

MINUTES  
**HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 21, 2018

**TIME:** 8:00 A.M.

**PLACE:** Room EW41

**MEMBERS:** Chairman VanOrden, Vice Chairman McDonald, Representatives Shepherd, Boyle, Clow, Mendive, Kerby, Cheatham, Amador, DeMordaunt, Moon, Syme, Ehardt, Kloc (Tway), McCrostie, Toone

**ABSENT/  
EXCUSED:** None

**GUESTS:** Valerie Hershey, Middleton Academy; Rachel Lightfoot, Nampa School District; Gina White, Stephanie Thomas, Nampa School District - Greenhurst; Sue Wigdorski, Idaho Education Association; Roger Brown, Boise State University; Clark Corbin, Idaho Education News

**Chairman VanOrden** called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

**RS 26003:** **Rep. McCrostie** spoke to **RS 26003**. He said the legislation addresses First Amendment Free Speech Rights on post-secondary campuses. Attorney General **Jeff Sessions** accused Boise State University of infringing on free speech rights to avoid controversy, said Rep. McCrostie, and BSU spent over a year revising its free speech policy with the Idaho Freedom Foundation and the ACLU. The legislation ensures rights are protected on post-secondary education campuses, he added.

**MOTION:** **Rep. Kerby** made a motion to introduce **RS 26003**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

**Sherri Ybarra**, Superintendent of Public Instruction, introduced **Kelly Brady**, the director of mastery education. Superintendent Ybarra said she believes this is the right path to achieve personalized learning in Idaho. The system caters to students' individual needs and challenges them to think for themselves, said Superintendent Ybarra. Students only move on to new concepts and skills when they demonstrate mastery of the previous concepts and skills. This model looks different in each school, she added. Diplomas will truly represent that graduates have the skills to succeed. Idaho is getting national attention for its implementation of mastery-based learning, said Superintendent Ybarra, and two states have mirrored Idaho's legislation.

**Kelly Brady** introduced **Karla Phillips**, policy director for the Foundation for Excellence in Education. Ms. Brady said the foundation's role is to help each state create its own path and remove obstacles. She said most students believe they are ready for college, but many find they need re-mediation when they begin college. Most students believe they are reading at grade level, but only 34% are. She said Idaho is leading the way with mastery model incubators. She said voters are more comfortable with the term mastery than with the term competency, and with incubator rather than pilot project. Ms. Brady said the State Department of Education is doing a good job of balancing state support with local support. Communication and outreach should be a priority. It is very important in the early legislation, she added.

**Ms. Brady** said the Department has learned many lessons. People's perceptions are one of the biggest barriers, said Ms. Brady, because people expect education to be the same as it always has been, and because they expect students to graduate from high school in four years. Because of this, some schools have to translate the mastery-based model back to the traditional model.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Phillips** said she thinks the Idaho Legislature and State Department of Education have shown outstanding leadership, and this is why Idaho is so far ahead of other states. However, if a local district has not bought in to the idea, it will come up with reasons it can't implement the mastery model, she added. Ms. Phillips said there is not much flexibility in federal law for standardized testing, and there is no good way to move away from grade-level measurements. However, the data from the tests is still important. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Phillips said all incubator schools were required to include all demographics of students in the pilot project. Idaho statute requires mastery of skills and is moving away from seat time to mastery, she added. States are being encouraged to offer tests on demand, she said, and the states should introduce this during the next round of negotiations with the testing agencies. Changing the school funding formula from seat time to enrollment will be one step in supporting mastery education, she added. Schools need the flexibility to re-define a credit hour, said Ms. Phillips. In the past, seat time was used to calculate credits. With the new model, credits would be earned with mastery of content and skills.

**Ms. Brady** introduced **Christine McMillan**, principal of Middleton Academy. Ms. McMillan said the school was accepted into the incubator program two years ago and received fantastic support from the State Department of Education. She outlined the steps the school followed to implement the mastery-based education model. Ms. McMillan spoke about the school's successes, challenges, partnerships and possibilities. She said the model of education raised grades and decreased discipline problems. In response to questions from the committee, **Wayne Ross**, ELA teacher, said when students see the rewards of the system they get past the initial resistance. The system sets students up for success, he added.

**Gina White**, principal of Greenhurst Elementary School in the Nampa School District, spoke about the school's experiences as an incubator school. She said what she loves about the model is it creates an individualized learning plan for each student. The staff is excited about the process, and it builds community, she added. By blending grade levels, students are achieving mastery of skills rather than just being passed on to the next grade, said Ms. White.

In response to questions from the committee, **Stephanie Thomas**, fifth-grade teacher, said students are working in four or five different modules in math. One way instruction has changed, said Ms. Thomas, is teachers do more partner teaching in blended classrooms. All teachers support the model, because they see how excited the students are, she added. One frustration is the school and teachers still have traditional time constraints, said Ms. Thomas.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. White** said the teachers are viewed as teachers of a set of standards, not of a grade level, and students do not dislike the system. How the model is presented to students and parents is important, she added. The average class size is twenty-five students per class. The school utilizes parent volunteers for small groups within the class. Ms. White said every student has an individual plan to help that student be successful. Parents are involved most of the time with struggling students, she added. One of the things that helped was the school was already doing standards-based grading, and the parents are happy students are gaining mastery, not being pushed on to the next grade, said Ms. White. One of the concerns is that the elementary school is the only school using a mastery-based education model, and some of the fifth-graders are performing at sixth-grade and seventh-grade levels. The middle school uses a traditional system. Another concern is standardized testing times. They do not line up with the mastery model, and Just-in-time Testing would work better with the model, she added.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Thomas** said most students look at re-testing as an opportunity for growth. The tickets the school uses empower students and pinpoint which concepts they need to learn, she added. Some students are reluctant, but the way the school has set it up is not threatening, said Ms. Thomas.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. White** said the Mastery Connect Program helps group students by which ones are struggling with a concept. By doing the re-teaching, students are able to master concepts and move on.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Brady** said Meridian Technical Charter School has 200 students in grades nine through twelve. **Cory Olson**, Columbia High School, said Columbia has 1300 students, and it is only the ninth-grade cohort which is doing the mastery-education model as a STEM Academy within the school. Mr. Olson said he believes the mastery-based education model can work in a comprehensive environment. There was resistance from students at first, but students eventually embrace the system, he added.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ryan Bandecourt**, Columbia High School, said the school uses a block schedule, where A days are mastery-based classes, and B days are traditional classes. The school uses a teacher-mentor system, rather than teacher as lecturer system. The feedback from students is diverse, said Mr. Bandecourt, with some students resisting the model, and others loving it. **Ms. Brady** said the focus group has gone to all the incubator schools to meet with parents, students, and school staff. The Department believes the model is the foundation for personalized learning.

**H 589:**

**Duncan Robb**, State Department of Education, spoke to **H 589**. He said this bill allows more schools to participate in mastery-based education, and it changes Idaho Code from reflecting an incubator stage of mastery education to a state-wide transition to mastery education. The biggest change is the addition of an advisory board to give recommendations to the State Board of Education, said Mr. Robb. There are few policy barriers, he said, but many of the barriers perceived are cultural. The Department hopes to gather knowledge about what it looks like, in professional development, for example, so it can inform other schools. Subsection three codifies the Mastery Education Network, as it currently operates. Subsection four changes Idaho Code to move from the incubator stage to a state-wide transition to mastery-based education. Subsection 4c addresses how schools receiving funds for mastery may use them. This codifies what the Department has learned about the model best practices. The Department will be able to take what it has learned and share that information with other schools, said Mr. Robb. Section six is a new section which clarifies how a district can begin to use the model without using state funds, and section seven distinguishes between the schools receiving funds and those which don't.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Robb** said that what the incubator schools said they needed had some influence on their funding. Some of the funds were used to hire more paraprofessional staff, but there is no indication the model will need more educators, he said. Most states have not appropriated additional funding to implement the model, said Mr. Robb. One thing Idaho has done well is have a design and planning year, but the model will look different in each school, he added. The K-12 Task Force wants to implement mastery-based education state wide, and it is designing resources for schools which want to participate. However, the Department is not interested in forcing any district to use the model, said Mr. Robb.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Robb** said the intent of the language about the advisory board is to limit the Board to twelve members, one from each member of the twelve stakeholder groups. During the incubator school phase, only in some cases was every school in the district in the incubator group, said Mr. Robb. None of the schools feel comfortable forgoing the additional funds yet, said Mr. Robb, but the decision to strike the number is that this will be determined by the funds available, not on statute.

**MOTION:** **Rep. Kerby** made a motion to send **H 589** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Robb** said schools can still benefit from participation in the Mastery Network, even if they do not need funding. The current incubators will not lose funding based on this legislation, he added. The State Department of Education collects data on how the incubator schools are using the funding. **Ms. Brady** said all the incubator schools have to submit requests to the grant system to receive their additional funding. The student management system and the curriculum insure goals are being met, she added.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** **Rep. McDonald** made a substitute motion to **HOLD H 589** to time certain, February 27, 2018

**Rep. DeMordaunt** spoke against the substitute motion.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION WITHDRAWN:** **Rep. McDonald** withdrew his substitute motion to **HOLD H 589** to time certain.

**VOTE ON MOTION:** **Motion carried by voice vote.** Rep. Kerby will sponsor the bill on the floor.

**ADJOURN:** There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

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Representative VanOrden  
Chair

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Jenifer Cavaness-Williams  
Secretary