

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, January 28, 2026

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Cook, Senators Woodward, Nichols, Carlson, Burtenshaw, Zito, 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 3:00 p.m.

**S 1227** **Education - Adds to existing law to establish provisions regarding generative artificial intelligence in public education.** **Senator Cook** presented to the Committee that the bill would create clarity and common sense with regards to artificial intelligence (AI) in Idaho schools. This bill would not mandate the use of AI but give the Idaho State Board of Education and local districts the ability to create standards on how they want to teach about AI in the classroom.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Carlson** asked if there was anything in the bill about facial recognition. **Senator Cook** responded that there was not because the State was not collecting such data. **Senator Carlson** asked if this needed to be specified. **Senator Cook** answered that it was specified in Idaho Code § 33-7007. **Senator Nichols** asked about parental-community engagement and whether there was an option for parents to opt-out of their students using AI. **Senator Cook** answered that there was no language in the bill about parents opting-out because it would be up to the school district if they wanted to include that language in their standards. **Senator Nichols** asked about I.C. § 33-7004 and if there was an option for parents. **Senator Cook** responded yes and that the guidance must support transparency. **Senator Nichols** asked why it was K-12 and not older students. **Senator Cook** answered that the State could move it but there were young students who were already using cell phones. **Senator Nichols** asked if there was anything in the bill that discussed age-appropriate materials. **Senator Cook** responded no because it gave the State Board and local districts the ability to create their own framework. **Senator Cook** closed the discussion stating that the bill came together from the feedback of twenty individuals from the State Department of Education, the State Board of Education, Idaho Education Association, parents, and other organizations.

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY:** **Kimberly Gardner**, from the Workforce Development Council, **William Goodman** with the Idaho Education Technology Association, **Reid Stephan** with St. Luke's Health System, **Norris Krueger**, PH.D., and **Alexis Morgan** with the Idaho Parent-Teacher Association testified in favor of **S 1227**. Testimony highlighted the impact that teaching AI to students would have on the workforce. They added the legislation would prioritize transparency and was human first.

**MOTION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **S 1227** to the floor with a **do pass recommendation**. **Senator Woodward** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**PRESENTATION:** **Senator Grow** presented to the Committee on the Joint Finance-Appropriation Committee's (JFAC) work during the Second Regular Session of the 68th Legislative Session. **Kevin McGurkin**, Legislative Services Office (LSO) Budget and Policy Analyst, **Dr. Campbell**, LSO Senior Budget & Policy Analyst, and **Keith Bybee**, LSO Budget and Policy Analysis Division Manager presented to the Committee to add additional insight on the FY2026 and FY2027 proposed budgets, Higher Education Institutional Budgets, and the General Fund. **Senator Grow** hoped the presentation was useful for the Committee to see how JFAC worked.

**DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Lent** asked about Idaho Digital Learning Alliance reductions. **Mr. McGurkin** answered that it was mixed in with other areas of education. **Chairman Lent** asked about difference between the Governor's recommendation and what the departments had asked for in regards to affected students. **Senator Nichols** asked about FY2025 and what the projection was for FY2026. **Mr. McGurkin** said he would follow up with her after the meeting. **Senator Nichols** asked if student enrollment had remained steady or increased. **Mr. McGurkin** answered that it had declined.

**Senator Ward-Engelking** asked how much Enrollment Workload Adjustment (EWA) would be for each college. **Dr. Campbell** responded that he didn't have the answer in front of him at the moment but that he would follow up with the Committee once he did. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about rescissions from the universities and if the money could be restored. **Dr. Campbell** responded that the money was in the FY2026 budget request and was recommended by the Governor.

**Senator Nichols** asked what policy bills they would recommend removing from statute to lower costs. **Mr. Bybee** answered that LSO staff could not give that recommendation since they are nonpartisan. **Senator Ward-Engelking** thanked the LSO team for presenting and commented on the K-12 funding. **Senator Woodward** asked about the Medicaid expansion cuts and if the Idaho Catastrophic Health Care Program fund was still in effect, whether it could help. **Mr. Bybee** answered that he would have to follow up with him. **Senator Woodward** asked about the revenue projection for FY2026 as adopted by JFAC. **Mr. Bybee** answered that they were lowered due to tax policy changes. **Senator Semmelroth** commented that it was a great presentation and asked if germane committees can present to JFAC. **Mr. Bybee** answered yes.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:23 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Lauren Young  
Secretary