

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Friday, January 29, 2016

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman VanOrden, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Mendive, McDonald, Dixon, Kerby, Pence, Kloc, Rubel (Brooke Green)

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Christie Stoll, Idaho College Savings Program; Phil Homer, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural School Administrators; Marcia Beckman, Cheryl Finley, Superintendent Sherri Ybarra, Chuck Zimmeroy, Tim Hill, Tim Corder, State Department of Education; Jess Hanson, State Board of Education; Clark Corbin, Educational News; Larry Johnson, E.F.I.B.; Marilyn Whitney, Governor's Office; Dan Goicoechia, S.C.O.

Chairman DeMordaunt called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

RS 24302: **Christine Stoll** with IDEAL College Savings Program spoke to **RS 24302**. She said the proposed legislation is a pro-active step to protect account holders' assets. Three years after a beneficiary's birthday, the account is turned over to Unclaimed Property. This legislation specifies that IDEAL retains the account, and the funds are not liquidated, when the account is turned over to Unclaimed Property. This will protect the beneficiary from tax penalties.

MOTION: **Rep. Wills** made a motion to introduce **RS 24302**.

In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Stoll** said that funds will still be invested while they are in Unclaimed Property, because IDEAL will maintain jurisdiction.

**VOTE ON
MOTION:** **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Sherri Ybarra, Superintendent of Public Instruction, introduced **Dr. Cheryl Finley**, who spoke regarding the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). Dr. Finley explained which tests were required by the federal government, and which tests were required by Idaho. Some of the tests are not administered at every grade or in every year. For younger children, tests are administered by sections, over several days.

Dr. Finley said the main concerns about the ISAT testing updates were that it is a totally new system, the length of the exam, the timing of results, and the reports. Some people did not read the manuals or follow procedures. The Department heard the most concerns before the tests were administered. Once assessment had begun, the Department saw fewer problems and concerns. Dr. Finley added that the length of the language arts exam was reduced by thirty minutes, and the length of the math exam was reduced by thirty minutes, without impacting the reliability and validity of the tests.

Several factors influenced the timing of test results, said **Dr. Finley**. The writing component of the test required more scorers and a longer time to be scored. Training scorers takes four to six weeks, and the pay of twelve dollars an hour is not enough incentive to teachers, who are already working sixty hours a week. The Department will work to continue to recruit teachers to score exams this year.

Another factor which affected the timing of results was a software glitch, which took another four weeks to resolve, said **Dr. Finley**. The Department has been working with the vendors to avoid this issue in the future. School districts use different formats for reports. Some distribute reports in color, some in black and white, and some make them available online.

Dr. Finley concluded that the Department listened to feedback and has worked to rectify those issues. The Department and vendor will meet with school districts during the month of February to discuss issues in order to rectify problems. The Department will also increase the amount and type of training regarding using assessment data to inform instruction. The Department staff also provides support during the entire testing window.

In response to questions from the committee, **Dr. Finley** said that Idaho pays for students' SAT Testing. The instructional time spent on testing is .9%. The current amount of time for testing is approximately five hours, and the younger children take their tests in shorter blocks of time. The ISAT tests broader science areas than biology and earth science.

The scores on the test were lower this year, but different scales were used. She thinks people understand different scales were used, but she will verify. **Superintendent Ybarra** added that the public was advised not to compare the scores from the old test and the new test, because different scales were used. **Dr. Finley** added the goal to return test results to teachers is two to three weeks.

In response to questions from the committee, **Superintendent Ybarra** said that tests will always be required, but with the authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the state will have more flexibility with its testing and be able to move away from a climate of compliance and over testing. The Department conducted a meeting for interested parties, and it has asked JFAC for funding for a Family and Community Engagement Coordinator to communicate changes to parents.

Christine Stoll gave an update to the committee on the IDEAL College Savings Plan. The cost of higher education has gone up, and parents are surprised at how much it costs. Money invested in IDEAL grows tax deferred, and investing the amount of attending one movie a month can grow to \$11,222 over eighteen years. The state tax deduction is capped at up to \$4,000 of contributions per year for single tax filers and up to \$8,000 of contributions for those filing jointly as married. The fee for managing the plan will be reduced from .69% to .51%. If a beneficiary doesn't use all the money in the account, the remaining money can be transferred to a new beneficiary.

Ms. Stoll said the new program enhancements for 2016 are a fee reduction, Spanish Language materials and call center, making computers and internet expenses qualify, allowing funds to be re-deposited without negative tax consequences, a full-time field representative who works with families and businesses to increase awareness, and new online advisor tools. She added that there are 575,000 Idaho youth under the age of eighteen, but only 41,000 are using the college savings plan. In response to questions from the committee, **Ms. Stoll** said there is currently no tax advantage for businesses to match their employees' contributions, but the Board has discussed it, and it may be offered in the future.

MOTION:

Rep. Mendive made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 26, 2016 meeting as written. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

MOTION: **Rep. Mendive** made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 27, 2016 meeting as written. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Chairman DeMordaunt said the committee would not meet at its normal time of 9:00 a.m. Monday, February 1. Instead, the House Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee would hold a joint meeting at 3:00 p.m. on Monday, February 1.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary