

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 05, 2018
TIME: 9:00 A.M.
PLACE: Room EW41
MEMBERS: Chairman VanOrden, Vice Chairman McDonald, Representatives Shepherd, Boyle, Clow, Mendive, Kerby, Cheatham, Amador, DeMordaunt, Moon, Syme, Ehardt, Kloc (Chilcote), McCrostie, Toone
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) DeMordaunt
GUESTS: Aaron McKinnon, Karen Lauritzen, Crystal Tibbals, Shelley Hopkins, Matt Compton, Hannah Henry, David Gibson, Sue Wigdorski, Kari Overall, Idaho Education Association; Misty Swanson, Idaho School Boards Association; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural School Administrators, Clark Corbin, Idaho Education News; Gidion Tolman, Division of Financial Management; Mike Keckler, State Board of Education

Vice-chairman McDonald called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Kari Overall, Idaho Education Association, introduced the teachers speaking to the committee. She thanked the committee for the opportunity to celebrate Idaho teachers and public education, and she said it is important for legislators to hear from teachers, parents and students.

Hanna Henry, second-grade teacher from Bonneville, explained her use of leveled rotations and worksheets in small group instruction. She said her students' Fall to Winter reading fluency significantly improved, and she attributes it to using leveled instruction. She said what she most would like is the funding to be able to provide more hands-on learning and field trips. She suggested the state create grants for which teachers could apply. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Henry said students switch classes and work with another teacher for thirty minutes a day. This provides the opportunity for students working at a higher or lower grade level to work with students in their grade level, said Ms. Henry. She said her school district is struggling to provide field trips, but she will discuss the state funding of field trips which meet curriculum goals with the school administration. Ms. Henry said the new reading test takes thirty minutes to complete. She gives the Star tests once a month for both reading and math. She could also give the IRI for tracking reading progress, she added. She said this approach exposes first grade students who are reading at a second-grade level exposure to second-grade words and skills, without teaching them, and she has seen high first-grade readers really improve.

Shelly Hopkins, seventh-grade ELA teacher at Kuna Middle School, explained how the standards-based grading and mastery education pilot project is working. The learning is project based, she said, and it requires scaffolding the skills. This is difficult because of large class sizes and teachers' lack of knowledge and experience using mastery-based education models. She added she is convinced it is impossible to implement with class sizes of one-hundred and higher, and she has been working seventy hours a week to implement the model. She recommended funding to hire more teachers and support staff. Ms. Hopkins said the current funding formula does not allow districts to both pay teachers competitive wages and to also have lower class sizes. She also requested the state protect internet technology and access, and provide enough funding that schools do not have to choose between technology and functional furniture. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Hopkins said Kuna Middle School is piloting mastery-based

education in all of its classes. Because the model is very new, the district has sent a few teachers to professional development classes. Students do not move to the next concept until they master the more basic concept, and the district uses a software program which tracks students' individual progress, she added. She said this model is challenging for ELA classes, because those classes are actually two subjects, reading and writing, and there are a lot of different ways to teach and measure mastery.

Vice-chairman McDonald turned the gavel over to **Chairman VanOrden**.

Karen Lauritzen, Post Falls School District, spoke to being a veteran teacher in her school district. She says she has seen many changes, and the diversity of learners in the school district is extreme. There is only one ELL teacher in the entire school district she added. She explained the skills taught in her class, and how she connects them to students' Invent Idaho Projects. The IRI scores rose from 50% to 78% proficiency at the mid-year point, said Ms. Lauritzen. She said students in Idaho have unequal opportunities, because the state only provides half-day kindergarten, which does not provide enough time for students to learn the more rigorous standards. She has noticed a difference between students who attend half-day kindergarten and those who attend a whole day of kindergarten. The students who attend kindergarten for a full school day come to first grade with the skills needed to learn the more rigorous state standards. Ms. Lauritzen said research shows that full-day kindergarten can decrease achievement gaps for minority and low-income students, and the Economic Policy Institute shows a monetary return of three to one. Participation in full-day kindergarten also improves attendance, she said. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Lauritzen said the staff is implementing the Next Generation Science Standards, but the emphasis is currently on ELA classes. The ELA curriculum is being adapted to include science concepts and standards, and the students love the hands-on experience they receive through the Invent Idaho Projects. If she had to choose between funding preschool or full-day kindergarten, Ms. Lauritzen said funding full-day kindergarten is the best choice. Parents see half-day kindergarten as not important, she added, and do not send their children to kindergarten. The students who are home schooled are not prepared for first grade, she added. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Lauritzen said for many years ELA classes used 90% fiction and 10% non-fiction literature. Now, ELA classes use 50% fiction and 50% non-fiction, so science and social studies can be incorporated. The Post Falls School District has used the money appropriated for literacy intervention to increase the number of paraprofessionals, to make groups smaller, and for the adoption of new curriculum, she said. The district felt it would not be possible to provide full-day kindergarten classes, with the amount of money appropriated.

Aaron McKinnon, Boise School District, gave a veteran science teacher's perspective. He has taught for twenty-two years. He said he is making science fun and challenging, to affect student achievement, and has shared engaging ways for students to master the standards to his peers. He said he loves project-based learning, and making the essential questions the focus of the learning plan. He would like more time to investigate subjects further, he said. Legislators can help with this by recognizing the challenges teachers face. If teachers know they are being supported, they can focus on their classrooms. He encouraged the committee members to make good legislation choices, through continued education about topics which may be new. In response to questions from the committee, Mr. McKinnon said there are now fewer content areas, so teachers can go into more detail. **Ms. Overall** said she did not like science, until she met Mr. McKinnon, and she can see and hear the curiosity of students in his class.

Crystal Tibbals, Troy School District, spoke to the school district's efforts to increase parent involvement at parent-teacher conferences. The district has increased parent attendance at conferences to 90%. Parents are busy, she said, and it is difficult to get them involved with their children's school. The school had to convince parents that involvement in their children's school is worth the time. When conferences were during the day, parent attendance was 70%, with one parent attending conference. The district moved conferences to after school and evening times, and provided free dinner. It also scheduled conferences for parents with multiple children into one block, and the school provided a safe place for the kids during the conference. Parent attendance is now 96-99%, and often includes both parents, she said. Conferences are also more focused and efficient. Because of the new standards and report cards, it was important to educate parents to help them feel comfortable reading and understanding the report cards. Another way the district has increased parent involvement, said Ms. Tibbals, is by involving the parents of elementary school students in their reading goals, and sending progress reports home monthly. The school uses many forms of outreach, such as the weekly student folders, weekly newsletters, parent surveys, flyers, emails, reward certificates, and district website. It takes a lot of time, she said, but it is worth it. The connections with students' families support the districts mission of life-long learning. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Tibbals said the type of communication with parents depends on the grade level. At the Title I School, two-way communications with parents help the district know what support the family needs. For example, the district provides food at the parent-teacher conferences, for parents going straight from work. Grades and test scores have improved, she said, but the parent involvement initiatives have been done along with other initiatives, such as implementing common core standards and educating parents that they are really not very different.

Dave Gibson, Twin Falls School District, explained how he uses technology to enhance traditional teaching methods. He said interactive white boards are used, so teachers and students can manipulate information. Chrome books individualize learning and allow for collaboration on projects. Mr. Gibson also uses technology for virtual tours, research, and writing music in small groups with performance software. He said he prefers iPads, because students can experiment with looping music, learn about pitch, and compose music. Music composition increases student learning, said Mr. Gibson, and there is music in every elementary school every week in Twin Falls. Although the iPads are more versatile, and a lot of applications are free, they are more expensive than Chromebooks, he said. He would like funds for a one-to-one ratio of students to iPads, and to be able to replace the desktop computers, which are eight years old. Mr. Gibson said he would like the legislature to increase funds to school districts for technology. In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Gibson said studies show test scores improve ten to twelve percent with music participation. He would like the amount of time for music class and the availability of classes to be increased. Mr. Gibson said Twin Falls paid for the interactive white boards, and all teachers have them. However, the professional development for using them is lacking, he said. He purchased his iPad for music class with a grant from the PTA. Although the district is working on a one-to-one ratio for Chromebooks, iPads are more versatile for music class, he said.

Kari Overall, Idaho Education Association, thanked the committee for the opportunity to present. She encouraged the members to visit the schools in their districts, when the legislative session is over, and meet the educators and students.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Representative VanOrden
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary