

**Task Force Community Forum
April 11
Twin Falls**

Attendance #: Approx. 40

Task Force members present: Richard Westerberg, Roger Brown. Task Force Chair Richard Westerberg recognized former Board members present Curtis Eaton and Laird Stone.

Task Force Chair Richard Westerberg provided an introduction and brief history of the Governor’s Task Force and the make-up of its members. Mr. Westerberg gave an overview of the evening’s agenda and flow. The presentation included education achievement data, degree attainment data (including national) and explanation of the Board’s 60% postsecondary attainment goal. Also included were Department of Labor information, job market data, and other information regarding the need for improvement in our education system. Mr. Westerberg reviewed focus areas identified by Task Force as well as the groups’ initial strategies and recommendations. He also provided a list of questions the Task Force would like the public to consider and provide feedback on.

Public comment:

Technology	H. Henning: Wanted to know if the Task Force is working to eliminate heavy backpacks loaded with books kids are carrying. Wants work to be done for books to be on “e-readers” so kids don’t have to carry heavy loads. Mr. Westerberg indicated the Task Force is looking at how to apply technology to education.
Funding Class Size	P. Ostyn: Former educator. Feels that the largest problem facing education in Idaho is that the schools aren’t properly funded so there is a manageable class size at the elementary level – classes are too large. Teachers can’t do adequate jobs of teaching with the large class sizes that are presently occurring in schools; especially grades K through 6-7 th grade. Need more teachers at the elementary level.
Effective Teachers	Evin Fox: Former educator from Twin Falls area; now teaches at CSI. Recommended the Task Force identify what traits make an effective teacher.
Common Core Curriculum	A. Arp: Magic Valley resident of 41 years. Would like to see prayer and Bible reading return to schools. Feels religion and morality need to be taught in school along with what students are learning. Would like the book <i>The Principles that Made Our Country Great</i> to be required reading along with <i>The Miracle of America</i> and <i>The Five Thousand Year Leap</i> . Need to reemphasize what made our country great and the free enterprise system. Stay away from the common core.
Curriculum Funding	R. Hague: Twin Falls resident. Commented that throwing money at a broken school system does not make a better school system and does not help us meet our education goals. Felt the Task Force needs to make sure our children get educated – bottom line. They need to graduate from high school and be proficient in their studies. Recommended looking at the old definition of education which includes “to draw out” from within. Students should be

	encouraged to develop what is within them and not necessarily what is provided in the classroom.
PTE Early Childhood Education	M. Gibson: Twin Falls resident of 40 years. Serves as part time director of ARTEC Regional Professional Technical Charter School. They make use of existing facilities and staff to make high-end programs at the charter school. Benefits to education are significant when opportunity for students to get technical education is provided. Need to focus on STEM courses and to focus on funding. Expand programs to begin them earlier like K-3 so students get a good start. Teachers should work longer and be more available to students. We need to know where we are at presently to know where we are going.
Public input Parent Engagement	D. Mitchell: Board trustee in Jerome District 261 and parent. Is disappointed with the overall community and others in the education community for their lack of participation and lack of attendance at this public meeting. Felt they should take up the opportunity to comment to the Task Force and help education move forward by providing suggestions and feedback. Commented there are good things going on in our schools, but feels there are outside forces at work, including legislators, that are impeding education. Problems can't be solved just with money. Feels parents and citizens need to volunteer at schools more to help students. There are also dedicated teachers who need help and need the support of parents.
Standardized Tests Technology	J. Christensen: Feels the Task Force needs to identify what the problems are first before they can start work to solve the issues. Need to work from data based situations where there is proof of a problem. Felt the 60% goal might be too high and that the students need other opportunities besides college to move into, such as an agricultural occupation in rural areas. They need real skills after they finish high school to start careers. Expressed concern over the state funding SAT tests; people should put up their own money to take the tests. Feels technology in school is moving too fast (used the example of I-pads in school) and it is too expensive. Is concerned about the high school drop-out rate and suggested a published report on drop-out rates for each district be required. Also felt districts should report on the rate of teenage pregnancy. Recommended an audit of school principals to see if they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.
Common Core	Not Identified: Speaker expressed concern about the things presented in the slides going too fast. She did not understand Idaho core and common core. Mr. Westerberg explained the Idaho core and that we need data on what students are doing; that the system will follow students through their education so that we can see how they are doing and what their needs are. She complained about being uninformed on the issues and asked for direction on where to get more information. Mr. Westerberg clarified that all the information can be obtained on the State Board's web page in greater detail about what it is doing and what the Task Force has done and is doing. He also pointed out all the Task Force meetings have been video streamed and that the Task Force has been a very transparent process, reiterating that all information is available to her and others for their own research, and that everyone has an opportunity to offer public comment on line as well, and that all public input will be considered.

	Mr. Westerberg clarified that the Task Force was charged with and concentrating on looking at things that could enhance the educational opportunities for our children. He added that these findings will likely result in proposed legislation that will go to the Governor which may or may not be recommended to the legislature. He also clarified the Board's 60% goal for the audience.
Decentralized Local Control	Gentleman, long time resident from the Twin Falls area, who did not identify himself. He was concerned that there is not an education crisis, but more of a culture crisis. His question is what are the problems that keep us from being able to do what we want to do with education? Felt that if cultural issues are not addressed then education issues cannot be solved. His second point was that communities are strong enough and able to solve their own problems. They just need to be asked and given a way to solve problems. (Local control.) He ended by saying that people learn because they love their teachers.

Mr. Westerberg closed by sharing about his own background and shared how committed Task Force members are to education and thanked everyone for their participation.