

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 08, 2016

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

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

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Rubel, McDonald

GUESTS: Karen Glassman, INSPIRE Connections; Kelly Edginton, Idaho Virtual Academy; Robin Nettinga, Idaho Education Association; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural School Administrators; Helen Price, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Jess Harrison, Idaho School Boards Association; Monti Pittman, Idaho College and Career Readiness Academy; Marilyn Whitney, Governor's Office

Chairman DeMordaunt called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Karen Glassman, INSPIRE Connections, spoke about the role virtual schools play in graduation rates. She said the school serves and attracts students from around the state, making the student demographics more diverse than the demographics at a traditional brick and mortar school. Many of the students who attend virtual schools, she said, do so because of a family or medical crisis, and when the crisis is over, they return to their regular school, which affects the virtual school's graduation rate. Student mobility also affects the data negatively, said Ms. Glassman, and the students who come to virtual schools are often behind academically, and take longer than four years to graduate. Students from the virtual school who choose to take the GED are also counted against the school's graduation rates, she added. The Every Student Succeeds Act allows for additional flexibility in graduation rates, said Ms. Glassman.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Glassman** said the school is revising its system for tracking students to match the student numbers with the transfer schools, but it is not a perfect system. Tracking students requires lots of human resources and time, she added. If the students who transfer out of the school are taken out of the graduation data, it raises the school's graduation data to 75-80%, said Ms. Glassman. The school has a highly-mobile student population, she said, and 75% transferred to other schools. The main reason students transfer from the virtual school to a brick and mortar school is because the crisis which caused the student to transfer to the virtual school has been resolved, said Ms. Glassman. Another reason students transfer back to a regular school, she said, is because the virtual school curriculum is more rigorous than students believed it would be. Many students attend the virtual school only one semester.

Kelly Edginton spoke about the Idaho Virtual Academy. The IDVA is fully accredited, and also has a separately-accredited alternative school. The school serves 2,200 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, and employes 64 teachers. The mobility and demographics statistics are similar to INSPIRE, said Ms. Edginton, and 55% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The state's special education student population is 10%, and the IDVA special education student population is 14.4%. The school hired a social worker one year ago, and also employs three counselors and a family academic support liaison. Ms. Edginton said the state needs an accountability system which will better address student mobility, as mobility is a large issue for virtual and alternative schools.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Edington** said schools accredited as alternative schools have a lower student-teacher ratio, use a block system for classes, and have a lower student-counselor ratio. Students of an alternative school must meet at-risk factors. IDVA has special education teachers to help with the special education population, said Ms. Edington. Individualized Education Plans are created, and the special education teacher meets with the home room teachers, parents and students. Virtual schools are allowed to measure attendance by student progress, said Ms. Edington. For example, if a student has made 75% progress in his curriculum, the student's attendance is counted as 75% for funding purposes. Parents are very involved at all levels of a student's education, said Ms. Edington, but involvement at the high school level is different from involvement at the elementary level.

In response to questions from the committee, **Chairman DeMordaunt** explained the Use It or Lose It criteria for funding does not apply to charter schools.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Edington** said an example of persistence, as it applies to a school's graduation rate, is if a student hasn't graduated in four years, and it takes five or more years for that student to graduate, the school's graduation rate is not negatively affected.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Glassman** said the students in the wrestling club in Blackfoot are enrolled in INSPIRE, but the club is completely separate from the school. The school is trying to be clear that it is not involved with the wrestling club, but that message has sometimes been misrepresented.

Monti Pittman spoke concerning the Idaho College and Career Readiness Academy. The virtual school is in its second year of operation, said Mr. Pittman, and has 114 students, 49 of whom are on the free and reduced lunch program. Of the eleventh graders who enrolled in the school, 66% were deficient in math, and 23% were deficient in language arts. Approximately 45% of students require more than four years to graduate, he said, and many of the students had dropped out of school for some time before enrolling in the Academy. The goal is for students to graduate in four years, but if that goal is not met, students are still graduating, said Mr. Pittman. Mr. Pittman gave an example of a 17-year-old boy, reading at an elementary level, who has informed the school he will drop out of school when he turns eighteen, because he sees no value in education. This will affect the school's graduation rate. The school is working hard to bring his reading level up before then, and hopes he will decide not to drop out, and gain the skills he needs, said Mr. Pittman.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Pittman** said many of the students with late graduation issues had come to the Academy with late graduation issues already. The Academy is based on a career-technical education curriculum, and has four tracks: Engineering, Business, Web Development, and Health Care. Mr. Pittman said he would like to see graduation rates changed to reflect persistence, and a weighted percentage for how long students are at the school. Personnel from traditional brick and mortar schools have told him they encounter similar issues, and applying a weighted graduation rate to reflect persistence, or longer graduation times, would be helpful to traditional schools as well.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:49 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary