

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 19, 2026

TIME: 2:00 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 2:03 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Burtenshaw** moved to approve the Minutes of March 9, 2026. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Vice Chairman Cook** moved to approve the Minutes of March 10, 2026. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Nichols** moved to approve the Minutes of March 11, 2026. **Senator Carlson** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

S 1336 **Education - Amends and adds to existing law to revise and establish provisions regarding civics education.** **Senator Anthon** presented the bill which would establish extensive American history and U.S. government curriculum requirements in schools. **Senator Anthon** addressed that the bill would need to be sent to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Jason Moss**, Superintendent of Grace School District, **Blake Youde**, Idaho Charter School Network, **Quinn Perry**, Idaho School Boards Association, **Dani Backer**, Social Studies Director, Boise School District, and **Lori Gash**, Social Studies Coordinator, West Ada School District, testified in opposition to the bill. They thanked Senator Anthon for offering to send the bill to the 14th Order of Business and shared their concerns about the bill. Most testifiers had concerns over the Western Civilization requirement and how there might be an impact to Advanced Placement (AP) courses and offered college classes. There was additional concern about the proposed language and not allowing individual districts to choose curriculum materials from Idaho standards.

Dr. Samuel Lair, Idaho Freedom Foundation, testified in support of the bill. He explained that he worked with the bill sponsor so that it would strengthen student knowledge of American history and how the U.S. government works.

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Cook** asked Dr. Lair why Native and African American history was not included. **Dr. Lair** responded that though the bill did not directly address those concerns, he believed the fundamental principles that were outlined in the bill, and affirmed their equality in the U.S.

Senator Semmelroth asked Ms. Gash if she had been involved in content standard setting processes. **Ms. Gash** answered yes, both at the state and district level. **Senator Semmelroth** asked if her district was involved in the bills' content creation. **Ms. Gash** responded her district was not involved in the bill creation, however, her district has had representatives at previous state standard meetings which then went to the public for comment. **Senator Semmelroth** asked from a broad perspective, if she looked to Idaho Code for curriculum content. **Ms. Gash** answered no, school districts always looked at state standards to drive their curriculum decisions.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **S 1336** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Carlson** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

S 1412 **Education - Adds to existing law to provide for the Idaho Student Safety and Educator Disclosure Act.** **Senator Nichols** presented the bill which was a combination of **S 1371** and **S 1372** from this session. She had worked with the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) and the Attorney General's Office to create the bill. **Senator Nichols** walked through the bill which identified gaps and inconsistencies in school reporting of hiring educators. The bill would create a clear and uniform process in gathering hiring information to make sure student safety was a priority and would apply the process to both public and private schools. The bill would protect students as well as school employees from retaliation after reporting misconduct behavior.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Laretta Boulton**, Pheonix Advocacy Agency, **Tori Doell**, **Ashley Green**, and **Marianna Baker** all testified in support of the bill. They testified the bill would keep students safe and protect teachers and staff who were whistleblowers while streamlining the process of reporting. All the testifiers shared their accounts of being retaliated against and how the system needed to be updated.

MOTION: **Senator Semmelroth** moved to send **S 1412** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

H 832 **Education - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding career technical education certificates.** **Senator Carlson** presented the bill which would help recruit and retain industry professionals in career technical education (CTE). The bill proposed to remove the minimum required hours and instead replace the requirement with adequate professional experience. The Divisions of Career Technical Education would establish the minimum number of industry hours for specific content areas which would be approved by the Legislature.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Cook** moved to send **H 832** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

H 711

Education - Amends and adds to existing law to provide for alternative authorization for administrators and to authorize the use of funds for related mentoring. Senator Carlson presented the bill which would add an alternative path for districts to hire administrators. This bill would help rural school districts when recruiting principals and superintendents. The bill was split into two paths, a "grow your own path" and the executive leadership path. **Senator Carlson** presented that the "grow your own" path allowed Idaho educators with at least five years of experience to obtain leadership skills through professional training. She added the executive leadership pathway was for professionals with at least five years experience from other industries.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about additional education classes that administrators might need to take. **Senator Carlson** answered that administrators would need to complete a competency assessment to align with Idaho administrator standards.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Andy Grover**, Idaho Association of School Administrators, **Jeff Gee**, Superintendent of Ryrie School District, **Scott Muir**, Superintendent of Soda Springs School District, **Dr. Matthew McDaniel**, Assistant Professor, College of Idaho, **Heather Stout**, **Dr. Jason Moss**, Superintendent of Grace School District, **Quinn Perry**, Idaho School Boards Association, and **Craig Woods**, Superintendent of Emmet School District, all testified in opposition to the bill. They raised concerns that school districts did not have a recruiting issue, they had a retention issue and lowering the standards for administrators would not help that issue. There was wide support of the "grow your own" pathway but there were concerns the executive leadership pathway was a shortcut. There was even a suggestion from the testifiers to send **H 711** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment.

Blake Youde, Idaho Charter School Network, testified in support. **Mr. Youde** testified that the bill had a similar model to charter schools. He also argued that the language in the bill was a "may," it was not a mandatory system for districts to adopt. He continued that the bill provided opportunity for leadership and expanding candidate pools for administrative positions.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Semmelroth** asked Dr. McDaniel what his research mentioned about retention. **Dr. McDaniel** answered that putting administrators into leadership roles when they were not prepared had not yet come up in his research, however, he had seen research that reducing workload and increasing compensation could improve retention. **Senator Semmelroth** asked Dr. McDaniel about his comment of splitting the bill into two and about the continuous improvement plan in section 2. **Chairman Lent** joined the conversation about another piece of legislation that went through the body on the continuous improvement plan. **Chairman Lent** asked Dr. McDaniel where he taught and who his students were. **Dr. McDaniel** stated he taught at the College of Idaho and that some of his students were teachers and school administrators. **Chairman Lent** asked if he was aware of data that suggested using an alternative pathway in the charter school system. **Dr. McDaniel** answered that there was not data for Idaho specifically but on the national level it did not have a net positive impact on schools. He continued that the broader conversation he has had with professionals was that school administrators should come from an educational background.

Vice Chairman Cook asked Mr. Woods if he foresaw a constraint to the hiring process for school principals. **Mr. Woods** answered that he did not see it limiting the process.

Senator Carlson asked the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to close. **Superintendent Debbie Critchfield** added that the alternative pathways were an option and not a mandatory process that school districts needed to follow. She

continued that she did not see this option as a diminishment of the profession but as an option for school boards to hire the right person for a role. It simply created a larger hiring pool for local communities to choose from. **Senator Ward-Engelking** commented that she was not opposed to the "grow your own" pathway but emphasized the importance of having administrators who understood the education system. **Chairman Lent** asked Senator Carlson if she would be open to sending the bill to the 14th Order of Business. **Senator Carlson** answered that she would be okay with that if there were concerns with section 2. **Senator Woodward** asked a procedural question about the codifiers' correction after a legislative session was over. **Chairman Lent** agreed that did occur and added there might be a few pieces of current legislation that might need to be cleaned up. **Senator Woodward** added a comment that this could be a tool for rural school districts and for charter schools. **Senator Nichols** commented that Idaho would not be an outlier if the State adopted this bill since other states had a similar pathway. She continued that because the pathways were optional, it would be very doable. **Chairman Lent** ended the discussion that the bill was the right tool at the right time and that he was appreciative of it being voluntary.

MOTION: **Senator Woodward** moved to send **H 711** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

H 516 **Education - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding prohibiting instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity for students in kindergarten through grade 12.** **Senator Carlson** presented an proposed amendment to the Committee and asked the bill be sent to the 14th Order of Business. **Senator Carlson** read the amendment to the Committee. The amendment removed "or in a manner that is not age appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards" and would instead read as "this subsection shall not be construed to prohibit incidental reference to such topics within the context of teaching literature, history, biology, health sciences, career technical education, or other academic subjects aligned to state content standards or otherwise permitted by statute."

TESTIMONY: **Grace Howat**, Idaho Family Policy Center (IFPC), and **Lori Billaud** testified in support of the bill. They testified that it was important to get radical gender instruction out of schools. The bill would also enable parents to be involved in what instruction was being taught to their children.

Heather Stout testified against the bill because of concern that history would not be taught in schools, specifically LGBTQ history.

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Cook** asked Ms. Howat if she had been in a classroom recently and seen radical gender instruction being taught to students. **Ms. Howat** answered that she had not been in a classroom recently but per the public records request IFPC submitted, schools had not implemented policies prohibiting employees from providing this instruction to students. **Vice Chairman Cook** commented that he had been in a classroom recently and had never heard anything close to what she was claiming. **Senator Semmelroth** wanted to add to the record that Ms. Howat previously testified at the March 9 meeting regarding the non-compliant school districts and Quinn Perry clarified for the Committee that policy adoption took time for school boards. She continued that when IFPC submitted the public records request, it could have taken place during the adoption process and IFPC's number was not necessarily correct. **Ms. Billaud** answered Vice Chairman Cook's question that she had seen radical gender instructions in classrooms while she was a substitute teacher.

Senator Woodward asked about the amendment, specifically the section on

incidental reference. **Doug Taylor**, the amendment writer, answered that he worked with the State Department of Education (SDE) to craft the language. **Senator Woodward** asked what an example of incidental language would be. **Mr. Taylor** responded that he could not give an example. **Senator Nichols** gave a definition of incidental reference from Black Law's legal dictionary to the Committee. **Senator Woodward** commented that he had concerns because an example of incidental reference could not be given. **Senator Carlson** and **Superintendent Critchfield** spoke to Senator Woodward's concerns and mentioned they wanted to move away from a scenario where students were raising questions about topics that were not outlined in the lesson plan. **Senator Ward-Engelking** commented her concern about the bill opening up schools to legal issues if there were incidental mentions. **Senator Zito** commented that if there was not a direct connection between the lesson and the topics addressed under the bill, there would not be a problem, there would only be an issue if there was a connection to the lesson plan and what was prohibited under the bill. **Senator Nichols** offered an example of incidental reference by mentioning episodes of LGBTQ history, such as the Stonewall Riots, without going into extreme detail with students.

MOTION: **Senator Woodward** moved to send **H 516** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Semmelroth** commented that she would support the motion but she had concerns that this was a bill written by a lobbyist and business owner to add curriculum content standards into code who didn't have an educational background when there was a current process in place that involved content exports and public input. **Senator Semmelroth** requested that her comment be entered into the record.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **H 516** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lauren Young
Secretary