

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Tuesday, March 09, 2021
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Thayn, Vice Chairman Crabtree, Senators Den Hartog, Woodward, Lent, Johnson, Cook, Ward-Engelking, and Nelson
- 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 Thayn** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:05 p.m.
- GUBERNATORIAL REAPPOINTMENT:** **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Re-appointment of Dr. Linda Clark**, of Boise, ID, to the State Board of Education Commission (Board) for a term commencing July 1, 2020, and expiring July 1, 2025. **Dr. Clark** gave a brief overview of her background and stood for questions.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Den Hartog** asked Dr. Clark to identify the biggest challenges the Board will face in the next couple of years. **Dr. Clark** said the immediate need was for the Board to address the unfinished learning students experienced due to the pandemic. In the long term, the board needs to address how best to prepare students for their working life after their education ends, the doctor said. **Chairman Thayn** asked what some of the challenges and successes were in higher education. **Dr. Clark** said Idaho is unique in that it has a single Board that oversees kindergarten through graduate school; the common course numbering system between Idaho colleges makes it easier for dual-credit students to transfer credits, and the close working relationship between the higher education communities has helped students navigate the higher education systems. **Chairman Thayn** asked Dr. Clark how she is addressing social justice issues on campuses. **Dr. Clark** said the Board takes this issue very seriously, and will make changes and policy as needed.
- PRESENTATION:** **Dr. Rich Moore**, Superintendent, Oneida School District, and **Dr. Terri Sorensen**, Executive Director, Idaho Home Learning Academy (IHLA), gave a presentation on IHLA successes (see Attachments 1, 2).
- DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Thayn** asked why teachers like to teach for IHLA. **Dr. Moore** said the simple answer is IHLA teachers like to work from home, and the academy provides them that opportunity. **Senator Nelson** asked if all IHLA teachers reside in Idaho. **Dr. Moore** said teachers reside in 17 states and all are working toward getting their Idaho certification if they do not have it already. **Senator Nelson** asked how salaries to those outside Idaho are being addressed. **Dr. Moore** said pay is set and those outside the State are on the same pay scale as those living in Idaho. **Chairman Thayn** said he wanted to learn more about the individualized learning plans (ILP) shown in the presentation. **Dr. Sorensen** said teachers convene every two weeks to review and revise curriculum that might not be meeting the needs of students. These weekly reviews create the ILPs.

Senator Johnson asked for clarification on what is meant by a "certified teacher." **Dr. Sorensen** said the teachers working for their school are all Idaho-Certified, which means they have met the requirements from the State of Idaho for grade-and-subject specific teaching. **Senator Johnson** asked how IHLA administrators would feel about creating their own criteria for a teaching certificate, and would IHLA then hire those teachers for their program. **Dr. Sorensen** said they have teachers from diverse backgrounds, which makes for a unique team, and the teachers bring that diversity to the classes offered.

Senator Lent asked what the student-to-teacher ratio was at IHLA. **Dr. Sorensen** said the ratio was 23 to 1. **Senator Lent** referenced the low math scores shown as part of the slide presentation and asked if it is harder to teach math virtually. **Dr. Moore** said the online academy began five years ago and the math scores shown are benchmark figures for where students placed on math testing. Teachers now hold weekly office hours to help students improve those math scores.

Senator Den Hartog asked what was the impetus to start the online academy. **Dr. Moore** said five years ago the board of IHLA was approached by a software development company looking for a sponsor to use their software. **Senator Den Hartog** asked if the online school had an affect on the running of the brick and mortar school. **Dr. Moore** said because the online school and the foundation in how to run it was in place when the pandemic hit, they were able to return the brick-and-mortar students to class time in three short days, transitioning them to a virtual school environment.

Senator Woodward asked about the business model used to run the academy. **Dr. Moore** said the three companies - Tech Trep Academy, Harmony Educational Services, and Overture Learning, work well together and each program builds upon the other to offer students a well-rounded curriculum. **Senator Woodward** asked what internet requirements families need to run the learning programs. **Dr. Sorensen** said families can ask for reimbursement for internet credits or for buying devices needed for online learning; there is no requirement for bandwidth or internet speed. The need per family will depend on how many students they have accessing the system, which will then determine the bandwidth and speed they need in their homes, the Director said.

Senator Cook asked what the goal or time frame was to get math test scores higher. **Dr. Sorensen** said the goal is to have 56 percent of the students score proficient in math by spring. She also mentioned that one of the difficulties in attaining higher math proficiency scores was that many students are not math-proficient when they enroll. Incoming students who are not math-proficient lower the overall math scores for the entire program. Teachers work with students who need extra help in math, but raising the overall math scores will take time. **Senator Cook** asked if there was a cap to the number of students they would accept. **Dr. Moore** said he wasn't sure but they did have to close enrollment early this year due to having a lack of teachers and resources.

PRESENTATION: **Christina Linder**, Director, Non-Traditional Certification, College of Southern Idaho, gave a presentation on the College of Southern Idaho's Non-Traditional Education Preparation Program (NTEP) (see Attachments 3, 4).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** mentioned the Grow Your Own Program, which might provide a way for NTEP to use some of the pathway scholarship money. **Ms. Linder** said having access to scholarship money would be most helpful for several students. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if there was a real need for scholarship money for those who wanted to learn to teach. **Ms. Linder** said the large number of people who reach out to her and say they have always wanted to teach, but could not afford the training, would benefit from such a scholarship program. **Senator Nelson** asked for the data on the retention and successes of this program. **Ms. Linder** said after two years NTEP loses 24 percent of students, and after 3-4 years 42-47 percent. These losses can be attributed to teachers not having a strong classroom support system. **Chairman Thayn** asked if the strength of this program was the strong mentorship portion. **Ms. Linder** said that is a factor but so is the fact they have built strong curriculum pathways that teachers can follow. Students can also confer with their mentors immediately to make sure the curriculum works.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 4:26 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Florence Lince
Secretary