

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, February 23, 2026

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

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Cook, Senators Woodward, Carlson, Burtenshaw, Zito, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Nichols

**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 3:01 p.m.

**WELCOME:** **Introduction of New Page - Caleb Williams.** **Mr. Williams** was from Shelley, Idaho. **Senator Carlson** asked what he planned to do after graduation. **Mr. Williams** answered he would go on a mission with his church and then attend Brigham Young University-Idaho. **Senator Cook** asked what he wanted to do with his career. **Mr. Williams** responded that he was still deciding.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Zito** moved to approve the Minutes of February 10, 2026. **Senator Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Vice Chairman Cook** moved to approve the Minutes of February 12, 2026. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to approve the Minutes of February 16, 2026. **Senator Cook** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Semmelroth** moved to approve the Minutes of February 17, 2026. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**S 1317** **Education – Adds to existing law to provide for regional service centers.** **Senator Burtenshaw** stated that no new funding would be required as it was accounted for in the fiscal year 2027 budget and the regional centers would provide special education resources to school districts. **Senator Burtenshaw** stated the bill would provide structural efficiency and support for Idaho's special education students.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Semmelroth** asked about the Special Education Support and Technical Assistance (SESTA) program at Idaho's higher education institutions. **Senator Burtenshaw** was not familiar with the program and asked State Superintendent Debbie Critchfield to provide an explanation. **Superintendent Critchfield** answered that the regional centers would have a similar model, and asked Lisa Pofelski-Rosa, Principal Financial Specialist of the Department of Education, to explain how the centers would operate. **Ms. Pofelski-Rosa** answered the centers would provide shared services among school districts to provide additional support for special education.

**TESTIMONY:** **Stoney Wilson**, Superintendent of Fruitland School District, **Scott Muir**, Superintendent of Soda Springs School District, **Dr. Jean Henscheid**, President of the League of Women Voters, **Kayla Dodson**, Boise Teacher, **Dr. Joy Jansen**, Director of Special Services and Federal Programs in Ponderay, **Kathryn Larson**, District 1 constituent, **Kelly Heil**, General Education Teacher, **Jonathan Gillen**, **Melissa Vian**, Idaho Parents Unlimited, and **Kevin Moxley**, Idaho Realtor, all testified in support of the bill. They reasoned the bill would give support to teachers and districts by providing additional services to students who need the extra help. They argued the bill would also allow districts to pool resources to lower costs.

**MOTION:** **Vice Chairman Cook** moved to send **S 1317** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Senator Carlson** and **Senator Zito** requested to be recorded as voting nay.

**PRESENTATION:** **Idaho Falls School District**. **Superintendent Karla LaOrange** presented on the district's Proactive Approach to Student Success (PASS) Program. The program was designed by Bush Elementary Principal Tes Fields. The purpose of the program was to assist students who had additional behavioral needs in managing their behavior in and out of the classroom.

**PRESENTATION:** **Kootenai Classical Academy**. **Dr. Ed Kaitz**, Headmaster of Kootenai Classical Academy, presented on how the school was utilizing classical education. Kootenai Classical Academy was a Hillsdale College affiliated school which taught American classical education. The school eschewed technology and encouraged students to enroll in sports and after-school extracurricular programs.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Lauren Young  
Secretary