

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, January 16, 2023

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators Den Hartog, Nichols, Carlson, Herndon, Lenney, and Semmelroth

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Ward-Engelking

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 Lent** called the meeting of the Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

WELCOME: **Introduction of Committee Members and Secretary.** **Chairman Lent** invited each member of the Committee to introduce himself or herself. **Chairman Lent** then outlined the topics for the Committee meetings that week. Those included: school finance, school regulatory requirements, constitutional requirements relating to education, and other foundational information.

Introduction of Page Hannah Gaalswyk. **Chairman Lent** invited Senate Page Hannah Gaalswyk to introduce herself. **Miss Gaalswyk** shared that she was raised on a dairy farm in Castleford, Idaho. She planned to attend Idaho State University and major in accounting and minor in political science.

PRESENTATION: **Joint talk - Cooperation Moving Forward.** **Chairman Lent** invited Debbie Critchfield, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Kurt Liebich, President of the State Board of Education (Board), to provide an overview of K-12 education and higher education and answer questions.

Mr. Liebich addressed the Committee regarding higher education. **Mr. Liebich** informed the Committee that the Board was made up of eight members, seven of whom were appointed by the Governor, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. He cited one of their priorities was to increase the number of students who continued their education through four-year colleges, two-year colleges, certificate programs, apprenticeships, or the military. Another priority of the Board was to look at the institutions of higher education, not as individual institutions, but rather as part of a unified system where, for example, a student could start at a two-year college and continue to a four-year college. The Board served as the governing board for Idaho's colleges and universities. This differed from K-12 education where there were 115 school districts with local school boards that governed the districts. The Board became involved in K-12 education to provide consistent graduation requirements, to manage dual enrollment requirements, and to provide policies that required uniformity. **Mr. Liebich** noted that Idaho was one of the few states where the Board oversaw K-12 and higher education. Another priority of the Board was managing costs for higher education.

Superintendent Debbie Critchfield, Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction, discussed K-12 education. She stated that one of her priorities was working together to prepare students. This required the Board, the Department of

Education (Department), parents, teachers, business leaders and communities to work together to prepare students for life. **Superintendent Critchfield** asserted that one of the most important focuses of education was literacy. Math was another important focus of education. Students lost ground in both areas during the pandemic. She noted that Idaho needed to offer more career technical education. It was also important to do more to develop relationships with parents and to support our educators to deal with severe behaviors and other emotional issues of children. Another priority was school safety.

DISCUSSION:

Senator Semmelroth asked Superintendent Critchfield to explain a recent Heritage Foundation study that ranked Idaho third in terms of school choice. **Superintendent Critchfield** noted that Idaho did not regulate the educational choices of parents and offered a variety of options, including: traditional public schools, public charter schools, private schools, and home schooling.

Vice Chairman Toews asked Mr. Liebich to explain how the completion rate was calculated. **Mr. Liebich** explained that originally the completion rate was based on population. In recent years, however, that definition had been broadened to include four-year degrees, two-year degrees, and certificates and badges. He further explained that they were trying to determine a way to capture military service. The completion rate was 37 percent. We could more accurately track the completion rate by including completion within six years. **Superintendent Critchfield** added that it was a concern that 80 percent of high school students had taken at least one dual credit course, however they did not go on to complete their education.

Senator Carlson asked Mr. Liebich to discuss what more could be done to increase the completion rate. **Mr. Liebich** responded they could do more to get students to take advantage of opportunities for dual credit. They could do more to identify students who were struggling early and provide tutoring and other remedial measures. **Superintendent Critchfield** also responded that they could review graduation requirements, in particular the possibility of including career technical education.

Senator Nichols asked Superintendent Critchfield what steps they could take to improve relationships between schools and parents. **Superintendent Critchfield** responded that they could provide more information to parents regarding their rights and working with local school boards.

Senator Den Hartog asked Mr. Liebich how they could ensure accountability and return on investment. **Mr. Liebich** stated that they could put in place summative assessments regarding student proficiency.

Senator Herndon asked Superintendent Critchfield to further explain the performance measurements. **Superintendent Critchfield** explained that the current National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results showed that the rate of students at or above an eighth grade proficiency was 32 percent. She further explained that the NAEP test defined proficiency differently than Idaho.

Vice Chairman Toews asked **Superintendent Critchfield** to comment on a Manhattan Institute report that indicated that 93 percent of recent high school graduates had been taught at least one of the basic principles of critical race theory and radical gender theory. **Superintendent Critchfield** responded that the Department could review curriculum and make it available to districts. The Department could also make a repository of resources available at the Department that local boards could use to review new curriculum. In addition,

the Department could help educate parents on their right to review curriculum.

Senator Lenney requested Superintendent Critchfield's stand on education savings accounts. **Superintendent Critchfield** stated that she would continue to defend parents' right to choose, however, she was not an advocate of public funds going to private schools.

PRESENTATION: **Joint talk - Cooperation Moving Forward.** **Chairman Lent** invited Layne McInelly, President of the Idaho Education Association (IEA), to provide a report on education from the perspective of the IEA. **Mr. McInelly** reported that the recent investment in education, which included pay increases for teachers and other school employees, helped them to feel respected and appreciated. Those investments in education also gave teachers, parents and students hope for the future.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Herndon** expressed concern regarding a continuing education class on the IEA website regarding creating safe spaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LBGTQ) students.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting of the Committee at 4:25 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Linette Grantham
Secretary

Meg Lawless
Assistant Secretary