied that it would be easier for principals if school districts developed committees to make the selections.

**Senator Souza** asked Mr. McMurtrey to put into words the reason for the premiums. **Mr. McMurtrey** said he believes the premiums are to be used for teachers who went above and beyond the requirements as well as for hard-to-fill positions. These premiums were not to be distributed to those that do the basic tasks.

**MINUTES  
APPROVAL:**

**Senator Patrick** moved to approve the Minutes of February 8, 2016. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**Senator Anthon** moved to approve the Minutes of February 9, 2016. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to approve the Minutes of February 10, 2016. **Vice Chairman Thayn** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** moved to approve the Minutes of February 11, 2016. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**PRESENTATION:** **Debbie Critchfield**, Board Member, State Board of Education (SBE) presented from the Governor's Task Force for Improving Education (Task Force) the work of the Literacy Subcommittee and declared literacy to be the life-blood of education for children and adults. She said the recommendation from the Task Force is that students must demonstrate mastery of literacy before moving on to significant content learning. She stated reading is necessary for all aspects of life and gave examples of why adults must be competent readers.

**Ms. Critchfield** said research proves that reading proficiently by the end of the third grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. She stated in 2014 the SBE organized a committee of teachers, administrators and other stakeholders to implement the Task Force recommendation. They spent two -years working to determine the issues that hinder reading proficiency and developed possible remedies. The effort focused on the earliest grades: K-3. She showed the Committee a chart that illustrated the reading levels of K-3 students in the past two-years. **Ms. Critchfield** explained the results from the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) and said the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores indicate that more than half of Idaho third-graders scored below "basic" (see attachment 4).

**Ms. Critchfield** said the Subcommittee identified four areas for improving literacy; the recommendations are built on a five-year plan beginning in 2017. She outlined the procedures for the plan and said the last time the reading plan was addressed was in 1999.

**Representative VanOrden**, District 31, presented the recommendations from the Task Force that developed the legislation. She explained the recommendations were based on the research that demonstrates the importance of screening kindergarteners' reading skills and providing early intervention to address literacy skill gaps to put students on a path to literacy proficiency and academic success. She reported in the detail the four recommendations: 1.) state guidance to develop a literacy plan, 2.) reading intervention programs starting in kindergarten, 3.) assessments to be reviewed and revised and 4.) school libraries to be expanded. She said the recommendations were aggressive because literacy is the fundamental skill on which to build an educated population for economic success in Idaho.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked if the Task Force researched the systemic reasons for passing students to the next grade when they have not achieved the appropriate reading levels. **Ms. Critchfield** said the discussions at the Task Force and SBE meetings did address that issue. She said it is often the issue of time and money; there is not enough instructional time because of a lack of aids or resources to give the remedial student the help. She said this is a good argument for the need of mastery-based education.

**Senator Nonini** asked if the students who are learning English as a second language (ESL) go home to English-speaking parents or do they tend to speak in their native tongue. **Ms. Critchfield** replied she didn't know. She explained that she has learned through the Task Force that reading in any language improves literacy. **Senator Nonini** asked if in those districts where ESL is small, is reading proficiency higher? **Ms. Critchfield** replied that there is no confidence in making that correlation.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** said this discussion is much needed. Because money will be spent to remedy the problem, the solution needs to be well thought out. He asked if the IRI should be redone. **Ms. Critchfield** replied the IRI does not give a complete report of reading comprehension. The criticism of the test is that it shows fluency and quickness to reading but it doesn't assess or gauge comprehension. There is a small group in the Literacy Subcommittee that is currently reviewing other assessments that would better serve teachers to help direct their instruction.

**H 526**

**Blake Youde**, Chief Communications and Legislative Affairs Officer, SBE, presented **H 526**, To Provide for Literacy Intervention and Related Provisions. He said this legislation was drafted based on the recommendations made by the Task Force regarding the need to improve literacy. He explained the subcommittee's process in developing the proposals. The premise for this legislation is to increase literacy among the youngest students: grades K-3. **Mr. Youde** said the legislation targets resources to students in school districts submitting learning plans that show how the students will be served. Costs must stay within the allocated appropriations and reports must be submitted so that the Governor's office, State legislature and State Superintendent's office can monitor student progress. He explained that this legislation is targeting the 36,000 students grades K-3, who read below grade level.

**Mr. Youde** explained to the Committee all the changes in § 33-1002, Idaho Code. He emphasized that the new provisions to this Code connect with **H 450**, which deals with parental involvement.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked for more information regarding the changes. **Tracie Bent**, Chief Policy and Planning Officer, SBE, explained in detail how the sections were moved and renumbered. She outlined the additions and changes made to § 33-1615, Idaho Code.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** said he has concerns about funding being attached to the IRI assessment scores. He doesn't think the IRI is the best tool for assessing reading and scores could be falsified so as to receive more funds. **Mr. Youde** replied the Literacy Committee has issued a request for information (RFI) to update the current IRI because it does not seem to be the best assessment. He explained that in the current General Fund there is funding attached to literacy intervention; if districts were driven by funds they would have found a way to get them. Districts are more driven by better literacy scores.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if other options for fund disbursement had been considered. **Mr. Youde** replied the Literacy Subcommittee engaged in two years of study and this was the best opinion.

**Senator Nonini** asked if only half of the suggested appropriations are given, can the intervention obligations still be met. **Mr. Youde** replied in the affirmative. He explained there are many literacy programs available. With reduced funding, not all students may be helped.

**Senator Souza** asked if there is a way to structure the funding for student improvement to incentivize the districts to improve literacy scores rather than continue poor scores for more money. **Mr. Youde** said currently one-third to one-half of all children in grades K-3 in the State are not proficient in reading. This would be a great policy discussion when the proficiency rates greatly increase. The very significant need is to get these students to their grade level in reading. The question will be how to incentivize school districts to keep the reading proficiency levels high. **Mr. Youde** emphasized the State is at a crisis level for literacy with its youngest students.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked if this proposal incentivizes school districts to find solutions that will work for their districts around literacy or is this just another funding stream that would divert current literacy money to other subject areas? **Mr. Youde** replied the SBE fully believes this legislation will bring resources the school districts so badly needed for literacy. There is accountability in the legislation requiring districts to report what programs work to improve reading proficiency.

**Senator Ward-Engelking** said she appreciates that the SBE is putting the control at the local level where they know different types of students and how to best serve them. She said in regards to the fears that scores will be under-reported, that would be highly unlikely because of parental involvement and other regulations involved. If there is some controversy regarding the reading level outcome from the test, the test is retaken.

**Senator Nonini** asked if the reading levels over the last five to seven years gone up or down. **Mr. Youde** replied that for the last 10 years the results have been flat. **Senator Nonini** asked what has been the past funding for literacy. **Mr. Youde** replied the past appropriations have been \$2.4 million for intervention in both math and reading for students who score "below basic." This equates to about \$100 per student.

**Senator Souza** stated there is current funding on intervention and the proficiency has remained stagnant. She asked what is the rationale to put more money towards intervention and what would be the behavioral change to achieve a different outcome?. **Mr. Youde** said the proposed legislation increases the number of students served. He explained only approximately 16,000 students who scored "below basic" are currently being helped. There are still 20,000 that are at "basic level," still below grade level, who are not being helped. The second part of the legislation, he said, increases the time from 40 hours to 60 hours. He emphasized the SBE and the Literacy Subcommittee recognized to move that the needle upward, it is going to take additional support as to who is being served and who is not being served. When over half of the students who read below grade level are not be helped there, is no way to expect improvement in the overall trend.

**Senator Souza** said she would be more comfortable if someone could provide data showing how the current funding helped the students who are "below basic." **Mr. Youde** replied the flat-lined number denotes students who are less than proficient. The current resources are only serving a subset of that group. He emphasized the importance of establishing a consistent, focused intervention that creates a stronger foundation for students to strengthen their reading abilities and opportunities to learn.

**Senator Souza** asked which students **H 526** will serve. **Mr. Youde** explained which students were being served under the current legislation. He said there are 20,000 students who read at the "basic" level who have never received service. **H 526** is aimed to address those students as well as provide more for the other 16,000 students who scored "below basic."

**Senator Ward-Engelking** explained to the Committee the different quantifiers for reading levels: grade level, basic and below basic. The majority of the students served by this will also include those scoring at the "basic" level as well as those in the "below basic" category.

**Vice Chairman Thayne** said he doesn't believe that Committee members are bothered by the cost and would like to see this effort succeed. He said he doesn't want to settle for good intentions. He would like to support programs that work. He believes the legislation emphasizes too much on measuring and testing students and not enough on what will work. He would like an answer as to what would work.

**Chairman Mortimer** stated this is a critical piece of legislation and wants to make sure that Committee members have their questions answered. He ruled that there will be another hearing for **H 526** at a later date.

**ADJOURNED:** Due to the lack of time, **Chairman Mortimer** indicated **H 526** would be held for a date certain, pending the Chairman's decision. There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:27 p.m.

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Senator Dean M. Mortimer  
Chair

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LeAnn Mohr  
Secretary