

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Monday, February 26, 2024
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators Den Hartog, Nichols, Forsmann (Carlson), Herndon, Lenney, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth
- 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 Lent** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:02 p.m.
- H 566** **EDUCATION - Amends existing law to revise when a student can be exempted from certain required English language assessments. Senator Semmelroth** provided an overview of the legislation. She shared that **H 566** addressed the issue of English Language Learners (ELL) who did not have the necessary language competency to take the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). She explained that the IRI tested early readers in kindergarten through 3rd grade for text accuracy, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. ELL with little to no English language proficiency could not be evaluated fairly in these metrics. She said that the results were inaccurate student and school performance data. **Senator Semmelroth** introduced Representative Galaviz to share more details about the legislation. **Representative Galaviz** explained that **H 566** provided a two-year IRI testing exemption for ELL who were not enrolled for two full school years in the United States and who scored less than a level two on the State's English language proficiency assessment. She stated that there were approximately 1,400 students across Idaho who were affected by the legislation. She clarified that schools remained accountable for English language instruction to help ELL to access curriculum and instruction. She also added that schools maintained local control and determined which students qualified for the exemption before the fall testing date.
- DISCUSSION:** In response to Committee member questions, **Representative Galaviz** stated that **H 566** required exempted students to take the IRI after two years regardless of their English proficiency. For students who did not score proficient on the IRI, academic interventions were provided.
- MOTION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **H 566** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Herndon** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: The Science of Reading in Action: Phonics-Based Classroom Instruction. **Ryan Cantrell**, Chief Deputy Superintendent, State Department of Education, introduced Shane Williams, Superintendent, West Jefferson School District. **Mr. Williams** shared about his school district's high Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) scores and how the district achieved this success over four years. He credited West Jefferson School District's strong literacy results on research-based, phonics curriculum delivered with fidelity and the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for educators. In their PLC meetings, teachers regularly reviewed student data, identified what instruction worked and did not work, designed targeted interventions for students as needed, and collaborated on how to best support student growth. The school district also invested in professional development opportunities for teachers. In cooperation with its school board, West Jefferson School District added more professional learning days into the school calendar. **Mr. Williams** pointed out that predictable and consistent funding was important for the district to keep its focus on student achievement.

DISCUSSION: In response to Committee member questions, **Mr. Williams** and **Kyle Johnson**, Principal, West Jefferson School District, replied. **Mr. Johnson** shared that strong literacy achievement continued into the upper grades. He stated that approximately 88% of 5th and 6th grade students had tested out of the literacy program. **Mr. Williams** remarked that the school district saw less summer learning loss since the literacy programs were implemented.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lisa Stein
Secretary