

MINUTES
Approved by the Committee
Idaho Content Standards Committee
Thursday, August 06, 2020
9:00 A.M.
Room EW42
Boise, Idaho

Cochair Marshall called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.; a silent roll call was taken. Members in attendance: Cochair Representative Gary Marshall and Representatives Dorothy Moon, Ryan Kerby, Paul Amador, and John McCrostie; Cochair Senator Steven Thayn and Senators Lori Den Hartog, Jim Woodward (via video conference), and Dave Lent; LSO staff Matt Drake (for E. Bowen) and Jennifer Kish. Unable to attend/excused: Senator Ward-Engelking. Attendance of audience members was not recorded.

NOTE: presentations and materials distributed to members are posted to the Idaho Legislature's website: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2020/interim>; and copies of those items are on file with the Legislative Services Office located in the State Capitol.

Cochair Marshall made opening remarks thanking LSO staff and guest speakers for their time to participate in the meeting. He then requested a motion to approve minutes from the June 22 meeting. **A motion to approve minutes of the June 22, 2020, meeting was made by Cochair Thayn and seconded by Senator Den Hartog; the minutes, as presented, were approved unanimously by the members.**

At 9:05 a.m., Cochair Marshall invited Patricia Levesque, CEO of ExcelinEd, presenting via video conference, to begin her presentation. Ms. Levesque explained that ExcelinEd is a national policy advocacy organization that assists states in creating a more student-centered education system. Her organization not only worked with state standards but also assessment and accountability with colleges for workforce education policy. Her presentation [Idaho Standards Review](#) focused on the efforts of ExcelinEd's involvement with the state of Florida (where ExcelinEd is based) during its content standards upgrade, which are recognized by the acronym BEST (Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking).

- Cochair Thayn asked what determines whether a standard is or is not a common core. Ms. Levesque answered that a common core should be a fundamental skill, where a student understands how something works and was not just memorizing a fact/rule.
- Rep. Amador asked what type of metric was used to determine the quality of a state's content standards. Ms. Levesque responded that her organization looks to entities, such as the Fordham Institute, that have studied those standards for decades. Additionally, she emphasized the necessity for teachers to be able to understand and employ the standards.
- Rep. Moon inquired whether Ms. Levesque was directly involved in the rewriting of the BEST standards for Florida. Ms. Levesque explained that she was not; she was the go-between from the professionals to the teachers and rewrite teams. Rep. Moon asked who had invited Ms. Levesque to present at today's meeting. Ms. Levesque noted that it was the committee who invited her through contact with Mr. Blake Youde.
- Rep. Kerby asked about the process when deciding the break down of the functions of the standards. Ms. Levesque noted that she did not deal with those items, that was the commissioner and department of education's responsibility.
- Sen. Den Hartog inquired about the cost of the standard's rewrite, especially with the use of professional writers. Ms. Levesque reported that the cost for the professional writers cost approximately \$80,000.00.

At 9:34 a.m., the committee heard comments from Mike Petrilli, President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, presenting via video conference. He spoke to the reason why some states are recognized as having strong content standards. He noted that specifics and focus can get lost when large committees, which often compromise too much to political influences, are tasked to rewrite standards. He reported that common core standards were adopted in 2010 to provide clear, coherent, and challenging standards that would be paired with assessment tests that had higher standards also. These standards were not perfect but they were more specific and allowed for local school systems to supplement the standards. Mr. Petrilli cautioned trying to attempt a rewrite during the occurrence of COVID due to communication and funding limitations. He also cautioned about the costs that occur with a new curriculum: professional writers, new assessment tests, additional professional trainings, new textbooks, etc. Mr. Petrilli felt that there were some negatives with Florida's standards and encouraged the Idaho delegation to look at Massachusetts and California standards.

- Cochair Marshall requested more information about the use of professional standard writers. Mr. Petrilli explained that these individuals often had many years of experience creating the wording for such standards and/or also had many years of experience in the subject matter and a knack for making it clear and concise. Cochair Marshall asked why skilled, practicing teachers couldn't do the same, especially if the group was kept small. Mr. Petrilli surmised that such a group of individuals could be effective, as long as those individuals also had the broader perspective of the process. Cochair Marshall asked whether paid individuals were any more effective than volunteers on the standards committees. Mr. Petrilli stated that, essentially, the individuals had to be someone that had the respect and trust of those who appoint them, as well as had the ability and power to make decisions.
- Rep. Amador inquired about the importance of the use of multiple methods to solve math problems. Mr. Petrilli responded that the employment of the multiple methods allows students to understand process.
- Cochair Thayne asked how much overlap existed between standards, if one were to compare the state of Massachusetts (common core) and Indiana (not common core). Mr. Petrilli noted that there was always overlap. He added that common core was an attempt to make those standards more specific by providing examples of a reading list, or specific math skills, or theories in science.
- Rep. Kerby noted that Massachusetts had many examples in its standards and wondered why. Mr. Petrilli offered that, when states asked for feedback about state standards, teachers and administrators responded that some items were confusing; hence, the addition of those examples for clarity.
- Rep. Moon inquired whether there was a copyright on common core standards. Mr. Petrilli explained that, initially, when common core was developed, the state superintendents and governors were concerned that someone would print and sell the standards, hence, the standards were initially copyrighted. He added that it was a rather moot point nowadays as the standards were online and available to anyone to use. Rep. Moon then asked about the limitation to make changes to only 15% of the common core standards. Mr. Petrilli explained that there was no enforcement of such a limit. He noted that the percentage was initially put in place so that states could tweak standards to accommodate states' differences in the hope that it would help the standards be more easily embraced. Rep. Moon inquired how Florida's BEST standards assessment cost compared to the SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) assessment cost. Mr. Petrilli reported that he could not answer that question. He noted that one would have to take into consideration the costs for question/item development and preliminary testing for a new assessment rather than employing the SBAC in its packaged format and to consider the shared costs of being in a consortium with other states.

At 10:08 a.m., a joint presentation occurred from individuals of the Independent Institute, Dr. Graham Walker, Executive Director, and Dr. Williamson Evers, Director of the Educational Center

on Educational Excellence (via video conference). Dr. Evers opined that common core standards emphasized skills over substance and had other initial deficiencies that were unable to be corrected before they were adopted nationwide. He observed that Florida's updated standards could stand as a new model for other states to build upon. Dr. Evers recommended that Idaho review the standards of Florida, Massachusetts, or California rather than those of Texas or Indiana. He noted that Idaho could consider using Florida's assessment system. Both Dr. Walker and Dr. Evers referenced the [NAEP \(National Assessment of Educational Progress\) report](#) to show Idaho's ranking among other states. Both presenters noted that Idaho's NAEP scores "flattened" in 2010, which is coincidentally when Idaho adopted common core standards.

- Cochair Thayn asked whether Dr. Evers was suggesting that Idaho use Florida's standards and tweak to Idaho's needs. Dr. Evers agreed with that statement.
- Rep. Moon asked, in regard to assessment costs, not including any development costs, whether the yearly cost of testing in Florida was any better than employing the SBAC. Dr. Evers felt that all assessments used a similar metric but the cost was dependent on the number of states involved. Rep. Moon inquired about the use of professional writers for standards. Dr. Evers commented that professional writers were useful and recommended their employment; however, he encouraged the inclusion of teachers and other professionals in conjunction with the effort.
- Rep. Kerby inquired, if Massachusetts was doing so well in the NAEP report, why Idaho shouldn't look at Massachusetts' standards. Additionally, he inquired which other states were as strong as Florida. Dr. Evers reported that Massachusetts had actually dropped since adopting common core, but that the strength of that state may be entrenched in the state's historical educational traditions.
- Rep. Amador asked what type of metric was used to determine the quality of a state's content standards. Dr. Evers reported that expert panels provided those matrixes; before common core was created, the Florida [Education] Foundation and the American Federation of Teachers did the expert reviews on standards.
- Cochair Thayn questioned why Florida's standards were more focused on learning outcomes. Dr. Evers responded that he could look into that further, but noted that in common core there were some unusual cross-teaching requirements that were not effective.
- Sen. Lent asked Dr. Evers to speak to the relationship between professional development and successful standards. Dr. Evers noted that it was difficult to determine whether the professional development was effective or how effective it was. He observed that it was simply better to make the standards more clear so that there was not a need for such extensive professional development that now occurs.

At 10:42 a.m., Dr. W. Gary Martin, Leischuck Endowed Professor of Mathematics at Auburn University, was invited to begin his [presentation](#) via video conference to the committee. Dr. Martin spoke to his experience teaching mathematics and experience working on writing curriculum and Alabama's state standards.

- Rep. Kerby inquired why Dr. Martin suggested to eliminate Algebra I from the 8th grade. Dr. Martin responded that what used to be Algebra I has mostly been absorbed into 7th & 8th grade math skills. He noted that there sometimes exists a gap between Algebra I and Algebra II because basic algebraic skills are lacking. Rep. Kerby then asked why the state of Minnesota had math NAEP scores comparable to Massachusetts, considering that no one was touting that state's standards. Dr. Martin reported that Minnesota had great funding for education and strong socioeconomics.

The committee recessed at 11:10 a.m. for a break.

At 11:25 a.m., the cochair invited Marilyn Whitney, Deputy Superintendent of Communication and Policy for the State Department of Education, and her colleagues to provide a report, [Idaho Content Standards Review](#), from the three subject rewrite committees. Ms. Whitney reported that the

department had enlisted assistance from the [Region 17 Comprehensive Center](#) to assist the rewrite committees. The reports were provided by the rewrite team coordinators Cathy Beals - mathematics (p.3-13), Liz James - ELA (p.14-21), and Sharon Cates - science (p.22-32).

- Cochair Thayn asked Ms. Whitney to explain the role that staff from Region 17 Comprehensive Center would play with the review committees. Ms. Whitney explained that those individuals would assist the coordinators on agendas and organization but also facilitate the content review groups and subgroup meetings.
- Cochair Marshall expressed concern about the timeline being efficient/effective, especially in light of COVID interruptions and limitations. Ms. Beals reported that, while the reasons varied, most were related to constraints with COVID and noted that her team was comprised of approximately 50% teachers. Rep. Kerby noted that everyone had concerns with the general time constraints and also COVID-related issues; he encouraged a little peer pressure to inspire others on the review committees to "get crackin."
- Rep. Moon appealed to have teachers who had experience with other states' standards on the committees and to have more parents on the committees. Ms. Cates reported that the committees were instructed to use the nomination process to place individuals on the committees; committees were not to solicit participants. She noted that there were very few nominations for parents and community members. Ms. Whitney added that the department was receptive to any/all names provided, but did not want the perception that the committee members were specially selected. Rep. Moon encouraged the department to replace the members lost.
- Rep. Amador asked whether the department had discussed the use of professional standard writers. Ms. Whitney acknowledged that one reason the department enlisted the help of Region 17 Comprehensive Center was to learn about those types of ideas. She cautioned that she did not want to rely heavily on national professionals but would rather endorse the use of Idaho talent.
- Rep. McCrostie inquired about the cost of Region 17's services and the services it could provide. Ms. Whitney explained that funding for the comprehensive centers was provided by the US Department of Education and so there was no cost to the state of Idaho for Region 17's services. She shared that Region 17 assists in identifying additional resources for educational endeavors, such as professional writers. Rep. McCrostie noted that some review members may be playing dual roles: parent, teacher, community member, etc., and asked whether the department expected more attrition. Ms. Whitney agreed with his statement and foresaw more losses due to unexpected circumstances, but was determined to refill those positions.
- Cochair Thayn questioned whether the math committee expected significant or slight changes to the standards. Ms. Beals admitted that she expected significant changes to the format based on recent feedback from review members. Cochair Thayn asked whether the number of standards was expected to increase or decrease. Ms. Beals reported that those with education backgrounds were concerned about eliminating standards, which might interrupt progression learning, while others sought to make the standards more clear and better organized.
- Rep. Moon wondered what type of assistance could be offered to community review committee members to accommodate those who would miss work or other obligations, especially in light of the fact that teachers were able to have substitutes to cover their absences. Ms. Whitney explained that the current plan was for members to meet virtually, which would allow for multiple shorter meetings. She acknowledged that there really was no perfect way to accommodate or compensate all members.
- Cochair Marshall inquired about any compromise on the standards' quality when decided by a large committee. Ms. Whitney reminded the committee that there were smaller subgroups of approximately six members within the subject areas.

At 12:35 p.m., the committee moved to its discussion portion of the agenda.

- Cochair Thayn summarized that Mr. Petrilli suggested that the state of Idaho start with its current common core standards and make adjustments and that Dr. Evers suggested that Idaho start with Florida's standards and make adjustments. He admitted that the [letter](#) from the education committees to the Department of Education inferred to replace the standards, but he theorized that it didn't intend for the participants to start "from scratch." Cochair Marshall agreed, observing that by its name, common core items were the core skills common to all students in all states.
- Sen. Lent proposed that it was the committee's responsibility to identify those items that are continually "hamstringing" the effectiveness of standards and to attempt to solve those issues while the review committees worked on their tasks. Rep. Kerby suggested that the committee identify those items and place them on the next agenda for discussion. He added that most states have the same issues that continually plague common core standards and so the committee should look at other states' solutions, possibly invite guests to speak on this.
- Cochair Thayn reminded the committee that the state was able to change the standards, the only requirement was that the state had to HAVE standards. He suggested that committee members review the letter and possibly identify items that were not addressed by the letter for the next agenda.
- Rep. Amador proposed that the committee identify the objectionable issues - possibly misunderstandings - with common core standards that occur from community members, constituents, etc.
- Rep. McCrostie encouraged the committee to keep moving forward and not change the targets while the rewrites are occurring. He cautioned not to add worry to those in the educational system who were already dealing with school starting under COVID, a shortage of substitutes, etc. Cochair Marshall entreated committee members to recognize that additional goals/instruction may arise for the rewrite committees as issues were discussed.

Cochairs Marshall and Thayn bantered the idea that the committee may meet near/during the anticipated special session, but acknowledged that LSO staff and legislative members may be quite busy at that time already. With that, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.