

(Draft – Awaiting Formal Approval)
**MINUTES OF THE
PUBLIC EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**
Room 210, Senate Building, State Capitol Complex
August 28, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Howard Stephenson, Co-Chair
Rep. Bradley Last, Co-Chair
Rep. Steve Eliason, House Vice Chair
Sen. J. Stuart Adams
Sen. Lyle W. Hillyard
Sen. Patricia W. Jones
Sen. Mark B. Madsen
Sen. Aaron Osmond
Sen. Daniel W. Thatcher
Sen. Stephen H. Urquhart
Rep. Joel K. Briscoe
Rep. Francis D. Gibson
Rep. Stephen G. Handy
Rep. Michael S. Kennedy
Rep. David E. Lifferth
Rep. Carol Spackman Moss
Rep. Jim Nielson
Rep. Kraig Powell

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rep. LaVar Christensen

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Ben Leishman, Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Mr. Thomas Young, Economist
Ms. Linda Error, Legislative Secretary

Note: A copy of related materials and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

Co-Chair Stephenson called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m.

1. Announcements

Mr. Ben Leishman, Fiscal Analyst, Office of The Legislative Fiscal Analyst, explained to the committee that due to a legislative bill, meeting materials will now be available electronically unless otherwise requested. He instructed the committee on how to access the materials on-line.

Co-Chair Stephenson noted the 50th Anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and invited all to attend the celebration and bell ringing on the steps of the capitol during the lunch hour.

2. Local Education Agency (LEA) Other Post Employment Benefit Liabilities (OPEB)

Mr. Leishman explained that during the 2013 Legislative Session, members of the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee requested information on school district Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) and the long-term liabilities associated with these benefits. He further explained that each school district completed a survey of several questions about their OPEB. Termination benefits were included to provide the Legislature with a complete view of the potential liabilities of school districts. Mr. Leishman presented and explained the issue brief “Survey of Other Post-Employment Benefits in Utah School Districts”.

Sen. Hillyard expressed concern over the appearance that some school districts are continuing to offer their benefits and that liabilities are not funded. Rep. Eliason explained he is working on legislation he might introduce in the upcoming session that would address the problem of districts that continue to offer benefits while having unfunded liabilities.

Ms. Debra Roberts, Utah State Board of Education, agreed to get a recommendation from the State Board of Education on what could be done to address the unfunded liability problem in some districts. Sen. Stephenson expressed concern that the unfunded liability could fall to the taxpayers in the respective districts.

3. Teacher Salary Supplement Program

Ms. Wendy Peterson, Deputy Director, Department of Human Resource Management, presented a brief overview of the program. She stated that in the 2008 General Session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 2 which provided for the creation of the Teacher Salary Supplement Program to address the critical shortage of math and science teachers in Utah schools. Ms. Peterson noted that eligible teachers would receive a maximum annual salary supplement of \$4,100. Ms. Peterson explained the criteria needed for a teacher to be eligible for the additional funds.

Mr. John Matthews, Department of Human Resource Management, reviewed the handout “Teacher Salary Supplement Program” which included the budget, the application information, and the appeals process for applicants who were rejected.

Co-Chair Stephenson requested a report as to whether the program is having an effect on attracting qualified teachers and asked for a recommendation on whether to expand the program.

Superintendent Martell Menlove, Utah State Office of Education (USOE), stated the USOE could administer the program and by so doing could eliminate some of the confusion and stream-line the process. Sen. Stephenson requested a report in the next meeting to see if that would be appropriate.

4. Retirement Rate Impacts on Related to Basic School Programs

Mr. Leishman explained that two programs in the Minimum School Program provide additional compensation to qualifying educators. They are the Educator Salary Adjustment and the Teacher Salary Supplement programs. The analyst further explained that qualifying educators receive a specific dollar amount as part of their total compensation. The money given to each program also includes an amount to help Local Education Agencies (LEAs) pay the employer-paid benefits costs associated with the compensation adjustments. He presented and explained the issue brief “Retirement Rate Adjustments for MSP Educator Compensation Programs” and noted that the committee should be aware that there may be a need for more money to cover the recent increases in the state retirement rate.

Mr. Leishman explained that the program funding is not tied to the WPU and that money is distributed to districts according to qualifying educators.

Co-Chair Stephenson questioned whether districts could choose to opt-out of the program for their teachers in their district.

5. Career & Technical Education Add-on Program – Allocation Formula

Mr. Leishman explained that during the 2012 Interim, the subcommittee studied the possibility of allocating funding based on the relative cost of providing courses and to include incentives for high skill, high wage, and high demand subjects. Mr. Leishman presented and explained the issue brief "Minimum School Program: Career & Technical Education Add-on" which included the Career & Technical education (CTE) formulas used to calculate program costs. Mr. Leishman also presented and explained different formula scenarios to assist the Legislature with the allocation of CTE funds to LEAs.

Sen. Hillyard questioned if there is duplication in funding of courses between the school districts and the Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT). He also expressed concern as to why some UCATs enrollments are down. Sen. Stephenson and Sen. Urquhart also questioned if moneys are being sent to the right public education facility for courses available. Co-Chair Stephenson recommended that in order to address this concern, a meeting between all involved parties occur before the next subcommittee meeting.

6. Teacher Professional Development Days

Ms. Sydnee Dickson, Director, Teaching and Learning, Utah State Office of Education, presented and explained the handout "Effective Professional Development". Ms. Dickson explained that in 2009 the Quality Teaching Block Grant was eliminated, which resulted in a loss of funding to Utah schools for professional development days. She said that LEAs are asking for restoration of this funding in order to improve instruction practices leading to higher levels of student achievement. Ms. Dickson reported on the teacher professional development activities in the state, including an overview of the number of professional development days offered by LEAs during the 2012-13 school year and how they were funded. She also reported that with 26,063 active classroom teachers and an average daily wage of \$248 (based on 183 days without benefits), the cost for one professional development day would be around \$6,463,624, plus an additional \$1,376,363 for specialists and administrators for a total of \$7,839,987.

Ms. Dickson further explained the importance and the need for professional teacher development in our school system. She reported on the USOE's professional development efforts and costs including the largest, Utah Core Academy.

Mr. Bob Sanju, Director, K-12 Learning and Development, Washington County School District, explained his experience as principal of Fossil Ridge Intermediate School implementing the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model. He reported on the increased learning that occurs by following the PLC model.

Mr. Sanju presented a video showing the success that occurred at Fossil Ridge Intermediate School by implementing PLC.

Ms. Dickson presented recommendations to improve professional learning to improve teacher effectiveness thereby increasing student learning.

Sen. Osmond questioned whether districts should be given more flexibility as when to hold professional development days. Sen. Stephenson noted that the 990 hours of classroom time requirement is by rule of the USOE.

Rep. Nielsen expressed concerns, after hearing from several teachers/constituents, that at times professional development opportunities were not effective. Rep. Eliason stated that if additional funding is given, there needs to be some way to measure if the professional learning is effective.

Ms. Dickson reported that there are many great high quality learning programs working for teachers in the state. She stated in order to improve professional development in our schools and districts there must be more accountability when money and time are spent.

Co-Chair Stephenson dismissed the committee for a lunch break at 12:20 p.m.

Co-Chair Last reconvened the meeting at 1:45 p.m.

7. Critical Languages and Dual Immersion

Mr. Gregg Roberts, World languages Specialist, Utah State Office of Education, explained that in 2007 the Utah Legislature passed the Critical Languages Program with Senate Bill 80, and then in 2008 added Senate Bill 41 which added the Dual Language Immersion Program. He noted that currently Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and French are the four languages available in the program. Mr. Roberts stated that we now have 98 state supported programs. He then reported on the benefits of the Dual Language Immersion Program to the students and noted that the state is getting national attention because of this program. Mr. Roberts presented and explained the handout "Utah Dual Language Immersion" and noted that test scores for those in the immersion programs were the same as in non-dual immersion classrooms.

Mr. Roberts presented a video showing the importance of the Dual Language Immersion Program. The video can be seen on "You Tube" by searching "Utah Dual Immersion".

Mr. Roberts explained that the cost for the immersion program is \$100 per student. He noted that there is a waiting list with each program. He stated that if funding were available, a maximum of 20-25 programs could be added each year.

Sen. Stephenson noted the expert work of Mr. Roberts and his ability to set a standard for the success of the program under difficult circumstances. Sen. Stephenson explained that the difficulty with the program is denying students the opportunity. Sen. Thatcher expressed concern about the amount of students who are being denied the opportunity to participate in the Dual Language Immersion Program. Mr. Roberts explained that the program is growing as quickly as it is possible.

10. Beverly Taylor Sorenson Elementary Arts Learning Program

Superintendent Martell Menlove, Utah State Office of Education, presented and explained an overview of the program and introduced the handouts "Beverly Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program". He discussed how the program is helping the students in Utah schools.

Mr. James L. Sorenson explained that prior to his mother's death in May 2013; it was her desire that all the students of Utah have access to an art integrated education. Mr. Sorenson reported that according to a Dan Jones study, students of the Beverly Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program consistently performed higher in math, language arts, and science than those that were not participants. He cited several other studies which showed that test scores were significantly higher for those students participating in the arts program. Initially the program only reached 10 percent of Utah students at a high cost. Mr. Sorenson noted that a new model has been put into place to reach more students at a much lower cost. He reviewed the number of participating schools and costs involved. In summary, Mr. Sorenson explained that at the end of a five year plan the cost to the state would be about \$8,000,000 with all schools in the state participating.

Co-Chair Last explained that the Sorenson family funded the infrastructure that makes this program possible by training the specialists who train those who teach the children.

9. Necessarily Existent Small Schools

Mr. Shawn Teigen, Senior Research Analyst, Utah Foundation, presented and explained to the committee the report that was done by the Utah Foundation in 2012 concerning rural schools and referred to the handout “Reaching for Educational Equity: An Evaluation of Utah’s Rural Schools”. Mr. Teigen reported that about 25 percent of schools and 15 percent of students in the state are considered rural. He further explained the findings in the report which included teachers, test scores, graduation rates, course offerings, funding, extra-curricular activities, and college entrance.

Sen. Stephenson questioned the availability of on-line courses to the rural schools. Mr. Teigen reported there are a variety of choices and opportunities for students to take on-line courses. Sen. Stephenson requested an inventory of available on-line courses currently provided to rural students in order to evaluate further funding requests.

Mr. Leishman, briefly explained the issue brief “Minimum School Program: Necessarily Existent Small Schools” which included the program overview, funding history, qualifying schools and funding comparisons.

11. Statutory Reports

Co-Chair Last encouraged all subcommittee members to review the following statutory reports: “Enhancement for Accelerated Students”, “Enhancement for At-Risk Students”, and “Title I – Schools in Improvement Paraeducators Program”.

MOTION: Sen. Osmond moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Adams, Sen. Madsen, Sen. Stephenson, Sen. Thatcher, Rep. Gibson, Rep. Handy, Rep. Kennedy, and Rep. Powell absent for the vote.

Co-Chair Last adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.