

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, January 23, 2023

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators Nichols, Carlson, Herndon, Lenney, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Den Hartog

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** convened the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) at 3:04 p.m.

WELCOME: **Chairman Lent** welcomed the Committee, presenters and others present.

PRESENTATION: Idaho Digital Learning Alliance, Launch Pad: Reading Intervention in Action. **Jeff Simmons**, Superintendent of IDLA, explained that IDLA was the state virtual school for Idaho and had provided services to public schools for 20 years. They worked in partnership with public schools and provided several classes throughout the year. The classes might be one not provided locally or a summer class to help students catch up. Their new program, Launch Pad, was available for kindergarten through fifth grade. Launch Pad provided smaller group instruction with more individualized attention by certified teachers.

PRESENTATION: IDLA Launch Pad: Reading Intervention in Action. **Jolene Montoya** provided additional information regarding Launch Pad. She explained that the students received up to five hours of instruction per week by a certified teacher. They used the iStation curriculum used across the state. That curriculum provided reports that assessed a student's individual needs. The rate of improvement for students using Launch Pad exceeded the national rate. To assess their program, they also compared the level of proficiency of their students to others statewide. Students who were behind in September caught up by December. One benefit of Launch Pad was that a student who was shy or unsure of their skills could provide a private answer in the chat room. In addition, it provided a quiet classroom environment. **Ms. Montoya** stated that Launch Pad served 17 school districts and 700 students.

Jeff Simmons explained they hoped to expand their services to more school districts. In addition to their literacy intervention program, they were prepared to offer a math intervention program. Other areas of investment included credit recovery and workforce development. Credit recovery was designed for students who failed a class the first time. That program had experienced an 85 percent pass rate. The workforce development program helped students explore career opportunities and find a pathway to a career through a career technical education, technical certificate, a registered apprenticeship, and more.

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Lent** inquired about IDLA's funding. **Mr. Simmons** explained that some of their funding was included in the Department of Education's budget. In addition, they charged a \$30 enrollment fee per student, per course.

Senator Nichols asked whether the reading program would be expanded into higher grades. **Mr. Simmons** responded that both the reading and math programs extended only through fifth grade. The credit recovery program was available to Junior and Senior high school students.

Chairman Lent asked whether IDLA served anyone outside of the public school system. **Mr. Simmons** explained that a student must be enrolled in at least 1 public school course in order to receive their services. This included private school students and homeschoolers.

PRESENTATION: A Report From the Classroom. **Steven Thayn**, teacher at Emmett Middle School, provided a report from the classroom. He discussed education standards, social and emotional learning, dealing with student discipline, challenges facing his students and math facts. **Mr. Thayn** expressed that positive teacher-student relationships were important to the emotional well being of students who may have difficult home environments or other factors affecting them. He stated that there was a growing number of students who were disruptive and did not want to learn. Students faced challenges with difficult home environments as well as addiction to the internet and their various devices which changes the way their brains work. As a result, many students had a difficult time focusing. **Mr. Thayn** stated that many of his students were not proficient in Math. He had success by helping students to acquire proficiency in stages. He first focused on addition, then subtraction before moving on to multiplication and division. In addition, he used a math program online that helps keep track of each student's progress. Their proficiency level was about 70 percent. **Mr. Thayn** noted that student discipline was less of a problem at the charter school he was also involved with. He felt this was the result of their zero tolerance policy. **Mr. Thayn** discussed the Advanced Opportunities Program. This program allocated \$4,125 to each student that could be used toward dual credits, career technical education, certificates, college or other paths toward a career. This allowed students to take ownership of their education and career. Finally, **Mr. Thayn** commented that he found standards very helpful. Incorporating them into his lesson plans helped him to focus his lessons.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Lenney** questioned Mr. Thayn's statement that social emotional learning did not include critical race theory when that was included in the Department of Education and State Board of Education's curriculum and documents such as the guide to reopening schools. **Mr. Thayn** said that was simply his experience as a teacher.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked Mr. Thayn how he obtained teaching certification and whether he had taken any courses such as classroom management. **Mr. Thayn** explained that his school had a learning coach, but that he was very busy and not available as much to help coach. He did obtain an interim certificate.

Senator Carlson asked whether Mr. Thayn had any solutions for classroom management and use of screen time. **Mr. Thayn** shared that in his classroom, screen time was limited to certain programs. He felt that getting rid of mandatory attendance would help alleviate classroom management problems. **Senator Carlson** requested additional information about the Advanced Opportunities Program. **Mr. Thayn** explained that IDLA provided classes and the Advanced Opportunities Program provided funds for classes through IDLA or elsewhere.

Vice Chairman Toews asked whether the majority of students with discipline problems were male or female. **Mr. Thayn** responded that girls were less of a discipline problem.

Chairman Lent asked Mr. Thayn to speak about the relationship between standards and standardized testing. **Mr. Thayn** stated that the standardized tests helped him to know what standards he needed to focus on.

Senator Nichols asked why students were not participating in the Advanced Opportunities Program. **Mr. Thayne** opined that schools were not providing enough information about the program to students. He felt that some teachers and administrators were not informing a student who they did not think would be successful.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting of the Committee at 4:08 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Linette Grantham
Secretary

Meg Lawless
Assistant Secretary