

CAREER LADDER AND TIERED LICENSURE
September 29, 2014
MEETING NOTES

Present: Rod Lewis, Chair; Linda Clark, Co-Chair, Senator John Goedde, Senator Dean Mortimer, Senator Janie Ward-Engelking, Representative Lance Clow, Representative Wendy Horman, Superintendent Tom Luna, Rob Winslow, Karen Echeverria, Wayne Freedman, Geoffrey Thomas, Rod Gramer, Brian Smith, Christina Linder and Penni Cyr

Not Present: Representative Mark Gibbs

Others Present: Roger Brown, Office of the Governor; Tim B. Hill, State Department of Education, Paul Headlee, and Brooke Brouman, Legislative Services Office; David Hahn, Division of Financial Management; Alex Feldman, Consultant, State Board of Education; Blas Telleria, Boise School District; and Marilyn Whitney, Office of the State Board of Education

Chairman Rod Lewis reminded the committee that at the last meeting on September 15, 2014, a request had been made to present the career ladder proposal with a five-year implementation schedule. Committee members had requested two additional weeks to digest and fully understand the material.

Mr. Lewis clarified that the proposal contains two aspects: (1) the end point, the career ladder itself, comprised of three reimbursement schedules which correspond to the three levels of licensure previously approved; and (2) the implementation plan which is the road map for attaining full implementation of the career ladder.

Finally, the committee had discussed resolution language stating the committee's clear connection of the career ladder and tiered licensure programs which are designed to retain and recruit quality teachers, and that passage of one is dependent on passage of both.

The committee then reviewed the September 29, 2014 Presentation. Dr. Linda Clark clarified that the total system cost would arise from new money each year. She also stated that the proffered figures were not intended to address growth or benefits because those elements were better handled by legislative process. The model was designed so that it could be changed in implementation by the legislature. The committee's task was to put details on the original Governor's Task Force Recommendations and to give the legislature something concrete to work with. "We have fulfilled our responsibility," she said.

Mr. Lewis offered language to be included with the committee's final report:

The Career Ladder/Tiered Licensure Committee approves a plan to move the state of Idaho's salary-based apportionment to a career ladder with the following levels of state apportionment:

Residency Level - \$40,000 - \$42,000

Professional Level - \$47,000 - \$51,000

Master Level - \$54,000 - \$58,000

This approval includes the 5-year implementation plan presented to the committee effective beginning in the Fiscal Year 2016.

Superintendent Luna seconded the proposed language. He also stated why he supports the plan: "This is an important step, not the last step, and it brings to conclusion the work that was created by the original task force and finished by this committee. I could identify some questions that may be asked as it makes its way to the legislature. These questions will come forth... Most importantly, I would rather focus efforts to make [this plan] better than to stay with the current system that we have struggled with for so long. It takes teaching in Idaho to a professional level that does not exist today, and brings the respect and professionalism that Idaho teachers deserve."

Representative Clow asked if the figures in each implementation year represented minimum salaries. Dr. Clark replied that the committee has been very consistent that the figures do not reflect salary paid to teachers, but rather the reimbursement for teachers that the state pays to the districts. When money flows to the districts, it is intended that the districts will not pay less, but the committee has never talked about a forced minimum. That is one of the sideboard questions which will come later through the legislative process.

Penni Cyr asked if the figures were setting a false base. Dr. Clark replied that it is the committee's intention that the notion of a false base would be eliminated, and every person would be assigned to a cohort group. The current "grid" system would be eliminated completely, and, at full implementation of the career ladder program, the false base of the grid system would disappear as well. "I would not support it if we had another false base because we would not address the fiscal instability."

Mr. Lewis agreed that the committee has expected that teachers will not be paid less than the reimbursements, but said that it takes legislative action to set that in place. Representative Clow noted that the legislature would also need to deal with several aspects of Idaho Code that reference the grid system, and legislation would need to be brought forth. Dr. Clark added that Idaho Code references to continuing contract would also need to be aligned with the new system.

Superintendent Luna said, "There is no rubber stamp with the legislature. I don't care what you bring to them and how well you think it is prepared. Our work is done; theirs just begins."

Mr. Lewis reminded the committee that the proposal provides an appropriate road map and adheres to certain principals of fairness for people in the system and coming into the system. He noted that the committee approved use of the old grid for purposes of assigning out-of-state teachers to their appropriate cohort group.

Representative Horman asked information about Year 6 costs, and Mr. Lewis agreed to have those figures provided.

Senator Ward-Engelking expressed her continuing reservation with and fear that the tiered licensure system would be implemented without the career ladder, and felt that the career ladder should be implemented first. Mr. Lewis said that the State Board of Education feels that the two systems are inexorably tied, and the legislature agrees: without tiered licensure, the career ladder will not be implemented and vice versa.

Mr. Lewis also cautioned the committee to remain accurate in their descriptions of the programs. He reminded the committee that it made a major move away from the original Task Force recommendation by removing loss of licensure. Once a teacher has obtained a professional license, s/he cannot lose it as a result of the structure. For resident teachers who do not qualify for a professional license, Mr. Lewis said, "Teachers are proficient or not, and if not, we left the door open to "bank" successful years, obtain training and come back in."

Dr. Clark reminded the committee that "this is a philosophical shift of major proportions." Tiered licensure puts into place two gatekeepers that Idaho has never had before: the first is at the university level. Pre-service teachers are being trained to higher standards and to the standards by which they will be evaluated throughout their career. The second gatekeeper is at the end of the residency period. Tiered licensure is about improving the profession. "We are not trying to be punitive; we want the best in the classroom. Our model mirrors medicine. I don't want a doctor from a medical school where everyone gets a license. Our first responsibility is to ensure high quality teachers from the beginning."

Senator Ward-Engelking agreed that when the career ladder is fully implemented, it will be attractive to new teachers. But until the career ladder is fully implemented, she fears Idaho will lose quality teachers to other states.

Superintendent Luna suggested that the reason behind this discussion was not that the committee is unclear about tiered licensure and career ladder, but because it is unclear among those it will affect. He said that he has read and had had many conversations with people who have been given inaccurate information. "Teachers need to be told the truth."

Representative Horman asked if a “yes” vote on the proposal committed the committee to the numbers in the career ladder presentation. Mr. Lewis confirmed that the figures represented the end result. Senator Ward-Engelking questioned five years, rather than sooner.

Dr. Clark reminded the committee that it was tasked to take a model and put details on it, rationalize it and make certain that its assumptions work. It exists as a five year plan and a six year plan. The legislature will decide on what the bottom line is, what increments and how long it will take to implement. “We have done all we can do.”

Representative Horman said, “I am completely supportive of the end result, but I will abstain.” Penni Cyr also supports moving to a more professional level, but stated that she, too, would abstain on the vote.

The resolution passed 12-0, with five abstentions.

Mr. Lewis presented additional resolution language to be added to the final report:

The Career Ladder/Tiered Licensure Committee is resolved that the proposed tiered certification framework being considered through the Administrative Rules process and the career ladder compensation model that will be proposed through legislation carried by the Board are companion pieces of an overall plan to increase teacher pay and recruit and retain high quality teachers. Implementation of the overall plan is dependent on the approval and passage of both the rule and the legislation.

Senator Goedde moved that the resolution language be adopted. Karen Echeverria seconded the motion.

Senator Ward-Engelking said that she would vote no because she felt that the appropriation needed to come before tiered licensure. Mr. Lewis reiterated that implementation of tiered licensure is dependent on funding the career ladder.

Representative Clow said that the legislature appropriates one year at a time. “We have to start somewhere; [this] is the way to start.” Senator Mortimer replied that the legislature does become obligated for multiple years by passing legislations that requires that moneys are extended for more than one year. He suggested that legislation come forth that obligates the legislature for five years.

The resolution language was adopted 13-2.

Mr. Lewis thanked the members of the committee for their time, effort and sacrifice. He offered closing thoughts:

“I have served on the Board for 15 years and have seen proposals come forward. One of the goals that we have had has been to increase teacher pay in those 15 years. There has always been a call for accountability that must stand beside that teacher pay, and we have had a difficult time getting there. What we have done here is monumental; it is significant, and I ask your support as committee members. This is a once-in-a-lifetime, once-in-a-career opportunity. We have rarely had this level of collaboration to put forth a system to increase teacher pay; rarely have we had the momentum to get to this place. I will offer that if we do not all support it, be it imperfect, we will have a difficult time passing it. It will take the support of all of us...nothing is perfect, but there is reasonable accountability that is neither too lenient nor too firm; the pay scales are meaningful and significant; and if we can implement it, it will benefit our state.”

Representative Clow added, “It is achievable, and important to the future of our state.”