

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Monday, February 17, 2020
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Lincoln Auditorium, WW02
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Lent, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None
- 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 Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m. He opened by reading a poem, "Destiny", from the book *A Heap o' Living Along Life's Highway* by Edgar A. Guest.
- PAGE INTRODUCTION:** **Halle Torgerson**, Senate page, introduced herself to the Committee. She told them of her future plans to attend Boise State University for her pre-medicine requirements.
- PRESENTATION:** **Wally Hedrick**, President, Idaho School Board Association (ISBA), introduced the ISBA officers and staff who were in attendance. **Mr. Hedrick** explained the makeup of the ISBA, and gave an overview identifying transparency, accountability, and local governance as the foundation for the operation of each school district and charter school. **Mr. Hedrick** introduced the five trustees who, having been encouraged to share something the Committee may not know about their school districts, would be presenting.
- PRESENTATION:** **Bryan Pyper**, ISBA Region 6 Vice Chair and Madison School District Vice Chair, reported accomplishments of the Madison School District over the past year including the following:
- parent and student engagement;
 - student teacher mentorship;
 - language immersion classes; and
 - pre-professional courses and work study in nursing, agriculture, welding, construction, and automotive engineering.
- Mr. Pyper** shared with the Committee the school district's high graduation and go-on rates.
- DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked Mr. Pyper what he believed to be the reasons for the district's success. Mr. Pyper responded the Madison School District had extremely active and supportive parents as well as outstanding educators. He stated his belief that the most important indicator of a student's success is supportive parents or guardians.
- Chairman Mortimer** inquired how **Mr. Pyper** believed other districts could increase parent participation. **Mr. Pyper** replied Madison District's approach was to focus on what was best for the students.

PRESENTATION: **Karen Pyron**, ISBA Region 7 Vice Chairman and Trustee with Butte County School District in Arco, informed the Committee that through training by the ISBA and the Idaho State Department of Education (Department), and with the help of professional development funds made possible by the Legislature, the Butte School District was able to analyze student achievement data. This analysis revealed a serious need to improve sixth grade math scores. **Ms. Pyron** explained a plan was developed to address this issue. She shared planning and implementation processes that required the cooperation of the administration, School Board, and teaching staff. **Ms. Pyron** emphasized that local control was an important aspect of this process. She pointed out that it is too early to declare the new program a success, but there are indications that improvements are being made.

Chairman Mortimer and **Senator Den Hartog** congratulated Ms. Pyron on the Butte County School District's use of student data to create programs to better serve their students. **Senator Lent** echoed their sentiment.

PRESENTATION: **Michelle Lippert**, ISBA Region 1 Vice Chair, shared the successes of the Post Falls School District including:

- high graduation rates;
- student access to college credits; and
- programs requiring suspended students to engage in community service and academic work.

Ms. Lippert discussed the importance of social-emotional education and suicide prevention.

Senator Lent voiced his support of social-emotional education. **Senator Ward-Engelking** thanked Ms. Lippert for her service to Idaho education and expressed her hope for greater funding for social-emotional education.

PRESENTATION: **Marg Chipman**, ISBA Past President, presented the successes of the Weiser School District, where the first priority is the children. She listed programs available to the students including:

- expansive career-technical education opportunities;
- dual credit offerings;
- outstanding fine arts programs;
- college and career mentor program;
- extra-curricular and co-curricular offerings;
- successful academic and interscholastic stars competitions; and
- Indian Head Academy alternative school.

Ms. Chipman reported that the school district has a rate of 58 percent of its students going on to higher education, including acceptance into several Ivy League universities. She stated the Weiser School District is focused on positive placement and notes their graduates go on to missions, military service, and good-paying jobs.

DISCUSSION: In response to Chairman Mortimer's questions, **Ms. Chapman** stated she attributed the school's success to a combination of a student-centered community culture and an influx of young adults returning to the community.

PRESENTATION: **Ken Hart**, ISBA Region 2 Chair from Nezperce, pointed out that Nezperce is one of the two distinguished schools in Idaho in the Title I program, and has been nationally recognized for student performance and academic growth. He shared the strengths of the district as being:

- high quality educators;
- strong community support;
- low student to teacher ratio;
- grant success;
- well-maintained facilities; and
- focus on student expression.

Mr. Hart stated that the weaknesses of the district were low student numbers and new teacher recruitment. He felt the opportunities included expanding the curriculum into adult education, and the threats to the district being changing funding formulas.

In response to Senator Winder's questions, **Mr. Hart** discussed Nezperce's low student-teacher ratio which allowed teachers to identify and meet the needs of individual students.

Mr. Hedrick closed the presentation by asking the Committee to remember the variety of needs and abilities of the different school districts and charters, stressing the importance of local governance. He extended a plea to not support legislation that hinders school districts in doing their job. **Mr. Hedrick** thanked Chairman Mortimer for his thoughtful service and led a standing ovation in Chairman Mortimer's honor.

SCR 128

Relating to Financial Literacy. **Senator Souza** advised the Committee that **SCR 128** deals with financial literacy education. She stated that **SCR 128** was a general opening for a conversation about the importance of financial literacy. She pointed out some of the reason for the resolution as follows:

- Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 owe over \$1 trillion;
- lack of financial stability while young can have life long effects;
- making personal finance classes available to Idaho students would promote financial stability.

Senator Souza advised that **SCR 128** encourages Idaho high schools, colleges, and universities to offer credit-bearing personal finance classes.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked Senator Souza what classes would be eliminated in order to offer financial literacy. **Senator Souza** responded the classes would be optional, not required, so nothing would need to be eliminated.

TESTIMONY:

Lincoln Smyser, Legislative and Communications Director for Idaho State Treasurer's Office, voiced Treasurer Ellsworth's support for **SCR 128**, stating the Treasurer's belief that financial literacy is an important first step toward financial stability.

Michael Watson, Chief Marketing Officer for Idaho Central Credit Union (ICCU), affirmed that ICCU stands in full support of **SCR 128**. He explained that teachers have come to ICCU to request assistance in educating their students about personal finances. ICCU has a division devoted to helping adults achieve higher financial literacy. He noted that ICCU partners with STUKENT, an Idaho Falls company offering a personal finance education curriculum. He advised the Committee that ICCU has offered a five-year grant to all high schools in Idaho to offer the STUKENT program. The curriculum can be adapted to the teacher's needs from a month to a full year.

DISCUSSION

Vice Chairman Thayne inquired if the STUKENT curriculum is for high school or college credit. **Mr. Watson** replied that it is not accredited, and explained that it was developed by a high school teacher for high school students.

Senator Souza noted that Director Cameron stands in support of **SCR 128**, and that the Department of Insurance has a strong interest in financial education. She shared research results from Montana State University showing that financial education increases students' ability to make informed financial choices.

MOTION:

Vice Chairman Thayne moved to send **SCR 128** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Lent** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1325

Regarding Teacher Certification. **Senator Ward-Engelking** told the Committee that the purpose of **S 1325** is to allow school districts to grow their own teachers. She pointed out that, especially in rural areas, it is difficult to find and to keep teachers. **S 1325** will establish programs in which non-certified employees may seek certification while employed by a school district or charter school, using professional development funds or the Opportunity Scholarship, as appropriate, if the district chooses. She explained that the program would apply to those with a college degree teaching on a provisional certificate. **Senator Ward-Engelking** emphasized that the teacher shortage is found all around the state with fewer students entering the teaching field, and that **S 1325** would provide a way to overcome this shortage.

At Chairman Mortimer's prompting, **Senator Ward-Engelking** explained how the Opportunity Scholarship works.

Senator Den Hartog asked if this bill targets rural school districts. **Senator Ward-Engelking** responded that it is not specifically geared to rural districts although that is where the need is greatest.

TESTIMONY:

Harold Ott, Director of Idaho Rural Schools Association, spoke in favor of **S 1325**. He alleged that having a certificated teacher in every classroom is paramount in increasing student achievement. **Mr. Ott** perceived the availability of professional development funds to assist these paraprofessionals in becoming certified would benefit school districts by helping them retain teachers. **Senator Den Hartog** asked if anything now prevents districts from using professional funds for this purpose. **Mr. Ott** responded that the professional development money has never been used for that purpose.

Karen Pyron spoke in support of **S 1325** declaring that paraprofessionals who have worked in districts for a number of years become highly skilled education professionals and should have the opportunity to become certified teachers. She continued that **S 1325** creates a way to help paraprofessionals in their own communities to become certificated teachers.

Marilyn Whitney, Deputy Superintendent of Policy, voiced Superintendent Ybarra's support of **S 1325**, commenting that the teacher shortage is real and she supports any additional tools and avenues districts and charter schools can use to ensure all students can have trained and qualified teachers in their classrooms.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** pointed out there is no additional cost to the state. **Senator Woodward** expressed concern regarding the use of the Opportunity Scholarship for this purpose. **Senator Ward-Engelking** replied that the paraprofessionals are part of the adult completers category.

Senator Den Hartog requested clarification regarding the need for a four-year degree whereas adult completers only need 24 credits under the Opportunity Scholarship. **Senator Ward-Engelking** responded that professional development funds would be used for those with a bachelor's degree and who only need teacher preparation classes. The paraprofessionals with 24 credits or more, and who are working in a school district, would access the Opportunity Scholarship funds.

Vice Chairman Thayn commented that he supported this program as it is giving people an opportunity to become more self-sufficient.

MOTION: **Senator Buckner-Webb** moved to send **S 1325** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Thayn** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote** with **Senators Den Hartog** and **Crabtree** requesting they be recorded as voting nay.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

Senator Mortimer
Chair

Morgan Howard
Secretary

Carol Cornwall
Assistant Secretary