

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, March 13, 2017

TIME: 2:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Guthrie, Crabtree, and Ward-Engelking

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senators Winder, Nonini, Den Hartog, and Buckner-Webb

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 2:10 p.m. and read a poem by Edgar A. Guest, from "A Heap O'Living Along Life's Highway" titled *School Exercise*.

PRESENTATION: Career Ladder Update. Rob Winslow, Executive Director, Idaho Association of School Administration (IASA), said he invited school superintendents to the Committee today to share how the career ladder has been implemented in their school district. He stated there is an infusion of new money for salaries and the Idaho school districts are trying to build the new salary schedule. **Mr. Winslow** said today three superintendents from smaller school districts are here to speak to the Committee regarding the implementation of the career ladder. He introduced Luke Schroeder, Superintendent, Kimberly; Rob Sauer, Superintendent, Homedale; and Andy Grover, Superintendent, Melba.

Mr. Schroeder said he has just completed his fifth year as superintendent. He emphasized the new money has allowed the district to turn their supplemental levy into a plant facility levy; the infusion of new money has been very beneficial to his district. He explained the timing of the career ladder implementation occurred right after teacher salaries had been frozen due to the recession. He said for those teachers in the sixth and seventh year of their profession the career ladder is beneficial. His concern is the salary level increases for teachers, having 8 years or more of employment, is minimal.

Mr. Schroeder stated the most difficult part of the career ladder was getting his staff placed on the correct rung. He walked the Committee through the salary allocations (see Attachment 1). He has worked with the various education associations to get the career ladder fully implemented. He explained the Kimberly Master Teacher program's criteria which separates an average teacher from a distinguished teacher. The desire of the Kimberly School District is to have funds allocated towards that program. **Mr. Schroeder** said the career ladder while initially difficult to implement will prove to be successful in the hopes of recruiting and retaining quality teachers.

Mr. Sauer said he has just completed his fifth year as superintendent. He expressed his gratitude for the career ladder and stated it is a tremendous opportunity for districts the size of Homedale to recruit and retain teachers. He explained that Homedale School District experiences are very similar to the Kimberly School District. He gave the Committee the career ladder salary schedule grid (see Attachment 2) and explained the 12th cell, which is beyond the State's maximum rung on the career ladder. He recommended the State look at implementing a super cell component to support those teachers with experience and additional education. **Mr. Sauer** stated the career ladder is a great tool for teachers coming into the profession or in the middle of their career. His concern is for those teachers with longevity and how to support and retain them in their careers.

Mr. Grover said he has been in the Melba School District for 10 years. He stated the largest obstacle for his district is teacher retention. He explained in the past they had offered higher salaries to retain teachers but found that did not entice teachers to stay. He said Melba is a poverty district and they do not run supplemental levies. He explained the importance of the career ladder to the Melba School District and showed the Committee how their salaries fit into the career ladder (see Attachment 3). **Mr. Grover** stated for the teachers who at the time of implementation were making more than the career ladder rung, the school district used the salary equalization fund to augment those salaries. He said with teacher retirements, the school district will eventually no longer need the fund and will only use the salary supplements they receive from the State. He emphasized Melba's salary funding formula matches the States' salary funding formula. **Mr. Grover** voiced his concerns regarding the professional standard report and the master teacher program.

Senator Den Hartog stated the Legislature was concerned about the transition from salary schedule to the career ladder. She asked if the change to the career ladder was well received by teachers and staff. **Mr. Sauer** explained the majority of the teachers in his district received 2 to 7 percent increase in salary, which helped in the transition. He said longtime teachers were troubled by the significantly lower percentage of salary increase in their career ladder rung. He said the 12th cell, which Melba developed for their career ladder was established to help address that issue.

Mr. Schroeder said in the first year of implementation of the career ladder, teachers were educated about the program. Many were concerned that it may not be funded for the second year and they are pleased that the Legislature is moving forward with this program. He said a master teacher may be looking at only 3 percent raise whereas someone in their third or fourth year of teaching could receive 7 to 8 percent pay increase. **Mr. Schroeder** said they are going to continue to use the State's salary guidelines. To keep veteran teachers in their careers, they would like to see the State address the long-serving teachers' pay scale.

Mr. Grover replied at the beginning of the career ladder the Melba School District was actually experiencing a decrease in teacher's wages. The new money from the State was well received and the career ladder has been implemented without considerable problems. He reiterated the issue of longtime teachers not receiving as large of percentage increase in their salaries.

Vice Chairman Thayne asked if the leadership premiums are going to more experienced teachers to augment their salaries and how do the school districts determine where out-of-state teachers are placed in the career ladder.

Mr. Sauer said the out-of-state teachers with experience are difficult to place on the career ladder. He said they try to place them fairly on the best rung based on their education, experience, and years of service. He stated the leadership premiums are available to all staff who meet the criteria. He explained that approximately 50 percent of staff receive the leadership premiums due to mentoring young teachers.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked if those teachers that lost days due to furloughs have been placed on the career ladder. **Mr. Sauer** replied in the affirmative. He said the rung in which they are placed is consistent with the State's recommendations. He stated the five furlough days are held out of their salary.

Senator Guthrie asked if the school districts are still using surplus money to supplement teachers' salaries now that the career ladder funding is being allocated. **Mr. Grover** replied they are using supplemental funds to pay teachers who are at the top of the career ladder or are in the super cells that have been created by the school districts.

Mr. Schroeder replied two years ago about 86 percent of the district's discretionary spending went to fund healthcare costs and salaries and last year only 73 percent was used in those areas. He said the districts with supplemental levies often use those funds for the salary differences.

Mr. Grover said the career ladder funding was a big influx of money for all school districts. If districts remained on the existing salary schedule less discretionary money was being used to make up the difference in teachers' salaries. He stated the financial relief is appreciated.

Chairman Mortimer asked the superintendents to relay to the Committee any information they deemed necessary.

All superintendents addressed the concern regarding veteran teachers and how the current career ladder pay scale does not benefit their years of service. They all asked that the career ladder funding be continued and there is a relief not having to go to the public for supplemental levies. They stated this program has gained significant credibility with local associations and they are eager to see it continue.

Mr. Winslow said he hopes the Committee understands how beneficial the career ladder has been to school districts. If the 2018 career ladder appropriation is funded with the addition of pupil service staff, school districts can have quality staff in their schools. He concluded saying the legislature's continued support has meant a great deal to teachers and administrators. It's helping them get back to the place of fiscal stability.

S 1147

Relating to Higher Education. Senator Burgoyne, District 16, said **S 1147** addresses the issues of inconsistent application of existing State Board of Education (SBE) credit transfer guidelines at our public colleges and universities. He said issues about credit transfers discourage students from entering college and completing programs. It also drives up college costs and causes students to incur debt. He said it makes it more difficult for the State to achieve its stated public policy of the 60 percent "Go On" rate. **Senator Burgoyne** said the bill does not change how things are supposed to work; rather it codifies SBE credit transfer guidelines and provides a mechanism for SBE oversight and enforcement. He said the guidelines stem from the premise that all of the public and nonprofit institutions of higher learning of the State are regionally accredited by the same accrediting organization; the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Senator Burgoyne said the bill is a result of his consultation with SBE staff and significant assistance from Chairman Mortimer. He stated the SBE staff vetted the technicalities and the SBE has not taken a position on the legislation. **Senator Burgoyne** explained the changes in the legislation: 1.) sets a general standard for the transferability of credits; 2.) updates the statute that governs post secondary career technical education to reflect the current practice; and 3.) codifies the existing credit transfer guidelines of the SBE and gives SBE the force of law to overcome inconsistent application. He stated the goal of this legislation is to ensure the transferability of credits between universities

Senator Guthrie asked if he had examples of an institution of higher learning not allowing the transfer of credits. **Senator Burgoyne** replied he does not have specific examples of that occurrence. He said the bill is to incentivize and push for the transfer of credits between universities and colleges. This is to avoid any controversy regarding the transfer of credits to and from the colleges or universities.

Vice Chairman Thayn said dual credit students have found the credits they would have the earned in a specific subject are not transferable. He asked if that problem would be addressed with this legislation. **Blake Youde**, Chief Communications and Legislative Affairs Officer, SBE, replied the transfer credits which are stated in the statute are still tied to the SBE's general education requirements as defined in SBE policy. He said any of the more specialized courses would be degree specific.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked specifically would this affect calculus or chemistry credits. **Mr. Youde** replied if the class meets the general education requirement as defined by the policy of the SBE.

TESTIMONY:

The following people testified in opposition to **S 1147**:

Selena Grace, Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Idaho State University (ISU) (see Attachments 4 and 5);

Joe Stegner, Special Assistant to the President for Governmental Affairs, University of Idaho (U of I).

Their testimony discussed issues regarding the following: accreditation role of NWCCU; unnecessary to codify SBE rules; there are established articulation and transfer policies; receiving institutions should be the evaluators of credit equivalency; the six general education discipline standards were set by the eight institutions of higher learning in the State which stipulate the common core transferability; student learning is measured by outcome rather than course credits; challenges lie in the discipline specific credits; the bill does not protect institutions of higher learning from transferring credits from schools that are unsanctioned or unaccredited; students do not benefit; and undermines the quality and integrity of the institution accepting the credits.

The following person spoke in favor of **S 1147**:

Ron Harriman, Chairman of tax Accountability Committee of Idaho (see attachment 6).

His testimony discussed issues regarding the following: ensures that classes and coursework offered and taught by the States institutions of higher learning are transferable; economically important to the people of Idaho; and sets similar educational standards across all the State's institutions.

Senator Guthrie asked Mr. Stegner out of 1,000 credits requested to be transfer, what percentage does the U of I deny. **Mr. Stegner** replied it is his understanding that it is under 1 percent.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked for an explanation regarding the transferability of 36 general education framework credits as stated in the bill. **Senator Burgoyne** replied that allows students with an associate degree the ability to transfer to institutions that do not offer the associates degree to transfer those credits. The burden goes to the receiving institution to treat those credits in a certain way.

Senator Burgoyne concluded his presentation by stating the guidelines for accepting transferable credits exist yet they are not being followed. In the testimony resistance was expressed from the universities about complying with the existing guidelines as they are written. He said those testifying suggested there are three better ways to address the issue than to simply follow the SBE guidelines. The bill puts the guidelines into Idaho Code so they are followed. He recommended that if there are problems with the guidelines the universities should be going to the SBE to remedy the guidelines.

In respect to the discrimination clause, **Senator Burgoyne** stated there is nothing wrong with discriminating against students based on their attributes and program when they apply to a university. He explained the essentials of the antidiscrimination clause. He stated institutions of higher learning should only transfer the credits that the guidelines require they transfer.

Senator Guthrie stated he is struggling with the issue. He asked Ms. Grace how many credits are denied transfer at ISU. **Ms. Grace** replied if the institution does not offer a course they cannot accept those credits for a course they do not offer. She explained the students are not losing that credit it is being applied towards elective coursework. She said there are nuances in technical programs and health professions. She explained at ISU 27 percent of the degrees are in health professions and 21 percent are in career technical education. In some of those programs there is specialized accreditation and that impacts how ISU is able to transfer in courses.

Vice Chairman Thayn stated he is not ready to vote on this. He said he appreciates the work of Senator Burgoyne and does not want students to be lose the incentive to continue education if they have to transfer between institutions. He is not able to vote yes on this proposal.

Senator Guthrie said his concerns are consistent with Vice Chairman Thayn. He said at first glance this is a tremendous idea and with some more research we can have better appreciation and stewardship of transferable credits.

MOTION:

Senator Guthrie moved to hold **S 1147** in Committee subject to the call of the Chair. **Senator Crabtree** seconded the motion.

Chairman Mortimer stated he is willing to accept the will of the Committee. He expressed his longtime frustration with this issue. He said he applauds the effort of Senator Burgoyne in taking the first steps to resolve the problem and looks forward to continued discussions.

Senator Ward-Engelking said she is in agreement with the Chairman. This is a very important issue for students in Idaho; students should be able to move from one school to another in this state without losing credits.

Senator Buckner-Webb said she appreciates this legislation being brought forward. She has dealt with this issue with so many students in her district and stated there is so much frustration from parents. She emphasized that this needs to be to resolved.

The motion passed by **voice vote**.

HCR 25 **Chairman Mortimer** said due to the lack of time, **HCR 25** will be held for another day.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 3:36 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn Mohr
Secretary