

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 17, 2021
TIME: 9:00 A.M.
PLACE: Room EW41
MEMBERS: Chairman Clow, Vice Chairman Kerby, Representatives Boyle, Mendive, DeMordaunt, Moon, Ehardt, Marshall, Wisniewski, Galloway, Shepherd, Yamamoto, McCrostie, Berch, Toone
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None
GUESTS: President Debbie Critchfield, State Board of Education (SBOE); Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra; Greg Wilson, Governor's Senior Advisor for Education; Kurt Liebich, SBOE Board Member; Alayna Knop, English Language and Arts (ELA) Coordinator, State Department of Education (SDE); Ryan Cantrell Idaho Rural Schools Association; Marilyn Whitney Deputy Superintendent, Communications & Policy, State Department of Education (SDE); Tracie Bent, Chief Planning and Policy Officer, SBOE; Tim McMurtrey, Deputy Superintendent, Operations SDE, Lisa Colon Durham, Director, Certification and Professional Standards SDE; Karlynn Laraway SDE.

Vice Chairman Kerby called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Vice Chairman Kerby noted although the Committee approved **S 1039** on Workforce Readiness Diploma with a **DO PASS** recommendation, upon hearing the Committee's debate the bill's sponsor requested to amend the language in the bill, therefore the bill will be moved to General Orders.

RS 28493: **Rep. Mendive** presented **RS 28493**, proposed legislation allowing qualified school bus drivers who are retired and collecting benefits from the Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI) be allowed to come back into public workforce without affecting their retirement benefits. Idaho has been experiencing a school bus driver shortage for several years.

MOTION: **Rep. Shepherd** stated he is a licensed school bus driver, although not retired and made a motion to introduce **RS 28493**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

President Critchfield, State Board of Education, discussed her concern regarding the growing number of students who perform below state averages due to the pandemic-related closure of schools. Her goals are to provide in-person instruction and intervention to help students recover learning loss. Her office is working to monitor progress with other methods of measurement beyond standard testing, as test data and school accountability needs to be current, not based on 2020 data. Summer intervention programs are also under development to boost literacy. President Critchfield discussed an increased focus on teacher preparation, tools and resources.

Vice Chairman Kerby turned the gavel over to **Chairman Clow**.

In response to Committee questions, **President Critchfield** stated the plethora of virtual platforms used by schools are in the process of being streamlined.

Kurt Liebich Board member of the State Board of Education, discussed efforts to improve student access to technology and the internet. He stated there was a shortage of approximately 180,000 computers and up to 50,000 students without internet access. Mr. Liebich discussed the grant created to assist teachers and students and the continued obstacles in access and delivery. In response to Committee questions he stated that moving forward, teachers and students will have an opportunity to increase digital proficiency.

Chairman Clow asked members of the SBOE why the charter school enrollment cap currently causing a financial issue for virtual schools, wasn't addressed in their administrative work to provide budget certainty for traditional schools. **President Critchfield** stated they weren't aware of the 30 unit charter school cap or how the virtual schools would be impacted.

In answer to Committee questions, **President Critchfield** responded that digital books are less expensive than textbooks which need frequent updates.

Superintendent Ybarra discussed professional development programs and opportunities, as well as strengthened accountability. She addressed the Idaho Reading Initiative (IRI), Fall & Spring IRI Results, and the Strong Families, Strong Students grant program. The IRI tests were administered remotely, which provided mixed results. Social-emotional indicators and increased consistency in school to student communications are also a focus for her office, as the suicide rate has increased. Her team also created a learning management system for educators to track student engagement. Superintendent Ybarra stated summer literacy programs are statistically successful and she is committed to increasing opportunities for learning for Idaho students. She indicated the high school graduation rate increased in 2020.

Alayna Knop, English Language and Arts (ELA) Coordinator, presented the mixed results of the Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 IRI student assessments. The summer reading loss was more than annually anticipated. The SDE is currently monitoring student progress with interim assessment. Ms. Knop reviewed the approximately \$32 million 2020 Literacy Fund Expenses. In answer to Committee questions, she responded that IRI results only have three degrees of measurement although individual districts can use five levels of measurement to better analyze results.

Superintendent Ybarra responded to Committee questions regarding the approximately 8,000 homeless students. She stated there is an urgency to return to in-person instruction to best serve student needs.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Representative Clow
Chair

Christine Reynolds
Secretary