

**MINUTES OF THE
EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE**

October 18, 2000 - 2:00 p.m. - Room 303 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. David H. Steele, Senate Chair
Rep. Lloyd Frandsen, House Chair
Sen. Ron Allen
Sen. Dan Eastman
Sen. Karen Hale
Sen. Howard A. Stephenson
Rep. Jeff Alexander

Rep. Ron Bigelow
Rep. Duane Bourdeaux
Rep. Judy Ann Buffmire
Rep. Fred J. Fife III
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. David L. Hogue
Rep. Bradley T. Johnson
Rep. Keele Johnson
Rep. Evan L. Olsen
Rep. Tammy J. Rowan
Rep. LaWanna "Lou" Shurtliff
Rep. Nora B. Stephens

Members Absent:

Rep. Matt Throckmorton
Rep. Bill Wright

Staff Present:

Mr. J. Wayne Lewis,
Research Analyst
Mr. James L. Wilson,
Associate General Counsel
Ms. Wendy L. Bangerter,
Legislative Secretary

Note: A lists of others present and copies of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

1. Call to Order - Sen. David Steele called the meeting to order at 2:20 p.m.

An additional Education Interim Committee meeting was scheduled for Monday, November 27, 2000 at 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Wayne Peay, Director of the Pioneer Library Online, reviewed the benefits and potential of an online library. He demonstrated the kinds of databases available for research and explained that an online library is especially beneficial to rural schools who typically have limited hard copy resources. He encouraged committee members to log on to the Pioneer Library website and explore the vast potential for locating data that could be helpful in the legislative process. He said the Pioneer Library is used extensively and during September had several hundred thousand hits.

2. Comprehensive Elementary Reading Program - Best Practices - Ms. Lynn

Greenwood, Reading Specialist, State Office of Education, reviewed previously enacted legislative initiatives on comprehensive elementary reading. During the last legislative session H.B. 397, as enacted, established a Reading Performance Improvement Scholarship Program to assist selected elementary teachers earn a reading endorsement. She said the State Board of Education recommended the state office receive a \$4 million literacy building block to begin placing reading staff developers into every elementary school. Research has shown that teacher professional development is directly related to student achievement and a reading staff developer is key in providing teachers with needed training. As provided for in H.B. 312, every school has implemented a school reading plan that will ensure all students will be reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade.

The State Board of Education is recommending the State Office of Education receive a \$3,258,800 staff development building block. Funding would assist schools and districts in implementing the elements of a successful research-based reading plan. As proposed in HB 177, training is needed on ways to prepare a data indicator report and a school portfolio. Ms. Greenwood explained the state office has created writing labs and recommended reading time in class, as well as training for reading leaders. She told the committee that HB 312 directed staff development for teaching phonics and decoding skills and more than 1,000 teachers have trained in a Qualitative Reading Inventory to enable them to identify specific reading deficits. The legislation has also provided for exposure to quality literature and writing laboratories.

Ms. Carolee Gunn, Assessment Specialist, State Office of Education, summarized H.B. 75, from 1999 General Session, which provides rewards to schools for improvements in reading. She reviewed the rules established for schools to receive reading awards, identified applicants who had applied for the awards, and noted those who were selected, based on their reading programs.

Ms. Teddi Safman, Associate Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, reviewed the requirements of specific teacher preparation programs used to teach reading. She reported that each of the five Utah universities offers a basic reading endorsement, as determined by State Office of Education and through teacher collaboration. She reported that half of the universities provide for an advanced reading endorsement and less than 1% of elementary teachers have that designation. Ms. Safman said teacher preparation institutions have adopted performance standards-based NCATE standards. She emphasized the need for evidence of demonstrated competencies of literacy standards and stated that each institution is responsible for demonstrating what their students can do. She reaffirmed that pre-service institutions will continue to collaborate with public education in teacher preparation.

Mr. Rich West, Director of the Center for the School of the Future, distributed and reviewed a document entitled Literacy Recommendations. The document contained 11 recommendations for strengthening comprehensive reading instruction. He introduced Mr. John

Smith, from Utah State University who reported that the School for the Future had partnered with schools districts, schools, universities, and reading specialists to accomplish the state's goal of having every student in the state's public education system reading on or above grade level by the end of the third grade. He emphasized that the recommendations from the Center are generated through those partnerships. He summarized a 3-year national effort to collect data on reading instruction and reviewed the Centers's eleven recommendations in this area to include: best practices, instruction and professional development, and assessment. He suggested that each child can and should have a qualified setting for learning and that elementary teachers' contract days should be increased to 188 days, with five days used for professional development in reading instruction skills. He recommended the following areas for consideration by the committee: 1) the number of reading specialists available in each district; 2) the incorporation of students with disabilities; and 3) new research on assessment, and frequent assessment. He emphasized that teachers need specific skills to properly assess their students.

Mr. West said teachers should read aloud to their students and students should read a variety of materials. He proposed that students be engaged in word study (phonics and spelling patterns), reading groups, and writing. He said a student's progress in reading needs to be monitored, parents need to be involved, and safety nets should be available for struggling students.

Sen. Steele said recommendations for legislative consideration of comprehensive reading programs would be presented in the November 15th meeting. He asked that committee recommendations be given to the chairs by November 13th so staff can review those policy recommendations and their fiscal implications.

3. Charter Schools Annual Report - Proposed Legislation

Ms. Barbara Gardner, Education Specialist, State Office of Education, and Mr. Gary Carlston, Deputy Superintendent of Public Schools, presented the charter schools annual report. They said a charter school advisory committee had been created and was comprised of charter school founders, the State Board of Education staff, and PTA personnel. Ms. Gardner said eight charter schools currently exist in Utah. They are actually public schools, which require the same support and monitoring as regular public schools. When most charter schools were first created, a great deal of support was given many of them through grants. She said the State Office accommodated their changes and provided support in every area to offer parents with a choice in their student's education. Mr. Carlston noted that limited federal monies are available on a reimbursement basis, and the State Office of Education has provided training programs for charter schools startups.

Sen. Steele remarked about a funding resource available through the Federal Charter School Alliance. The state advisory committee has expressed concern about knowing how to hire

teachers when a charter school is not a certainty. He said charter schools are a statutorily created pilot program and the advisory committee has interpreted that pilot charter schools should be operative for a 3-year period.

Sen. Steele introduced proposed charter school legislation. He pointed out that the removal of the pilot program status on charter schools and the procedure to remedy noncompliance in the bill he will sponsor was recommended by the Advisory Board. He asked the committee to study the bill and be prepared to take action at the next meeting. He said it was recommended that funding for charter schools flow directly from the State Office of Education to charter schools.

Committee members asked about the amount of money spent per student at a charter school compared to those per student costs incurred by public schools. Committee members were reminded that charter schools are established by the State Board of Education rather than through local boards. Ms. Karen Derrick, Utah School Boards Association, suggested the committee gather data on how well charter school students are performing. Ms. Ila Rose Fife suggested the committee investigate whether charter schools function as outlined in their charters and whether students attending charter schools moved from a private or public school.

Sen. Howard Stephenson reviewed a site visit made by legislators to a charter school in Carbon County. He said the school has a student waiting lists for each classroom and a large percentage of students attending have attended a parochial school, which is now closed. He said only one-half of the local funding is available to charter schools plus the full state appropriated WPU. He expressed concern for the success of any charter school once the initial startup funding is depleted. He reviewed amendments he will be proposing to the current law: 1) increasing the number of charter schools and eventually removing the limitation on numbers; 2) requiring that local districts provide additional funding and the state would mitigate for students coming from private schools.

Sen. Stephenson distributed information on ranking schools and a report card system that has been created for charter school legislation across the nation. He pointed out that Utah legislation, in comparison with other states, earns a C- grade. He introduced Debbie Besselievre and her son, Brent. She and a group of parents would like to create a charter school in the Highland area, but are prohibited by the current limitations in the law. She felt the three-year pilot program is unnecessary and will result in the loss of federal Title 10 grant funds. Sen. Stephenson felt the state board should monitor charter schools, but state law should not limit the number established in Utah.

Several other parents spoke about not limiting the number of charter schools. They said there is magic in empowering parents to become involved as administrators of charter schools because changes can be made more efficiently and quickly. They said parents will not "burn out"

when they are intimately involved in their children's education. Sen. Steele asked committee members to be prepared to make decisions regarding the charter schools draft legislation at the next meeting.

4. School Boards and School Superintendents Legislative Package

Because of time constraints, this item was not discussed.

5. Formation of Educational Policy - Due to time limitations, this topic was not discussed.

6. Adjournment

MOTION: Rep. Bordeaux moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

