

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Thursday, January 20, 2022
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Thayn, Vice Chairman Lent, Senators Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Blair (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.
- WELCOME:** **Chairman Thayn** welcomed guests and visitors to the Senate Education Committee (Committee). The Committee received two handouts, the first relating to petitions and the second handout relating to a study from the Legislative Services Office (LSO) regarding college credit costs.
- INTRODUCTIONS:** **Sherri Ybarra**, Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE), gave a brief introduction of Dr. Eric Studebaker and Todd Driver. **Ms. Ybarra** made a remark that the student advisory council expressed support of the Advanced Opportunities Fund, and she would be pleased to have them visit the Committee in February. **Ms. Ybarra** also stated that assessment and accountability for the learning loss grants would be discussed in the following presentations. She followed with the statement that these students are in need of intervention both prior and post pandemic.
- PRESENTATION:** **Dr. Eric Studebaker**, Director of Student Engagement and Safety Coordination, SDE, gave a high-level overview of the Advanced Opportunities Program in Idaho during the last year. He explained that there were several components including overload courses, exams, and the early graduation scholarships. **Dr. Studebaker** went over the student participation numbers as well as the funding request changes year over year. (See Attachment 1)
- DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Thayn** made a point that the students taking overload courses often do so during the summer months. **Dr. Studebaker** agreed and stated that this often leads to early graduation scholarship. **Senator Nelson** asked for clarification on the funding request chart, whether or not this was in regards to the number of requests received. **Dr. Studebaker** clarified that it was the number of requests received in a year. **Senator Nelson** inquired if the number of students on the chart were requests for funding. **Dr. Studebaker** explained that a student could make multiple requests in a year. **Senator Nelson** asked what the success rate on a student attempting to get a credit is. **Dr. Studebaker** explained that SDE does not collect the grade, however they do collect pass/fail rates. **Senator Den Hartog** inquired if the state still pays for the dual credit regardless of whether the student passes or fails. **Dr. Studebaker** explained that the state initially pays, however the student is required to re-take and successfully pass the course without state funding to remain in the program. **Senator Lent** asked for further information regarding the workforce training component, and what the investment rate of return would be from an outcomes perspective. **Dr. Studebaker** pointed out that dual credit also encompasses

career technical education, certifications, as well as associate of applied science degrees, however work is being done to identify the high school population.

**Senator Crabtree** wanted to know about the success rates over participation levels, and what the objective would be moving forward. **Dr. Stuebaker** replied that the goal is more about connecting systems such as the post-secondary system with the secondary system to link curriculums, as well as professional development for faculty. The measurement of the program is effective in ways such as aligning courses that are similar such as calculus or even welding. The Idaho State Board of Education (SBOE) and Next Steps Idaho is assisting with the course alignment and the required advising for a student.

**Senator Blair** requested more information on the gender gap between male and female, and what would narrow the gap. **Chairman Thayn** commented that one of the rules that SBOE was working on was to encourage or require an eighth grade exploratory class, which may lead into narrowing the gender gap.

On the SDE's website, there is a page that highlights advanced opportunities and the approved workforce training courses and exams. **Senator Woodward** expressed financial concerns with the program, asking if the money is being spent efficiently, and if the \$4,125 that is distributed was appropriate, or if the student could pay a small amount for a course to have more of an investment in a passing grade. **Senator Woodward** requested examples of overload courses.

**Dr. Stuebaker** replied that the Idaho Digital Learning Academy is the largest provider of overload courses and students take specific courses to graduate early.

**Senator Woodward** indicated that he had heard of students using advanced opportunities for driver's education, and if this is something that was an intended use of the program. **Dr. Stuebaker** explained that if the drivers education course was offered for credit, then yes. However, there may be forthcoming policy discussions for boundaries on the use of that.

**Senator Woodward** asked for clarification if students were using Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit for the same class at the same time. **Dr. Stuebaker** explained that they were due to the fact that the post-secondary institutions may accept one or the other but not both. **Chairman Thayn** requested an update on state funds that were provided to private school students last year. **Dr. Stuebaker** explained that the applications will be starting soon under a reimbursement model, and students will be allocated an amount based on the total number of requests.

**PRESENTATION:** **Todd Driver**, Director of Content and Curriculum, SDE, provided a framework of information based off of the full report that was received during Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC). These funds were targeted toward intervention for at risk students. There are three criteria for the districts to meet to receive payments from the funds and can only cover costs that are necessary expenditures due to the COVID 19 pandemic, budgets that were not recently approved upon implementation of the CARES Act, and were incurred during the period of March 2020 and ending December 1st 2021. The most frequent use is for general content remediation in English Language Arts and Literacy. The intent language in House Bill 356 specified that the K-4 funds were to be distributed based on the number of students at the lowest performance level. For K-12 funds, the bill tasked SDE with developing a distribution formula based on assessment sources or assessment scores. These participating districts had Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) and an Idaho Standard Achievement Testing (ISAT) requirements at both the K-4 level as well as the K-12 level. Interventions included remediation, tutoring, software licensure, and textbooks. Most of the monies were spent on salaries and benefits. (See Attachment 2)

**Kevin Chandler**, Director of Assessment and Accountability, SDE, provided additional information on the update IRI, which is in its fifth year of administration and is given to all K-3 public school students. Five foundational reading skills are measured in the IRI testing including: alphabetic knowledge, phonetic awareness, vocabulary comprehension and fluency. **Mr. Chandler** explained

that the districts and charter schools have been using the funding to meet their local needs following recommendation to address learning loss through summer and after school programs, tutoring and targeted intervention.

**Chairman Thayn** asked for clarification on the number of students who tested at level one, (which is considered to be an achievement at grade level) and whether or not the percentage calculated is that of the funds associated with the level one achievement or the actual calculated learning loss. **Mr. Chandler** explained that this data is looking at where the students are at the learning progression in order to prepare the students for testing. **Chairman Thayn** followed up with a request for comparable numbers to see what the actual loss was for those at-risk students.

**ADJOURNED:**

There being no further business at this time, Chairman Thayn adjourned the meeting at 4:21 p.m.

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Senator Thayn  
Chair

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Katy Morden  
Secretary