

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, January 29, 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.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to approve the minutes of January 21, 2026. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

RS 32899 **Repeals eight sections of Chapter 26, Title 33, Idaho Code that pertain to regional library systems as the systems have not existed for more than 40 years. Senator Semmelroth** presented that this was a product of **H 14** related to code cleanup and was reviewed by the Idaho DOGE Task Force.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **RS 32899** to print. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

RS 32912 **Repeals or updates 17 sections of Idaho Code in Title 33 relating to education. Senator Semmelroth** presented that this was a product of **H 14** related to code cleanup and was reviewed by the Idaho DOGE task force.

MOTION: **Senator Nichols** moved to send **RS 32912** to print. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Senator Semmelroth** introduced **Rae Ruiz** who used spell to communicate (S2C). Senator Semmelroth additionally introduced Ms. Ruiz's Communication Regulation Partner (CMP), **Jennifer Ruiz**, and **Kara Sanders**, S2C Practitioner. **Ms. Sanders** gave the Committee a presentation on what S2C was and how it allowed people with complex communication needs to communicate with others. **Rae Ruiz** spelled to the Committee her story which was read by her CMP. **Ms. Ruiz** was a 25 year old who used S2C to speak. She loved reading, writing poems, and spelling in other languages like Spanish, Russian, and Italian. **Ms. Ruiz** would like to pursue an education in psychology and continue her advocacy work.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Cook** asked how old she was when she started spelling. **Ms. Ruiz** spelled that she was 23 years old and she was an adult. **Senator Nichols** asked how hard it was to learn other languages. **Ms. Ruiz** answered that it was not hard at all, she found her autism astonishing in this regard. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if she had enrolled in classes yet. **Ms. Ruiz** responded she had not yet, but she looked forward to doing so soon. **Senator Carlson** asked what her favorite activity was. **Ms. Ruiz** spelled she had many activities she enjoyed but was happiest in her advocacy realm. **Senator Cook** asked Jennifer Ruiz how it felt being able to talk to her daughter for the first time. **Ms. Ruiz** responded it was emotional and she was excited to get to know Rae for the first time. She ended by stating it was a true gift from God.

PRESENTATION: **Dr. Brooke Blevins**, Dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Idaho, gave a presentation on the Idaho Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (IACTE). **Dr. Blevins** stated that IACTE is the association of representatives from all Idaho regionally-accredited colleges and universities with state-approved educator preparation programs focused on producing professional teachers, principals and superintendents for Idaho communities. IACTE helped prepare Idaho teachers for Idaho needs such as student behavior, educator ethics, Career Technical Education, rural schools, literacy, and generative artificial intelligence (AI).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Cook** asked what IACTE was doing with generative AI for teachers. **Dr. Blevins** responded that teachers had incorporated AI into their curricula. IACTE was looking at the ethical standards of using AI and working on professional development including AI. **Senator Woodward** asked about student behaviors and what tools the legislature could provide. **Dr. Blevins** answered that teachers and professionals needed more support to help with student behaviors. **Senator Woodward** asked about having behavioral expectations in schools. **Dr. Blevins** responded that clear expectations were needed and this was where tiered intervention came into play. **Dr. Blevins** mentioned that additional support for teachers and professionals would help with this issue. **Chairman Lent** asked what public education could look like in five years in terms of student behavior. **Dr. Blevins** answered there were already issues and teachers needed support now. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked what resources IACTE needed. **Dr. Blevins** responded that more resources were needed for teachers.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 3:56 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lauren Young
Secretary