Marilyn Whitney

From: Task Force
Subject: FW:

Sent: Thursday, May 02, 2013 12:57 PM
To: Task Force
Subject:

As a former charter school teacher, long time public education advocate and NWPE member I strongly encourage you to support legislation that will establish a school culture that respects the rights of nonunion teachers to work in an environment free from coercion, harassment, and intimidation regarding their decision to join or refrain from joining a union and to promote freedom of choice in association memberships. Such legislation would advance mutual respect, collaboration, teacher professionalism, effectiveness, and leadership.

Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2013 9:09 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Governor's Task Force for Improving Education

To: Governor's Task Force for Improving Education
From:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Task Force Focus Areas. You have a herculean task. Your very existence and mission illustrates why. You must somehow be the beacon to overcome the distrust, alienation and animosity resulting from the over-the-top campaigns of those opposed and those in favor of the referenda known as Propositions 1, 2 and 3.

I have spent many hours studying the background and content of the two consortia in play now, i.e., Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and Smarter Balanced, the group with which Idaho is participating. I have become a convert to Common Core Standards. My conversion comes with some deep concerns about our ability to make it happen. The report issued by the National Governor's Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and Achieve, Inc., entitled "Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring US Students Receive a World Class Education" sets forth five action steps. (See www.corestandards.org/assets/0812BENCHMARKING.pdf.) If Idaho in particular, and the member states overall do not embrace the substance of the five action steps delineated in that report, then what is being considered by the Task Force is much ado about nothing. That report, and others like it, leaves no doubt that success with the Common Core Standards is the qualified teacher in the classroom.

FISCAL STABILITY

Only the Governor and the Legislature can provide this by their leadership and the willingness to revise our present tax structure and the allocation to education. Stating the obvious: the implementation of Common Core Standards will require increased levels of spending for training teachers and staff at the state and local levels and for the hardrdware and infrastructure needed to administer the tests. New funds will be required to enable cash-strapped rural school districts to participate. Question: What will we do when funds are no longer available from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium grant? Smarter Balanced has created a Sustainability Task Force to provide recommendations on how states will procure, administer and maintain the

assessment system after the federal grant ends in October 2014. Perhaps it is this gap that caused Mr. Luna to wonder about remaining with the Common Core, eliciting a rather condescending letter dated March 22, 2013 from the Thomas Fordham Institute, a player in the Common Core implementation. Publications by The Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education are required reading to get a grasp on the long term requirements in dollars and time for the implementation of Common Core Standards. (See www.gordoncommission.org.)

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Presumably the Task Force has reviewed the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) recommendations on "Technology Readiness for College and Career Ready Teaching, Learning and Assessment.) This paper lays out the magnitude of the technological changes facing us to implement the Common Core. Again, the isolated smaller school districts are in a deeper hole. SETDA notes that school districts must include technology costs as an annual line item in their budgets and that at least 5 percent must be allocated or they will fall behind. The initial transition can be even more expensive depending on the age of each school's existing devices and wireless capacity. (See www.setda.org)

I urge circumspection in making costly long term dollar commitments, whether for assessment software or for computer equipment required for the transition to the Common Core. We can all reflect upon wonderful programs undertaken which did not succeed, or needed to be significantly revamped. The contract with HP in the Students Come First program is an example of a long range commitment with no flexibility unless a penalty was paid. As noted above, we don't know where the bucks are coming from after 2014. Bill Gates would be the first to acknowledge things in the art of education can change. The Gates foundation spent $2 billion over eight years on a concept and then dropped it because it wasn't showing results. (Newsweek, May 9, 2011) Observe 'No Child Left Behind'. And sometimes it isn't the concept, it's the execution.

The Governor stated in his press release announcing the Task Force that, "There must be no "third rail" in this conversation." I suggest that charter schools must be included in this "conversation" because of their potential without careful oversight to dilute resources from the K-12 budget for traditional schools. The legislation this year that provides building funds now and in the future for charters is an example. The Office of Performance Evaluations study raised other concerns, as have national studies, e.g., Stanford's CREDO report on numerous charter schools in the US. (See www.standford.edu then search for credo, click on Executive Summary-credo.)

EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND LEADERS

"… all students deserve an effective teacher. To make this a reality, the teaching profession does not need tinkering, it needs seismic changes…"

"… applaud the nearly nationwide adoption of college and career readiness standards articulated by the Common Core….Without an effective teacher for every student in every classroom, the promise of these standards will go unmet."

These quotes came from The Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching, a study created and paid for by the NEA. It is available at www.nea.org then search for transforming teaching.

The Task Force has seen presentations on the Gates Foundation's study, Measures of Effective Teaching, www.metproject.org, the Danielson Model, www.danielsongroup.org and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards www.nbpts.org .

Each of these organizations/studies emphasizes the critical role of the teacher and the need for collaboration. Collaboration between teachers, between teachers and administrators and with parents. These groups speak to professional progression, performance evaluation and the basis for compensation. Their

approaches are complementary. They also refute the validity of merit pay based solely on test scores, as does the corestandards.org study cited earlier. We are not stamping out widgets here.

And then there is the Finnish model which produces year after year the highest overall scholastic scores in the world as measured by OECD/PISA, the organization whose scoring is scaring us to death. (See www.oecd.org.) But Finland's approach is the antithesis of ours and most of the rest of the world. To summarize in the words of one of their teachers, "We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how to take a test." The Task Force has seen a presentation on Finland but there is an excellent supplement at www.smithsonianmag.com. then search for "finland schools". The state Board of Education would do well to examine, with the university presidents, the teacher education of the Fins and other highly rated countries. Their curriculums are intellectually challenging, drawing top students into the profession.

Two final thoughts. First, I hope that K-12 shall remain more than just a hatchery for the job market. This is the time we build citizenship, explore the arts and literature, test our skills at vo-tech, check our debating and leadership aptitude, play a sport or two. Second, quite unlike Garrison Keilor's Lake Woebegone, not all of our children are above average. Nor do all of them march to the same drummer. The Finnish model doesn't give up on these students academically. I hope we have the patience to help them find their wings, for often they are our entrepreneurs, inventors, authors and artists. And, yes, inspired teachers.

Sent: Monday, May 13, 2013 7:00 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Questions

Dear Task Force,

I am submitting questions for your consideration that have been generated through the Region IV school superintendents. Thank you.

Questions and Comments for Evaluation Task Force:

- How do we address the issue of growth in student achievement using the ISAT for teachers whose students don't take the ISAT (i.e. 1st grade teacher, Art Teacher, Teacher who only teaches 12th grade English-They don't see the students until after ISAT has been completed)?
    - If some type of building score is used on an individual teacher evaluation, it seems it might be open for a law suit.
    - We have two buildings that are K-3. Even though the students take the ISAT in 3rd, we have no growth data until 4th grade which is in a different building and students are combined.
- If the evaluator doesn't have to demonstrate proficiency in conducting observations until 2018, are the evaluations valid between now and 2018?
- Regarding Principal evaluations: Should section 121.02 Professional Practice include staff input?
- How will student achievement be measured for a principal if there is no ISAT growth data available for that building (i.e. a K-2, or K-3 school)?

Sent: Wednesday, May 08, 2013 12:02 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Idaho school funding

I believe that the legislature has been shortchanging the public schools and state colleges and universities for the past several years.

They seem to be more interested in reducing taxes than in providing a proper education for our young people.

I would like to see public schools funded at a level where local school districts do not have to pass override levies to provide a basic education. Inadequate funding from the state is particularly difficult for school districts with low property values. It takes a very high property tax levy to provide a generous amount of funding from the local property owners.

We are told that in the future more and more jobs will require post secondary education of some sort, be it college or technical training. With the reduced funding to colleges and universities, the tuition burden is more than many families can afford.

It is time to wake up the legislature and get some proper funding for our public education system. If higher taxes are required to pay for it, that's OK. It's better to do that than pay for prisons and other social services for an unemployable population.

Sent: Wednesday, May 01, 2013 1:07 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: comments

I appreciate your efforts to improve education for all Idaho students. I have listened to most of the meetings online and appreciate that option. I've learned a lot. Attending the meeting in Idaho Falls in April was also a learning opportunity.

Coming from a rural school district, my primary concern is funding. BUT, funding will not solve the problems unless accountability improves at the administrative level. There has been improvement in the teacher evaluation process, but unless I am uninformed, building administrator accountability discussions are just beginning. I understand that a superintendent evaluation is further down the road, but administrator evaluations is a key step in the process.

I would also like to encourage you to look at union vs. non-union teachers. I am not a member of IEA, and while I respect their efforts, I am frustrated with their claim that they represent a majority of teachers. I would like to know what percentage of teachers in Idaho are actually IEA members. Is that number available? As a non-union teacher, my voice is a whisper compared to the volume of the union teacher voice.

Please consider funding by mastery and or work completion rather than ADA or seat time. For example, if class content is available online, and students complete the assignments, proving mastery at some point, then schools/student should not be penalized for not sitting in a chair. The world is a different place than it was when ADA was determined to be the best funding mechanism. Families and students are much more mobile than they have ever been. Quality instruction and assessments can be delivered online, not just in the classroom Blended and online learning are fast becoming the preferred method of learning for adults and students. Funding must reflect that shift.

Please consider recommending a move from the traditional 9 month school calendar. The agrarian model is antiquated and has been proven detrimental to students learning.

Finally, I appreciate your commitment to make decisions based on what is best for students, rather than the system. Meeting the needs of the staff and/or the system has been the norm. Most folks say they make decisions based on what is best for kids, but when looking at the evidence, it's hard to support that statement.

Thanks for collecting input and I'm looking forward to your recommendations.

Sent: Wednesday, May 01, 2013 7:02 AM

Cc: Task Force;
Subject: Lessons from St. Teresa's in Seattle and blended learning

Good morning. I thought you would find the resources below interesting contributions to the Task Force.

Liv Finne of the Washington Policy Institute notes in What public education can learn from the leaders who saved St. Therese Catholic Academy, that "cutting costs, improving leadership, supporting teachers in the classroom and using online lessons hold important lessons for school administrators seeking to improve public education." A related article describes how Catholic schools are incorporating charter like changes to survive and thrive.

The article, Blended Learning and the Teaching Profession, is also an interesting contribution to how blended learning is not about replacing teachers with technology, but rather empowering them with new opportunities.

Thank you for your hard work on the Task Force!

Sent: Monday, April 29, 2013 1:47 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Hands on Approach to Educational Reform in Idaho

Dear Task Force Members:

I am currently retired following a 38 year career at Idaho State University. During my tenure with ISU I held a number of diverse positions including Director of Admissions, Director of the TRiO Programs, Coordinator of the TRiO Student Support Services program, and several others. I firmly believe that our youth should have access to the best possible education from kindergarten through higher education. It is for this reason I felt compelled to write to you concerning the identification of key challenges we are facing and recommendations for needed improvement! Please carefully review the enclosed attachment. I hope that you will seriously consider implementing some of the best practice solutions to our current educational dilemma!

Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2013 9:12 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Improving Education

Taskforce Committee:

It's unfortunate that the biggest factor in improving education is not even being talked about, at least I haven't heard it. We talk about aligning curriculum, training teachers, supplying technology, implementing common core, standardizing assessments, increasing funding, etc., but no one is talking about motivating students. Nothing will have a greater effect on a student's learning than a desire to learn. Students will be "first" only to the level they decide to be. (The old leading a horse to water adage)

Mr. Luna talked about a revolutionary change in education with Students Come First but I believe he set his sights far too low. If you want to improve education, give students a reason to learn. In other words, motivate them.

1. Eliminate compulsory education requirement. (Instantly the responsibility for attendance is on the student and parents)
2. Offer year-round education. (Not what you think, forget the current rigidity that is not conducive to learning)
3. Free public education from ages 5 to 19, after 19 for a fee. (IDEA, FAPE, etc., can all be accommodated)
4. Award a basic proficiency degree for achieving minimum standards, but in addition offer accomplished and master degrees in different subject areas which indicate each student's strengths, interests, and level of exposure. (Maintains a basic standard for graduation while allowing students to excel in their individual interests and abilities)

Common Core will not achieve what it's proponents want it to. It is just another program like NCLB, RTTT, America 2000, etc., it will fail even if it survives because it esteems students as widgets to be improved by being acted upon instead of individuals who will work to succeed once they realize they will be allowed to fail. It is akin to buying new wheels for a poor running old car and expecting it to solve the problem. We don't need to be radical or revolutionary, just natural and visionary.

Thank you for your work in behalf of the student of Idaho, and may the force be with you.

Sent: Saturday, April 27, 2013 7:40 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: public education in Idaho

Please add my comments to testimony taken in Pocatello.

I think that early childhood education and Common Core Standards are very important for Idaho's public schools, but think that the most important issue is equal and adequate funding for our public schools.

Pity the poor rural school district with low property values in trying to educate students in their district. Contrast that to the Blaine County school district where property values are very high. We used to have a funding formula to equalize state money going to school districts based on property values, number of students at particular grade level, etc. However, since funding was moved from the property tax with increased funding from state sales tax, the inequality in funding has steadily increased. This is not only unconstitutional in that we no longer have "uniform" schools, it's very, very unfair to students and residents who live in areas of low property value. We need a new funding formula.

We also need greater state funding if schools are to meet the demands placed on them.

Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 5:22 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Fixing Idaho Schools

Missed the recent meeting in Idaho; have several suggestions to improve the product:

1) Listen to the teachers and take their inputs seriously! They know what's best.

2) Get politics out of education funding; as it is, no public school district nor local college knows year to year how much they have to use.

3) Stop changing curricula every year or two; it's counter-productive.

4) STOP TESTING; It wastes an inordinate amount of time and doesn't prove anything.

5) Fire all consultants - they have individual interests that confuse the mission and their dictates cause turbulence for already over-burdened teachers trying to promote the real education of their students.

6) Stop the technology madness currently in vogue; machines never solve anything, people who think, do.

7) Spend money on early childhood education throughout the State.

8) Give the public universities, colleges and junior colleges enough money to make it affordable to attend

Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 11:50 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Comments to Task Force for Improving Education

Dear Marilyn,

I have come to believe there are two vital components for our children's education; the classroom environment and pupils health and spirit (referred to in terms of personal motivation and positive outlooks, not religious). Interspersed in my thoughts are quotes, all from Albert Einstein.

Classroom Environment- Instructor, available materials, learning goals and method to achieve, pupil to adult ratio. We should redefine educators as facilitators of students' acquiring knowledge, creativity, independence and independent thought and problem solving.

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." "the intuitive mind is a sacred gift....."

Health and nutrition- For the body and spirit. Must have art and music to foster creativity and joyful outer expression. Must have abundant opportunity and access to fresh air, muscle development, fine motor control and co-ordination. Must have food that is rich in nutrients, fresh and attractively presented.

"Wisdom is not a product of schooling but the life-long attempt to acquire it." " I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn."

Obviously Idaho is truly lagging behind in proficiency of our students. A comparison of state indexed minimums for PSAT National Merit is one classifier that demonstrates this. We have to turn the focus to engaging our students in active learning, building models, prolonged project development, experimentation of science and math principals and a stimulating classroom environment. We have to

offer materials that provide for this approach verses looking to text books, run off sheets, computers. There is still a place for root memory of basic facts but we have to see personal engagement and independent learning, creativity and problem solving as vital components. Classroom management and goals have to reflect such a course. Respect and support for facilitators and equable salary has to be a part of this approach. Young children in particular have a natural curiosity for the most part and that should be enriched with active class participation. If we strengthen this in early years and continue to build on it in successive grades, students will carry those abilities throughout their school years and into their careers. The world is becoming more one all the time and 20+ years on into the future there will quite possibly be strains of very limited natural resources and those generations will need high levels of intellect and imagination to get to the answers. It is just as much Idaho's responsibility to add our future generations to that need as other states already are and the students coming from our schools should not be deprived of equal opportunity because the education plan here failed them.

" We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human responsibility."

Children have to be outdoors and have to play. They have to be given opportunity to create and build in the natural environment and with earth materials. They have to have the fresh air. There has to be engaging materials and tools in that context also. If recess is limited to 10 or 15 minutes that has to be extended and one day a week that time can be dedicated to a predetermined purpose, activity or goal. Art and music are essential for creative expression and development of cognitive, emotional and refined potentials. There should be a second language opportunity available because we are more tied to a closer world and communication is the key to success.

If student's lunches were presented well with great nutritional value it would be a treasure for our students health and physical and emotional well being. Who among us doesn't love a great lunch and feel quite better and more productive because of it? There should be no less offered in our buildings where our children spend much of the entirety of their day and expend huge amounts of physical, emotional and cognitive energy. Qualified chefs can add a lot to presentation and ingredient selection and preparation which can be dispersed throughout the state program.

For consideration,

Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 10:59 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Input for Task Force

Task Force Members,

I wish to provide input for consideration by the Task Force.

I recommend an ambitious financial incentive program whereby schools are encouraged to progress from average schools (which defines most Idaho schools) to excellent schools. Goals might be set for the percentage of 8th graders having successfully completed Algebra 1 or above. Other goals might include the percentage of students qualifying for the Early Completers Program. If schools are rewarded financially for getting students through more rigorous courses of study or other worthy goals, college and career readiness will naturally follow. Goals should be set high enough that schools are truly stretched to reach them, but are rewarded heavily for accomplishing each goal.

From:
Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 8:29 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Comments for the Education Task Force

Thank you for your service on the task force.

All I ask is that the taskforce use peer-reviewed science to guide the process of transforming Idaho public schools. No experimenting on our children. No ideology trumping proven science. No use of "think tank" justifications.

Just be guided by what is already known through scientific study from credible sources.

And one last thing, don't be constrained by either political or monetary considerations. Provide the legislature and governor with what is required for a world class education and let us worry about how to gather the political will to make that happen for our state.

Thanks again for your service. Idaho is counting on your collective wisdom to help guide public education for coming generations.

Elliot

Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 6:22 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Common Core

Good morning,
I am addressing you this morning to let you know of my strong support for the Common Core Standards. I am currently teaching English for seventh grade at West Junior High. In my 12 years of teaching, I have never been so excited, invigorated, and inspired by the upcoming changes in education. I understand that some are concerned about the impact the Common Core Standards will have, considering that they are becoming more and more accepted across the

country and that this raises fears of an overreach by the federal government; however this is one of the few times that I, as a teacher, have finally felt unified with the other teachers in my country. No longer am I limited to finding resources and successful practices among a small few in my district, area, or state. I am able to access and build upon engaging lessons being delivered across the country.
The standards themselves are thorough, yet concise. Gone are the days of micromanaging education in the name of accountability. Common Core allows us to have a framework in which to educate our children, but does not itemize every possible task creating a daunting list that ignores the small humans in front of us. Common Core finally allows knowledge and learning to be placed in a "real world" context; one that highlights creativity and imagination. Two qualities often stripped from their greatest masters at an early age.

Finally, to address you as a parent, I would like to advocate for Common Core for my son. The pile of worksheets returned home by a first grader is astounding! And for what? To be checked off a teacher's list of content "covered"? Where is the exploration, the discovery, and most important, the focus on using evidence in observations to strengthen a child's understanding? I ask you to review the Common Core Standards and note the reoccurrence of the word "cite" in all grade levels. These are powerful opportunities to teach children to apply their thinking and to explain their processes.

In closing, I believe that as the United States, we MUST unite on education in order to compete globally. Statistics comparing Idaho to China in education, or Texas to Germany are not publicized as readily as the United States compared to these other countries statistics. UNITED is what education is about. Please do not allow education to be politicized to the point that it is more about adult's positions on state and federal government than it is about what is best for kids.

Date: Tue, Apr 23, 2013 at 2:22 PM
Subject:

Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 5:59 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: My testimony at hearing 4-25-13

To Richard and all of the dedicated committee members:
Thank you for your concern and for your service. It is my sincere hope that your work bears fruit that will lead to better schools in Idaho. As a rule, teachers are willing to do whatever the public wants, if the direction is clear and they are supported. It's time for leadership and a willingness for you, as the governor's task force, to stand up and say that you will provide it and support coming up with the money to pay for it.

For example, if Idaho does what other states are doing and applies the sales tax to internet transactions, that simple act of consistency would result in $40 to $60 million dollars, a number that would go a long ways to solve problems. We won't have schools that are second to none if our funding remains second to last!

A complete copy of my prepared remarks are attached, as time did not permit me to speak on every point.

Thanks again.

04/23/2013

Thank you for the Education Task Force Forum last night. I was anxious to learn about what direction the task force was going. I was pleased with the sincere interest in which the task

force members seem to have in hearing from the citizens. Thank you for your efforts and time put into collecting information.

These are the key points that I felt were stressed:

1. People want to have a choice
2. People want fiscal stability for education
3. People want effective teachers and leaders

I knew nothing about the much discussed Common Core Standards. But it seemed that those in the educational system approved of the Common Core Standards. (3 professionals) Those who disagreed seemed to be tied in emotionally with government involvement and personal feelings. It seems to be very divided though. I will do more research before forming an opinion.

My personal hope for the task force is to improve education by securing good quality teachers. I believe that there are three key players in educating a child. They are the student, the teacher, and the parent. Each have a role and with that role a responsibility.

The State has a responsibility to provide funding for education. My favorite remark of the night came from Mr. Larsen, who stated the question on the power point was backward that it should read, "What is an adequate education and what will it cost to fund it?" I personally think that legislatures seem afraid to raise taxes, but when it is left to the local levies and bonds there arises disparity.

Thank you again for your efforts.

Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2013 2:31 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Research survey from Joint School Dist. No. 2 and public meeting feedback

Dear Task Force Members;

My name is and I am a science teacher In March, I issued a survey about the Common Core and next-generation (SBAC) assessments to all certified teachers in Joint School District No. 2. Specifically, I designed survey questions that would determine the progress of district teachers with regard to CCSS/SBAC implementation, the resources perceived as necessary for implementation, and how the district's collaboration model can support this process.

Attached is a Power Point slideshow that highlights the results of the research survey. I hope that the data contained within provides the task force some important insight into the levels of preparedness of Idaho's teachers and their needs when it comes to education reform, specifically implementation of the CCSS and SBAC.

I am available to discuss the results of this research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information. Also, should there be any issue opening the attached Power Point, a copy can also be found via the following link: http://www.micahlauer.com/?page_id=12

As the state considers how to pursue education reform, the implementation of the CCSS and how best to support teachers in this endeavor needs to be carefully considered. The CCSS is key for preparing Idaho's students to be critical

thinkers and problem solvers who are college and career ready. It also marks a significant shift in teaching philosophy and practices. As the data from the research survey illustrates, there is a gap between teacher awareness of the CCSS and preparedness to implement the standards through lesson planning and assessments. This is where reform needs to be supported by training and professional development opportunities.

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2013 11:44 AM
To:

Cc:
Subject: average daily attendance and seat-time requirements.

Task Force Members and Legislators,

I appreciate the time you are taking to evaluate education reform in Idaho. As a school board member, I can only imaging how time consuming it is to read emails with a laundry list of suggestions.

In reference to specific strategies being considered by the Task Force; I believe that removing a requirement for seat time and changing the funding formula from average daily attendance to average daily membership can be the first steps in giving districts the flexibility to restructure and redesign education for the 21st century.

Seat time cannot measure growth or excellence in education.

By March of 2012 a total of 36 states had policies that removed inputs such as "seat time" as a requirement to complete a course. http://www.edweek.org/media/23biz-state-1202educreditbrief.pdf

According to the National Governor's Association "States may not be able to realize the full potential of education reform until the system's focus shifts from time-based inputs to student learning outputs tied to the mastery of content and skills."

- Seat time doesn't account for the ways in which advances in technology and alternative instructional methods can help students.

- Seat time does account for a student's ability to master a subject. With the increased rigor associated with the Idaho State Common Core, students might need more time for mastery in math and possibly less in an elective. Seat time prohibits any flexibility for student ability.

Funding formulas are outdated and administratively expensive.

In March of 2008 the legislature commissioned a joint oversight committee to evaluate public education funding in Idaho. Their findings and recommendations can be found in the following report: http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0901.pdf

> *"The passage of time has left the formula in need of attention once again. In many areas, the needs of the educational system in 1994 are different than those that exist today."* *Office of Performance Evaluation January 2008*

- Funding based on attendance does not pay districts for the number of students that are actually educated. My understanding is that moving to average daily membership would cost the state an additional $60 million dollars. I believe districts need that $60 million to begin filling the $188 million gap between what schools receive now and what they received in 2008-2009. However I am a realist, and by moving to an average daily membership (ADM) and simultaneously adjusting the divisors would allow funding to remain at current levels.

- School districts across Idaho struggle with the Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE) because it is administratively burdensome. The complexity of ISEE is amplified by diverse schedules across the state. (trimesters, semesters, A-B day) ADM could create a consistent system state-wide. If ISEE data is improved, then SchoolNet data is improved and teachers will have more success using data to inform instruction.

- Regular attendance is beneficial, but not solely linked to student achievement and mastery. Local school boards can create attendance policies to reduce classroom interruptions and extra work for teachers associated with absent students. Idaho has implemented a Five-Star Rating System that is a performance based measure entirely separate and independent of attendance.

- (ADM) can simplify the funding formula, saving administrative costs at the state and local level.

- Students across Idaho participate in Saturday school because attendance is directly linked to funding. Parents and students become skeptical when Saturday attendance is independent of academic achievement. This erodes trust between schools and community members.

- The State Board of Education adopted a goal to see 60% of Idaho's citizens have at least 1-year post secondary credential by 2020, but this goal has not been communicated to local school boards. Local school board trustees are volunteers, and have only voluntary training. School boards would benefit from mandatory training in governance, policy, and finance.

What we focus on, we become good at. Although inadvertent, funding formulas force schools to focus on seat-time and attendance rather than the mastery of academic skills and knowledge. We don't want Idaho schools to be excellent at attendance enforcement we want them to be excellent at education.

Respectfully,

Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2013 10:30 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Comment to Education Task Force re Common Core

Hi -

I have been reading many articles online about Common Core. My initial concern is not that this is a top-down, forced curriculum by the Federal Government. My initial concern is that there is profit behind this that leads to the bottom line being measured in dollars not in learning capability of our children. The dollars will be measured by data collected from standardized tests. Teachers, also, will be measured by these data.

I include just one comment from an educator familiar with Common Core:

This was written by

"The Common Core kills innovation. When it's the only game in town, it's the only game in town."

The above was posted on the Washington Post blogsite

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/eight-problems-with-common-core-standards/2012/08/21/821b300a-e4e7-11e1-8f62-58260e3940a0_blog.html

Are we truly taking the best path for our children by adopting this curriculum?

Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2013 1:57 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: concerning the common core..

To whom it may concern:

I want to express how much I am against common core in our education system. We are already signing away our liberties to the federal government in the healthcare division, next seems to be the education of our children. Those who are truly educated can see and know that history repeats itself. That is part of why I oppose our state adopting common core. In history, there were a couple of examples of good leaders and bad leaders. The good leaders were good because of the voices of the people guiding their decisions. The bad leaders(like Hitler) let wealth and power make the decisions. In our day, I see the voice of the people being traded for wealth and power. This common core appears to take education of our children out of the hands of parents, teachers, and even local leaders and places them in the hands of the Department of Education and the federal government. I am strongly opposed to ANY plan that takes power and liberty (disguised in any form) away from the people. I feel that common core is doing exactly that. I also believe that it is the parent's responsibility to teach their children and those who do not participate in their child's education feel that it is not their responsibility because of the education system taking on that responsibility for them, causing more parents to dump the education of their children on the public schools.

Thank you for reading,

Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2013 7:24 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Vo-Tech in Idaho Schools

The following are some of her comments regarding education in general with which I agree whole heartedly:

What would be your position on curriculum reform, including the role of the arts, the treatment of ethics, and the adoption of blended online learning?

"Our children need and deserve a comprehensive curriculum that includes, in addition to mathematics and English, the arts, music, history, science, physical fitness and multiple languages, beginning in elementary school. We have come to treat as frills many of the areas of study like music, arts and world languages, that are in fact central to developing children's cognitive capacity and overall intelligence. Furthermore, social-emotional learning and the development of social responsibility are critical to the survival and success of both individuals and of entire societies. We need to recognize that educating the whole child is essential to the human race. In this pursuit, technology has a role, but it should be seen as a tool for supporting inquiry into the world around us, rather than a mechanism for delivering electronic workbooks that limit, rather than support, serious learning."

I am concerned that without proper teacher training, the underlined objective in education cannot be fulfilled. Professor agrees, speaking of the Common Core State Standards, she said that with only "fly by training" for teachers and no in depth rigorous teacher education, the CCSS will fail to be of use in reforming education.

What is the task force doing to ensure that the whole child will be educated in terms of time for teachers to study in depth the constructivist methods and philosophy inherent in CCSS? Since methods related to this kind of teaching require teacher collaboration and cross curricular and hands on/project based assessment, how can the CCSS be implemented in a short time and tested without resulting in students, teachers, and schools being branded failures? This appears to be a matter of more funding also. How can that be accomplished?

Professor also said, ""Bureaucratic solutions to problems of practice will always fail because effective teaching is not routine, students are not passive, and questions of practice are not simple, predictable, or standardized. Consequently, instructional decisions cannot be formulated on high then packaged and handed down to teachers."

- from her award-winning book, The Right to Learn

How does this comment relate to the question of teacher merit pay? Would it not be better to use funds directed toward merit pay for over all teacher education?

Thank you for any response you may be able to provide to these questions, and for your service to the cause of educating Idaho students,

Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2013 11:30 AM
To: SBE Board
Subject: recent hearings on Idaho education policy

Dear Sate Board of Education, Considering the vote last November rejecting the Luna proposals, that vote should be respected and the intended results retained. Further, Idaho has adopted what might charitably be termed a customer service model of education management. This has proved over time to be counterproductive. Schools are not a business, cannot be reasonably managed as such, and school patrons are not customers. School performance is best focused on student performance. But for over twenty years students have been shielded from consequence of their poor efforts, which teachers cannot remedy. Instead of dumbing down the curriculum to hide student effort failure, students need to face the consequences of that failure, not teachers. And, teacher proffesionalism cannot be maintained by punitive contract conditions. Elsewhere in the world good quality results are had only where teachers are respected with decent pay and stabile employment, such as in Finland. Reform is a poor substitute for rationality.

From:
Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2013 4:43 PM
To:
Cc: Task Force;

Subject: Re: Clarification on my public comments at the Task Force meeting in Idaho Falls

,

Thank you for your email clarifying your testimony in Idaho Falls Monday evening. Your commitment to public education in Idaho is commendable and we appreciate your dedication to students not only in Madison School District, but across the state.

I understand that Superintendent Luna has responded to some of your questions and concerns regarding standardized testing. We are all worried about the time taken away from the classroom to provide for excessive testing and I hope that issue can be better managed in the future. My conversations with Superintendent Luna lead me to believe his department is serious about making the tests more meaningful, helpful and time-sensitive.

I appreciate the opportunity to touch on the funding issue with you. I have long supported increased funding for public education and teacher compensation. We have never been particularly generous to our educational system in Idaho. I do, however, feel that modestly replenishing our rainy-day accounts is not only advisable, but vital. In 2008 Idaho had almost $400 million in rainy-day funds. Those funds were almost entirely depleted in an effort to mitigate the financial consequences to public education during the recession. Indeed, those funds prevented cuts to education for almost three years while other state agencies were experiencing dramatic budget decreases.

Once the funds were depleted, projections for future revenues used to determine budgets have been very conservative, perhaps even pessimistic. The reason for the caution has not been a lack of desire to better fund schools and other needs, but without the savings accounts there as a safety net, any over-estimation of revenues would result in a holdback of appropriated funds. No one likes holdbacks, least of al, our public schools. Holdbacks come after the fiscal year has already begun and leave districts with devastating shortfalls during the last part of the year.
By slowly rebuilding rainy-day accounts, we can use much more realistic revenue projections knowing there is a buffer if we fall short. My experience has been that pubic education is much better funded--short-term and long-term--as well as protected from holdbacks when rainy-day accounts exist.

There is one more variable that has us worried: With increasing pressure on the federal government to reduce its deficits, many state-run programs, including public education, could possible face significant reductions in federal funding, leaving the state holding the bag for funds previously provided by the feds. If we think it is raining now, such actions could create a storm like we have never experienced. To be caught without reserves would jeopardize Idaho's financial stability and greatly harm our school system.

These are some of the reasons we felt that a slow yet persistent replenishment of rainy-day accounts was justified. It is a fine line how much is enough and how much is too much. That's a line we argue about during most of the session. We can't even agree among ourselves as legislators; I don't expect others to concur with the outcome.

Hopefully, this explanation helps you to understand the predicament in which we find ourselves. We could talk another day about tax increases, cutting other agencies, and other ways to increase funding for public education, but I believe the legislature truly has the best interest of education in mind when they put away some money in rainy-day accounts.

Thank you for considering my point of view.

From:
Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2013 8:37 AM
To:
Subject: RE: Clarification on my public comments at the Task Force meeting in Idaho Falls

The following response was sent to today:

Thank you so much for this e-mail. I appreciated hearing your comments at the Task Force community forum and will take into consideration much of what you have said. Thank you for your support of the new Idaho Core Standards. Teachers are very supportive, and we are excited about these new, higher standards that will help better prepare Idaho students for life after high school. I would like the opportunity to discuss the SBAC test with you further. I believe there are some misconceptions out there about this test. It will not in fact cost the State of Idaho more money to administer this test. The most recent estimates we have received show that the costs are very comparable with what we currently spend on the ISAT. The implementation of the new assessment may cost more in states that do not already have computer-based testing, but Idaho has had computer-based testing since 2002. Also, we do not anticipate the testing window at the end of the year will expand greatly, certainly not to 12 weeks. We are facing challenges in the Spring of 2014 as we field test the new SBAC test and still administer the ISAT test. Our Assessment Director is working with superintendents and curriculum directors right now to come up with solutions so that we can avoid having students take two tests. However, when the SBAC test is first administered and fully implemented in Spring of 2015 and beyond, the testing window will be very similar to the ISAT testing window.

I hope this helps address some of your concerns. Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Thanks,

Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2013 12:17 PM
To: Ed Task Force;

Subject: Clarification on my public comments at the Task Force meeting in Idaho Falls

Thank you for the forum to give public input to the Task Force which is entrusted to shape Idaho educational policy and vision. This is the correct way to govern. It is only after this process that legislative decisions should be made.

I speak as a parent, a passionate advocate for public schools and a trustee on the Madison School Board.

During my brief public comments I spoke to funding, charter schools and standardized testing.

Funding- I was disappointed to see the legislature retire the 2013 session with a "surplus" of $60 million to pad the "Rainy Day" account. As I stated publicly, last time I checked, it is already raining in Idaho. Today's

money is to be used for today's children. I see no value in stockpiling money for future children when today's are underfunded and have tangible needs.

Charter Schools- It is frustrating that one of educational goals of Idaho is to further expand and enable the charter model. My grievance stems from the unequal parameters. The funding source for public and charter schools are identical. It baffles me why the accountability isn't also identical. Charter schools are given considerably more choice and leeway on how their funding is used. That is unfair to the public model which comes with narrowly defined protocol for each fund. How is that equitable since both systems exclusively use public money? If charter schools are allowed choice of more local governance, it is entirely unfair to the public system to deny them the same luxury.

Standardized Testing- In my opinion, the increasing focus and value of standardized testing is the biggest crisis facing public education. We are headed the wrong direction. If "students come first" we owe them a course correction. We have killed the passion and spark of learning in both students and teachers. Regurgitation of facts to be scored on a standardized test has replaced creativity and passion in curriculum. Educating the "whole child" to become a life long learner has been sacrificed on the altar of an ISAT score. We are creating a nation of non critical thinkers which is not prepared for the future they will inherit. Regurgitation of facts has become irrelevant due to the increased ease of accessing raw data. It is only in instilling passion in the process of learning that we can empower tomorrows children to succeed...not in testing facts that will be outdated by the time they reach college.

However, I don't want to be grouped with the public sentiment against the Common Core Standards. Every teacher I have spoken to supports them. They speak to how they are an improvement in the collaboration of expectations from grade to grade (not to mention the standardizing of students who move from other districts or states). They appreciate how CCSS provide logical curriculum ties to the subject matter taught before and after them. They report that though the standards are specific, they are not narrow enough to dictate how each teacher presents them. They do not feel they are part of a "conspiracy by overarching federal government" nor do they strip local control. Someone, somewhere needs to correlate standards. There will never be a group nor setting where curriculum is agreed upon as a whole. That is neither realistic nor possible. Common Core Standards are strong and logical. I support them.

Notwithstanding my support of CCSS, I do add my voice in opposition to the correlating SBAC testing inherent to CCSS. SBAC significantly increases the cost, time and focus of standardized testing from our current model. The 4 week testing window of ISATs will be increased to a 12 week testing window under SBAC. We sacrifice real learning when we give that amount of time and resources to testing.

Respectfully yours-

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Respectfully yours-

Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2013 9:20 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Comment for Task Force

Hello,

There are a number of changes Idaho could make to help transform and improve our education system. First, change cannot be imposed. If change is imposed, the people will resist (as was the case with SCF). Real change comes through innovation. In order to be innovative, districts need flexibility.

Here are some ideas:

* Allow districts to create a competency-based learning system (See New Hampshire)
- Eliminate the Carnegie unit (provide a waiver)
- - Grouping students by age-based cohorts is a relic of the past
- If students know the material, they should be allowed to progress
- Organize teachers by competencies (or learning levels) instead of grade levels and subjects
- Eliminate the traditional letter-based grading system
* Blended learning that is district driven
* The Idaho education system is underfunded - change it!
- Provide more discretion to districts in terms of funding
- - When money is tied to a line item, it is harder to innovate

Thank you for your time.

Sent: Monday, April 22, 2013 10:21 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Ideas for the Task Force

Hello,
I just thought I'd write to this task force since I have many strong opinions about education and its importance. I have been a teacher and an administrator of the past 17 years. As I read through your published Power Point presentation I felt the urge to weigh in on some of the ideas.

1. "Create a more equitable and adequate funding system" and "Develop a statewide salary and benefits schedule" ...these are absolutely paramount. The state of Idaho cannot / will not retain teachers when they can go to a neighboring state for a much higher salary. It's just a fact. Stay with A.D.A. but stop siphoning off money to new charter schools, support public schools FINANCIALLY. Benefits, medical insurance needs to be fixed. The entire state of Idaho should put all its employees in one pool, and leverage Blue Cross, or whomever, for great rates. Investment in people will always pay off greater dividends than investment in anything else.

2. "Improve administrator, teacher, school board effectiveness" The way to do this is to have set times when administrators (ie. Project Leadership) teachers (ie. grade level or district wide meetings) can meet and communicate about what each other is using, what is working, etc.

3. "Define, key measures for growth and success" and "Evaluate current accountability system and make changes" Currently, the way schools are judged is completely ineffective and not based in truth. For example, my current school had - across the board - earned higher than 90% on all ISAT tests, yet is still considered a 4 star school. Once a school has above 90% of its students at Proficient of Advanced, all math formulas should be disregarded, and common sense should dictate that the school is performing at a high level. Additionally, to judge a school on one measure, the ISAT or the coming SBAC is just plain silly. Use this data in addition to the ISAT or SBAC

A. ISEE uploads should include end of course assessments for every subject and every grade. Made at each individual school.
B. Another data point should include grades from the teacher
C. Another data point should take into account parent input from surveys on school climate, safety, their perception of academic rigor, communication from school, parent involvement
D. Other data to measure how effective a school may or may not be should include if there is a well rounded curriculum offered: Physical Education, Health, Music, Ethics/ Character

building, use of technology

E. Monitor data from Administrators measuring the amount of engaged learning and use of higher order questioning

The idea is, measures to hold schools accountable should be based on many data points, not one standardized test in the spring.

4. "How should / could we balance a decentralized model with Constitutional requirement for a uniform, thorough, common system of Ed.?" This worries me, and it's a truly philosophical question Federal v. State rights. I would take the side of keeping Idaho in control of its education. Our values and curriculum should be different than Detroit, Dallas, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Maine... you get my point, we are different from them, and that's OK. I've lived in these other places, and I live here for a reason.

5. "What should be done about schools / districts that continually under perform?" I know things that should NEVER happen: penalties such as filling out tons more paperwork, labeling a school "failing" or "in jail." If you ever want to squash motivation and achievement, just nit pick, needle and ridicule - which seems to be the current system. What should happen, is teachers and administrators from high performing schools (like mine) should be compensated to go collaborate and teach under performing schools what we do. We must encourage, educate, and help them implement effective practices. That being said, my demographics and socio-economic status in Rexburg are vastly different from those in Blackfoot or Caldwell, Idaho.

Lastly, I hear on the radio from the Albertson's Foundation the awful statistics of students going and completing college from Idaho. I have a Senior in high school this year. He has earned a 4.0 GPA and a 28 on his ACT and he has enrolled in the University of Idaho. Four years of college cost will currently cost $81,000.00 at U of I. This is a huge barrier. Even for someone like me, who expects my children to go to college. After filling out the FAFSA, and getting a few small scholarships, my wife and I are still expected to pay $9,000.00 a year. If you really want kids to go and stay in college, make enrollment easier, and more importantly, make the price MUCH lower.

Thanks for listening,

Sent: Sunday, April 21, 2013 12:38 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: REVISED - Improving Education Questions

I apologize. I had originally listed the NCLB waiver as having a duration of one year but should have stated two years.

Thank you so much for your time,

From:
To: taskforce@osbe.idaho.gov
Subject: Improving Education Questions
Date: Sat, 20 Apr 2013 11:15:27 -0600

Dear Gov. Otter,

Unfortunately, I missed your meeting in Twin Falls and your visit to Jerome. I am a long-time resident of Jerome County, mother of 4 with a BS in Business Management. To be forthright, I strongly oppose the Common Core State Standards and do have some questions for you:

1.) How much will it ultimately cost Idaho as a whole to move to Common Core State Standards? Will the cost actually negate the stimulus money that Idaho has accepted?

2.) Are you aware that the No Child Left Behind Waiver is only a two-year waiver and actually violates federal laws? What is your position on this?

3.) Are you aware that the college-readiness we will be providing to our children via these "rigorous" standards is only preparation for a NON-SELECTIVE, 2-year college--NOT a 4-year university? Additionally, Idaho's universities have agreed to waive remediation classes for students graduating with a Common Core diploma, essentially accepting subpar skill sets. What is your position on this?

4.) The Common Core State Standards Initiative has published the following on their website: "*The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations. It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs.*" (http://www.corestandards.org/Math. *Retrieved 04/17/2013).* In speaking with local teachers, they currently spend a majority of their time working with students who are below grade level in an attempt to boost them to a level of proficiency for the ISATs in order to retain funding. Additionally, in the book Detracking for Excellence and Equity, which our Idaho educators are being asked to read on the side for Common Core, the case study of Ronnie, Peter, Tyrone, and Anna referenced in the introduction states, "Because Tyrone's 8th grade test scores indicated that he would need academic assistance in English, he was assigned to a support class that met every other day." (*Corbett Buris and Garrity, 2008*). My children are all advanced for their grade levels. When he was in the 4th grade, my son (now in 7th grade) used to call me from the classroom phone just to see how my day was going because he was bored and already done with his class work and homework. In 5th grade, he was charged with helping those in class who were behind. He now takes a book with him to read during his down time and has helped out in 6th grade classes this year. He is supposed to be in "advanced" math (prealgebra) but had made the observation himself before Christmas break that his class was actually a chapter behind "regular" math and not going any more in depth than "regular" math. It seems to me that this "Race To The Top" is actually a slow jaunt to the middle and not any better than where we are now. Detracking is a process that will actually discourage a love of learning in our children, inciting boredom in some and greater struggle in others, and the Common Core Standards and SBAC compound on "teaching to the test." Have you viewed the SBAC sample assessments on the state website? What is your position on all of this?

5.) The federal government facilitated meetings between the NGA and the CCSSO to develop the Common Core State Standards with funding from private interest groups, especially the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The criteria for a "common set of standards" required by simply submitting a Race To The Top application are ONLY met by Common Core. These facts dispel the myth that this is a state-led initiative with state-developed standards and further confirms federal coercion. Idaho will not be allowed to omit anything from these standards and can only contribute 15% to these standards. Once fully implemented, Idaho will lose authority over the education of our children. Parents will no longer be able to bring concerns to school boards, teachers, principals, superintendents, or state legislators, and educators, administrators, and even legislators will be forced to look to the US Department of Education for answers. According to the "FY2013 Public Schools Budget Presentation" drafted by Tim Hill, Deputy Superintendent, total federal revenue for Idaho public schools is $268,820,500. Total public school revenue is $1,553,601,400. Doing the math, which I am quite capable of after receiving a non-Common Core diploma from Jerome High School, this equates to federal funding of 17.3%. I haven't been able to find the exact amount that correlates with federal stimulus money relating to adoption of this "common set of standards," but is Idaho willing to trade 100% control for

less than 17.3% of public school money and a set of standards that is neither proven nor benchmarked?

6.) Also as part of the acceptance of stimulus money, Idaho was required to create a state longitudinal data system to data mine our students. FERPA has been altered behind closed doors to allow schools to share this information with anyone they deem appropriate without parental consent. There are over 400 data points the federal government would like to track, including but not limited to medical records, religious affiliation, voting tendencies, family income status, and various biometric data, from preschool through age 20 (a P-20W system). No matter what the "intent" of this absurd amount of data collection, this also boldly violates federal law. What is your position on this issue?

7.) On a personal level, I do have a 4th grader who has been negatively affected this year by the Common Core Standards, especially in math. The frustration on his part has literally brought me to tears at times, and I've spent many nights reteaching concepts he should've been able to grasp in a 7-hour school day. I can't get this year back for him, as much as I'd like to. This is something nightmarish that snuck in the back door through the Senate Education Committee. If Common Core State Standards are in fact the shining answer to our nation's educational woes, then why isn't someone declaring it from the rooftops and asking parents be a part of it? Why is my child being told "I don't know anything, and we're not allowed to talk about it" by his teachers? Why are teachers being told to "shut up" because "this is what we're teaching"?

I have attached the following link for a 30-minute video from the American Principles Project on all the well-documented and substantiated talking points of Common Core.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coRNJluF2O4&list=PLLtyyAr_FFd46wMCtBAyYHedjysWnt0lb

I welcome any well-documented and substantiated discussion on the pro-Common Core side of the matter. I thank you so much for your service and representation, and I look forward to receiving thoughtful answers to these questions.

Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2013 9:32 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Cda meeting

To the Education Task Force,

I attended the Coeur d'Alene Ed task force meeting last night..
I am not sure what you heard ,but this is what I heard.
#1 the state needs to honor its legal duty to fund a thorough and **equal** education to all children in Idaho.
#2 Do not pin the label of success simply on test scores
#3 Back off on the testing testing testing, the harm to children our future, is immeasurable.
#4 Be smart, don't think online is the answer; real educators know that it is not education. Question **why** companies spend big bucks to promote their stands on education in Idaho.
#5 Understand that Idaho is not attractive to the best and the brightest. Our graduates leave in droves to greener pastures. Take an honest look in the mirror. What does Idaho offer? People know that they can't eat the scenery. Put an honest stop to heaping all of Idaho's myriad of issues on the backs of teachers.
I wanted to remind the task force to look at the laws that make educating our young very difficult. On top of the financial accountability by the state, these are additional ones lacking.

*Accountability of home school parents. In my experience in a poverty transientcommunity the homeschool abuse ends when it no longer fits the family lifestyle (read..free babysitter needed). The havoc these students create when entering public school demanding all the resources and then some of a school with this multiplied now the test scores are the end all..
*Accountability for attendance
*Accountability for deep family/child services so that disturbed, abused, damaged children so that they do not impede the learning of others and can themselves begin to process of becoming a participant in their own education.
*Accountability of the parent role as THE teacher and the support of the school for 14 years. (Early childhood ed, family education)
Thank you for taking on this role, may it carry weight with those who make the laws.

Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2013 10:23 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Props 1 2 and 3

A lot of people here are very angry with our Legislature for reinstating parts of the rejected propositions. It seems that our representatives in Boise totally ignored the will of the people to pass the Luna Laws initially, then when voters overwhelmingly rejected the laws, they once again ignored the people they are elected to represent and simply put them right back in again. Our children and especially our teachers need our support, yet again and again the teachers are demonized. My daughter is an elementary teacher, and she could make thousands of dollars more each year by simply crossing over into one of our bordering states to teach. Our children are the ultimate investment in our future, and time and time again they are being short changed. It seems Sen. Goedde hates teachers, has no respect for the citizens he is supposed to represent, and certainly has an oversized ego, to put it mildly. Nothing would make this household happier than to see him taken out of power. Thank-You for your time.

Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2013 11:57 AM
To: Task Force
Cc:
Subject: Comments for the Education Reform Task Force

Dear Member,

I was unable to attend the meeting in Nampa last week. We were out of town, I am sending you some of my concerns and ideas.

I think that you should have parents take more responsibility for the performance of the students in Idaho. I am a certified teacher, but stayed home with our son while he was growing up. We read and worked with him from the time he was born until he graduated from Centennial High School in the Meridian School District. He is now a student at the University of Utah.

Currently, I substitute teach and volunteer in the Meridian District. I feel that Idaho should require the parents to take classes on how to help their children learn. This should start when the children are born. So much is learned by the time a child reaches kindergarten. Parents should be required to spend an hour or more each night helping their children do homework and read. The expectations for the

teachers to get the children up to national standards is only achievable if the parents are responsible for helping the children from birth until graduation. Also, the state of Idaho needs to inform all parents that the children need to come to school rested, feed, and ready to learn.

Many of the children move from school to school throughout the school year. They need to come to school ready to learn. Parents need to be taught that if they continually move, the children struggle with their academics. The state should inform the parents of this problem.

My husband and I would be willing to pay more in taxes to pay the teachers higher salaries. Our son did not want to go into education because he told us that the teachers have to work too hard for the amount that they are paid.

Thank you for all the work that you are doing to help the children, parents, citizens, and teachers in Idaho.

Sent: Friday, April 12, 2013 1:24 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Concern

I would like to address an issue. Although the " hot topic" seems to be Common Core, I believe Idaho has lost it's ethics when speaking about facilitation:

The system is not set up as a win-win situation. The School district has a lawyer on retainer, whom by the way is using my money (as a tax payer) to fight my student's battle and I am paying a lawyer out of my pocket. I can't grip about that, as much as I would like to.

You folks are legally and ethically violating the rights of Idaho students and citizens. The Dept. of Ed. has a Mediation department who attends IEP meetings within the schools. Did you know that the mediators on that board also hold positions in school districts such as " Head of special services" ? There is absolutely no way that a mediator, in cahoots with the other member of YOUR team, can objectively sit across the table and remain neutral. Hello! This is called dual relationship. It isn't allowed in other professions and I can't figure our how in the world the State Dept. gets away with doing this. I guess you realize that when parents cannot get through the mediation process, the due hearing process, and the IEP process with state mediators, that they drop what-would -have-been a lawsuit because it isn't affordable. You either lose another child to your drop-out statistics or alternate methods of education.

Sincerely disgusted Idaho Tax Paying Citizen with Students in your schools.

Sent: Friday, April 12, 2013 12:47 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Testimony before Task Force

I appreciate the chance to speak on the 10th. I do hope that Task Force members will keep my comments in mind. To some extent, the direction is set, but we must recognize that changes come and go, but student motivation, time-on-task, and teacher skills make the real difference.
Thank you,

Statement for the Education Task Force Forum on Wednesday, April 10
by

Follow the research.

- Teacher merit pay does not improve student learning. A teacher's real reward is a student saying "I understand this now." Sure, teachers have to support their families, but they are not motivated by being paid more than the teacher next door; they work as a team to lower barrier that keep kids from learning. If you want to reward good teachers, fund a stipend for teacher-mentors—promote teamwork, don't tear it down.
- On-line education does not improve student learning. Teachers leaving the field tell horror stories of the high numbers of drop-outs, the rampant cheating, and the ill-designed curricula. Student results reflect this. Support the integration of on-line learning to broaden the curricula and to offer AP classes, but not as an end in itself.
- Charter schools and testing have mixed results. I was surprised to find that Idaho charter schools performed no better than our public schools because they have two positives that should make them better: the interest that comes from participating in a pilot program and parent involvement. Texas, the poster child for statewide testing, is now abandoning testing and declaring it a failure.

What does improve education?

Motivating students, providing time on task, and training teachers.

- Varying student interests, maturity, learning styles and attention spans makes motivating them complex.

a. Knowing they will be tested motivates students whose self identity includes doing well on tests. Many others feel unappreciated, misunderstood, and depressed.
b. Rewards like points and grades, even money, work temporarily but lessen self-motivation in the long run.
c. Some students have a hungry brain that needs feeding. They frustrate teachers by refusing to do anything that doesn't meet their needs. These kids will do well in the long run and should be accomodated.
d. Most students are motivated by knowing that they have a future that is worth the investment in time and effort. Parents, teachers and others investing time, effort and money in them is a plus. They need to hear *I think you are worth this*. (Attacks on teachers are devastating to kids when the teacher is their primary supporter.) As a middle school teacher, I felt each of my students had a work/don't-work scale and my real job was going one-by-one and pouring energy into the work side and hoping I didn't run out before the day ended. Let me stress that image...pouring energy into the work side of each kid's balance. Students also need assurance that that working hard does bring rewards for people just like them. For many, their parents are proof enough. For others, mentoring through college and community programs can be life-changing.

- Time-on-task has been sacrosanct in education. Although facts are important, most learning involves skills which must be practiced as well as understood. No one is going to write or solve problems by learning facts any more than they can learn to ride a motorcycle or do surgery that

way. Theory is necessary, but experience is paramount. Furlough days send kids a message that their education is not all that important. We must treat their developing years with respect.

- Teachers need a growing repertoire of techniques. Methods that work with 70% of the kids one year may only work with 30% the next. "I'm going to try something new and I want your feedback on how this works" is a great motivator. "Kids in last year's class really liked this, but I'm not sure why" works also. Students need a variety of activities. "We're going to do something new for the next three weeks" is a motivator. Allowing individuals and groups to select their own projects is a motivator. And may I add that class size is a factor; you give me 32 students and I'm going to stand in front of the class with an overhead projector and a jar of popsicle sticks so I can keep track of who has participated and who hasn't. You give me 24 kids and I will divide them into six to eight groups and give them a task.

In short, we need to be less concerned with detecting and measuring underachieving schools and more concerned with seeing that teachers have access to methods that research has shown to work. Teachers went along with the desire for universal testing to see if it would make a positive difference. Now we know it doesn't.

We must give up the search for the one right curricula or method; we must plan to meeting the diverse needs of students with a wide range of individual interests and abilities. We must focus on:

- Convincing students that their future is worth investing time and effort;
- Providing students with the time and atmosphere that learning requires; and
- Ensuring that teachers have the understanding and tools to adjust any curricula to the learning styles and interests of their students.

Thank you for your attention.

Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2013 1:54 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: A Public School Teacher's Perspective on Charter Schools

I was discouraged to hear about the legislation that will enable charter schools to use funds raised by public schools through levies. In the first place, it is a sad commentary that Idaho's public schools are subjected to having to effectively "campaign" in their communities to raise money for institutions that should be funded by state governments. Unfortunately, in Idaho the specter of raising taxes for the public good is seen as political suicide for the majority of our legislators. Instead, Idaho's legislators and executive branch put it back on local communities, so that they may claim that they "don't raise taxes" in their campaign propaganda. In spite of this, many local communities do support public education and pass the levies to keep their children's schools functioning. Now, we are going to say that this money (which is scarce to begin with) can be skimmed by charter schools to serve the needs of an extremely low population of students. The law prohibits charter schools from passing levies, but I would like to see the result of a charter school levy. If only a small percentage of people vote in public school levies, what would be the outcome for a charter school that serves a very small segment of the general population? They wouldn't be able to pass a levy because the fact is they are not public schools in the sense that they don't serve the general public. Why can't we admit that charter schools are in essence, private schools funded by the public? An architect of Bush's NCLB policy openly admits this flaw in the legislation. She sees that charter schools serve to "ghettoize" public schools. See her article here: http://www.thenation.com/article/why-i-changed-my-mind
Some may be quick to deem this "liberal propaganda." I would argue that those who do have lost the capacity for foresight and common sense. A proliferation of charter schools will have the following effect on American education:

fragmented instruction based on ethnicity, religion (yes, even in light of separation of church and state), regionalism, and wealth
decimation of unions that protect teachers from retribution and poverty wages
public schools that are left to teach only areas stricken by poverty with little or no community involvement because those in the community do not have the resources, nor the time (working multiple jobs, or jobs with schedules not conducive to participating in school activities/meetings) to be involved
AND finally...the complete destruction of the public school system under the banner of "failure to meet the standards of NCLB." The government will claim a legitimate shuttering of public schools, leaving an entire segment of the population without access to education, thereby steeping the working poor even deeper in the cycle of poverty.
Please do not condemn these communities from a middle class perspective and say, " They need to take more of an active interest." In communities enlightened enough to extend a hand to these parents in a meaningful way, THEY DO take an interest. Do not condemn these parents until you have truly sought to understand their situations. PLEASE examine and pass educational policies that serve all of Idaho's children, not just segments of the population. Invest in PUBLIC SCHOOLS for the greater good. Unify our state, do not dismantle it. Students are children who were not born drones or consumers, but thinkers. Give all of Idaho's children the same educational opportunities.

Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2013 1:41 PM
To: Task Force
Cc: Marilyn Whitney
Subject: The Endgame Cost of Education

RE Article → Speak up! Public forums hit the road

Written by on Apr 8th, 2013. | Copyright © IdahoEdNews.org

The Endgame Cost of Education

As a past Executive Director of Idaho's public employee retirement system and, more recently as an organizational intervention specialist, I can without equivocation share with you that "money is never the problem." The issue of money may be buried somewhere in the supply chain of "Domino Effects". .. but it is never the prime causation of the problem supply chain. As the Ex. Director what I found was that excellent ideas *always* attract more money than they actually need. Bottom line … Money is never "The Problem" and those that say it is … are either miss-informed … or are pointing to "an excuse" … perhaps(?) in self-defense.

"If we think education is expensive ... try stupidity." - Unknown

Last night (4/11/13) some 20+ people met here in Boise to discuss the current state of education in our nation, in our state of Idaho and in our local schools. Our "Educational System" is horribly broken on many, many counts. "The System" is running not only us … but it is also running us out of money … its running us out of patience … and its running us out of respect for those with tirelessly working with outdated beliefs. We the people are paying for the dollars it is costing us …and we the people will end up paying for the negative consequences yet to be felt and realized. In less than 25 years from now the educational seeds being planted and nurtured in Russia, China, India, Brazil and the other BRIC want-ta-be nations are going to provide America with a wakeup call well beyond the point of no-return. Active ignorance of this fact will make no difference in the mirror of time.

The *Executive's Dashboard on the Meaningful Metrics that Matter* … is horribly missing. Dr. Deming taught the Japanese automotive industry years ago (*because Detroit would not listen*) that things that get measured get done because feedback systems work … but not when overtly or covertly made silent or ignored. And for starters, our current "Educational System" is desperately crying out for major changes in what "our" nation … and our Executive Dashboard is missing, i.e. a continual learning … continual improvement … feedback system of the four pillars for the Excellence in Education:

1. The **Student** / *the Customer* … physically evaluates the support from their teacher (A Report Card)
2. The **Student** / *the Customer* … physically evaluates the support from their parents (A Report Card)
3. The **Teacher** … evaluates the Student/*Customer* (A Report Card)
4. The **Parent** … evaluates "The Administrative System" … "The Teacher" … "The Student" and yes … "Themselves."

Any excuse raised to restrict or prevent the above open feedback system from working is the core problem. Someone either 1) doesn't want to change or … someone 2) does not know how change. Student, Teacher, Parent is the triad of success and/or failure in the system. Ignoring any one of the responsible parties in this triad will only amplify the agony and detrimental effect upon the other two. The common sense reality of the above "System" can readily be recognized in Asian parental levels of active motivational participation in their child's disciplined performance and with the local school administration and board.

Our nation's people are not sick but the "System" that our people are restrained by is horribly debilitating. The tyranny and betrayal of our own stubborn ignorance can only lead to an agony of un-paralleled proportion. However, and on the brighter side, the intervention point can easily be detected through the Meta Insight noted below.

"When things don't make an ounce of sense …
someone is making a ton of money.

Problematic supply chains cannot endure without silent beneficiaries."

Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 10:50 PM
To: Task Force
Subject:

My wife attended the Forum tonight in Nampa and spoke regarding the needs of students with special needs, such as those with Autism.
We have a 7 year old autistic son.

It seems to me that the needs of these children is not truly met.
The speech language therapist, sensory therapists, and other trained professionals that seem to spend a lot of time traveling between schools and distributing their time would be better utilized by centralizing these resources at a Charter type school for those with special needs.
This would be difficult in many of the smaller school districts, but in the larger school districts, this would seem to a very practical, cost effective and efficient way to utilize these resources.
This would allow for a school that can more effectively manage these children that have advanced sensory needs, require sensory breaks, social skills development and special education needs.
This would not just concentrate the professionals and paraprofessionals but allow for a facility that is designed to better support these needs.

Integrating these children into a classroom that is already too large with 30 children and expecting the classroom teacher to manage a special needs child is not in the best interest of that child or the rest of the children in the classroom.

We applied for a Montessori school with 54 children on the waiting list for only 2nd grade and 9 of them

being autistic.
This is an indication that the school system is not meeting the needs of either the Special needs or the Advanced children in the public school system.

Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 11:29 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: Please STOP Common Core

I am writing to voice my opinion about the Common Core Curriculum being discussed and pushed in Idaho. I am STRONGLY against the curriculum and everything that goes along with it. Please do what you can to stop this in Idaho.

Thank you,

Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 11:00 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: "common core"

Frequent ads on TV illustrate large portions of our children failing to attain grade level skills. Goals 2000, No Child Left Behind, "race to the top" failed to solve the problem. Local School Boards and Parents know what works for their children. "Common core" is going in the wrong direction. Spending time teaching "to a nationally administered test" detracts from the personal attention teachers could be devoting to students to improve their skills.

Do you recognize that States are being bribed to sign on to national control? If you sign on, you get "federal funds". Mr. Luna said, "We need those funds to provide for disadvantaged students." Those same students are going to be truly disadvantaged when they are adults and an enormous percentage of their paycheck is deducted to pay for the "federal funds" their parents allowed the States to accept knowing it was all borrowed.

Sent: Tuesday, April 09, 2013 9:30 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Thanks for the opportunity!

Dear Task Force;

I am currently involved in a Language Arts Committee to research teaching materials that correlate with the Common Core Standards.
I still think that the Common Core Standards are vague but we will move forward.
The following are actually what I hope for the future of education.

1. More language learning. Our children should be required to have more than one language starting in Kindergarten.
2. Charter schools were brought into existence on the basis that the schools could prove that they would only spend a limited amount per student period. I can see by what happened at Xavier that it is not easy especially if the building in which you hold classes needs to be maintained by the school itself and not leased. Charter

schools should be eliminated, they are stressing the districts who are already struggling to give all students a great education. I feel they only promote segregation and many times are teaching religious teachings that will produce similar adults we see in the Middle East.

3. I absolutely support the matriculation from level to level of learning by mastery. I also think students should have to pass a test before entering kindergarten to insure that they have the basics to begin. If this happens then all school districts should also have required preschool.
4. I realize all of the above will cost money which is why a statewide structuring of pay for teachers, administration and staff would be ideal as well.
5. I also wish that the schools would stick to teaching the subject matter and not get so involved with character education. These programs seem to change often and cost money.

I wish I could make the O"Leary meeting but will be working. Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of mine and all the kids in the State of Idaho.

Sent: Tuesday, April 09, 2013 2:06 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Suggestions for better Idaho Schools

Dear Task Force Members,

I learned today that an open meeting is to be held here in Nampa for input to the work of the committee. Since the meeting is only two days away, it is not enough time for me to plan to attend. I would, however, like to offer some input. I am a newly retired teacher with 25 years of experience in Idaho schools, both private and public, from grade 7 through university. Most of my time, however, was in the public high school classroom. I continue to teach online for IDLA.

I don't see how we can truly move ahead with public education in Idaho if we continue to spend the least amount of money per student in the entire country. I realize that those figures depend on cost of living in various places, but our legislature must stop being so stingy with the funds to education our children.

As a public school teacher in Idaho, I was acutely aware of the failing morale among my colleagues. Each year I would feel demeaned and browbeaten by the state legislature. Seldom was there any increase in pay even though the cost of living continued to increase, and we felt left behind. But worse than the low salaries that were forced upon us were the punitive laws enacted by the legislature. I began to feel that the legislature looked at us teachers as the enemy instead of a group of professionals doing everything possible to help our children succeed. I saw the heart ripped out of our professional association--I was always a member of the IEA--and saw the immediate decline in morale and teacher-administrator relations. There is no way that education in Idaho can become better as long as teachers are treated with scorn and contempt by the legislature. There should be more teachers on your committee if you really want to know what changes are needed to our system.

The Luna laws were completely demoralizing to teachers--loss of our professional association, loss of the continuing contract that allowed teachers to make long-term commitments to programs for students, loss of bargaining rights to be able to influence the school climate and schedule. I have never seen my colleagues as depressed and burdened as they were when these laws were passed. And then to have the legislature resurrect and pass much of it again after the voters defeated them--it is hard to continue to work for improvement when the legislature continually works against us.

I would like to see increased financing available for students who want to take a concurrent credit class to create a bank of college credits before high school graduation. When properly financed and supervised, these classes are an excellent way to steer high school students toward a college education. As a former concurrent credit teacher myself, I know that supervision by the credit-granting institution is very important so that there is no "dumbing down" of academic requirements. I also know that there are a lot of capable students who simply cannot afford the cost of credits, even though the colleges offer discounted rates. If we want them to go on, we are going to have to make it possible for any student to do it, not just the ones who can afford it.

I believe it is time to decrease the amount of money allotted to administrative salaries. Having worked in the Nampa School District for 12 years, I never could understand why we needed a superintendent as well as three CEOs--all earning well over $100,000--to administrate the district. I think it is too much money spent on administration and not enough on teachers and support personnel.

The biggest money drain in our schools is sports--unpopular as it may be to say so. While I believe that sports is a wonderful addition to a child's life learning, I do not for a moment think that the responsibility for providing that should be the school's. The sports schedule always supercedes the academic schedule--students are away from school countless hours and days for the sake of sporting competitions and are bused all over the state and beyond at school expense when the money could be so much better used in the academic part of the school's responsibility. Few will dare to say or write this, but I know many who firmly believe it. Sports should be a function of the municipalities and those who wish to participate and watch. That's the way it is in the rest of the world--where our country is competing less and less well academically.

Teachers are the heart and strength of our system. When we support teachers, we support the children they teach. The animosity of the legislature toward teachers has to cease if we are going to recruit and retain quality people in teaching positions. The demoralizing and blaming has to end. When teachers are paid well, encouraged instead of punished, and respected instead of demeaned, they will be free to do what they do best.

Thank you for giving a few moments of your attention to my e-mail. I will try to attend the last part of the open meeting so that I can hear what others are saying, but it would have been much easier if the notice had been out sooner. I'm sure you are all doing the best you can to steer this ship of education into more productive channels, and I wish you good luck with the monumental task. If I can help, I hope you will contact me.

Sincerely,

Sent: Tuesday, April 09, 2013 1:29 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Task force comments

What is the basic amount of funding needed to adequately educate a student in Idaho? - **$5,700 per student, per year**

Given the finite amount of funding, how would you like it spent in your school? – **Teacher salaries. I would like to see teacher salaries starting at $36,000 per year and guaranteed $1,200 raises every year. Educationally, the focus should be on reading, math, science, music, creative problem solving, and critical thinking skills. By middle school, we should be moving away from standardized testing and should instead be testing problem solving skills through, for example, in depth essay responses, developed on an individual classroom level – that money saved from standardized testing older students could go to better uses! I would love to see Idaho schools implement an empathy training curriculum into the classrooms to reduce bullying and as a critical life skill for our students.**

How should/could we balance a decentralized model with the Constitutional requirement for a uniform, thorough, common system of education? **A uniform, thorough, common system of education can be obtained by ensuring every student's education is equally funded, regardless of where they live, and by providing a model curriculum to every teacher or district, but the teachers should have 100% latitude to deviate from the model curriculum as long as the same subjects and topics are**

addressed, because a model curriculum cannot teach problem solving and critical thinking as well as an individualized approach.

Is funding based on attendance an appropriate model? **Funding should be per student based, with extra funding provided for students identified as being disabled and for students identified as being limited English proficient.**

What should be the measure(s) to hold schools and districts accountable? **Instead of holding teachers accountable based on standardized testing; teacher accountability should be based on student, parent, and other teachers' feedback on that teacher (via electronic surveys) and each teacher should also be responsible for implementing their own gauge of student progress, that could be a standardized test or essays or it could be whatever they think best gauges student success and then they submit that as part of an annual review in conjunction with the surveys received regarding that teacher. Teachers who are under-performing based on surveys received and based on their administrators' review of the materials submitted by the teacher to gauge their students' success are given 1 year probation and a mentor to work with. If they are still under-performing the next year, they are let go. I do not think bonuses should be used to motivate teachers – ALL teachers should be paid well, their job is hard and invaluable!**

What should we be measuring with respect to student achievement? **For grades 1-5, I think standardized testing of reading, math, and basic science is appropriate. For grades 6-12, students should be assessed based on critical thinking, problem solving, and writing skills and not standardized testing.**

What should be done about schools/districts that continually underperform? **They should be provided mentors from well-performing schools and time every week set aside to collaborate with their mentors and they should be given a set time frame of 2-3 years to improve and if no improvements are made, then administrators and teachers who are under-performing should be replaced.**

What professional technical education skills would you like to see taught in high school? **As a person who makes hiring decisions, the number one skill lacking in Idaho students is good writing. We need to focus intensely on improving writing skills during school hours; and that includes teaching students how to type and use all the features of Microsoft Word and other typing programs. But most importantly, they need to learn to write better and use appropriate grammar! We also should teach students how to do online research, how to find credible information on the internet and discern non-credible information. Finally, we should require students to do service-learning projects because all citizens should learn that it is important to give back and improve their communities and because volunteering can provide important professionalism and job skills.**

Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 1:52 PM
To: Task Force
Cc:
Subject: A few thoughts from Idaho voters

Thank you to members of the "Taskforce for Improving Education" for devoting so much of your time and energy to one of the priority issues in our state--Education. As you and the appointed Legislative Interim Committee on Education continue your efforts, we respectfully ask all of you to try to stay grounded in the impact of making our education policies by spending 3 to 6 hours in our Idaho public school classrooms. Not just the school buildings where you hold your meetings. Not the "showcased" moments by schools. Actual

time in your school district classrooms where you can see and hear the current learning process taking place between students and teachers --be it with use of technology, lecture, interactive discussions or projects. We have lived and voted in Idaho for 35 years--and have witnessed many changes in our state. We do get concerned when we see political leaders and lobbyists having so much say in education in our state with limited experience about what currently takes place in our school classrooms. When was the last time each of them actually visited a Idaho public school classroom for an hour? Education data points, researched effective practices and personal classroom observations and understanding help us make sound policy decisions advancing long and short term outcomes for our Idaho students.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 1:25 PM
To: Task Force
Subject: Education Task force community input

Hello,

It would be really nice if you could provide a moderated or open forum on your web site for input and suggestions for consideration in answer to your questions. Perhaps a simple way to submit ideas and suggestions that are then filtered and displayed publicly to allow for comments. Sometimes great ideas come from the least likely places. Gems have a way of rising above the fluff and can be very helpful when gathering information and problem solving. Just a thought.

-----Original Message-----
From:
Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 11:09 AM
To: Task Force
Subject: comment on education

I believe the citizens of Idaho made their voices clear when they overwhelmingly voted down propositions 1, 2, & 3 last November. Yet the Idaho legislature and the Idaho State Board of Education continue to press forward the very agenda that the voters refuted, in effect thumbing their noses at the citizenry.

It incenses me that the State Board of Education and the Idaho Legislature conducts itself in such a manner as to ignore the public will, undermining democracy.

Sincerely,

Subject: taskforce meeting
Date: Thu, 24 Jan 2013 10:34:28 -0700
To:

I wrote you a couple weeks ago? My name is [redacted]. I have been reading the skinny, write-ups on the task force meeting from the other week. First of all I'm really disappointed that parents are not listed, at least by the reporters, as valuable members of the task force. I guess the PTA is the only formalized way to have the parents voice represented and I'm sure many of the people in the room are actually parents. But, I just wish that parents would have made it on the list instead of businesses, think we are more important. It reminds me of the way that Luna spoke of my

children as products for businesses to consume. And I wish there were more parents invited. I guess I should be glad there is at least one, that's you! Thanks for doing this!

After reading the summaries of the task force meeting, I'm concerned that the list of ideas and subjects discussed are nebulous. I would like to see the reforms built around actual data, data that proves or identifies that there is an actual problem. I read about the posters made and taped on the walls based on ways to improve. I think that it would have been more efficient to have them frame, in their statements, the problems and then rank them--instead of working backwards from lofty goals. Fixing problems will have unknowable positive results. But, wanting results without identifying the problems looks awkward and backwards. For example, I realize that this task force is meeting to improve not only k-12 public schools but also the university/ college sector. But, I'm not convinced that "not enough" high school graduates aren't going on to college. I don't see how a goal can be set without asking all of the why questions. I'm not sure that I can agree that that is a *serious* problem facing our state. I would hope that data is being presented to this education committee so that together the numbers can be analyzed and compared with neighboring or similar states.

Perhaps if you get a chance you could share some concerns about this issue. If it is indeed true that fewer students are going on to high education then next set of analysis can ensue. From my understanding, our local College of Southern Idaho is busting at the seams. Is the population actually growing that much or are more people going to college now than in years past? I would like to see the comparison of job openings and projected career opportunities compared to the number of students that graduate from college each year on the national average but the state as well. I suspect that our state has a strong agricultural sector that isn't appreciated or considered when looking at this issue. Many of those agricultural workers and family of landowners don't see the need in spending more time or money on more education when they can start living, working and contributing to the family farm. If there are other ways to prepare high school students for the workplace in vocational careers at the high school level I could support that. But, my suspicions are that we are in an economic and job slump and that is affecting the decision young people are making as to whether they start or complete a college education. I suspect that IF there is a slow in numbers it is possible that students are seeing that there are many college graduates looking for jobs with school loans coming due. In addition, I think that the fact that the third proposition was voted down is a possible indicator that our citizens are unhappy with the broadening responsibility of the state government. I think that Idahoans agree with our state constitution in making public education (kindergarten through 12th grade) available to all. But, that the state paying for online college courses may be seen as a misuse of tax dollars. I think that free college credits contribute to the feeling of entitlement that this rising generation demonstrates. I don't think it is too much to expect individuals and families to pay for further education or take out loans, as in the past. Instead of clearing the path to make it easier or free for high schools students to start college, I wish I was reading about the task force determining whether the data supports their concern and if it does then looking for the REAL root cause not just jumping to have the state pay for classes. Reducing entitlement by not paying for these classes could also allow the state to redirect a lot of educational funds. Could you think about introducing this concern at your next taskforce meeting?

Here are some of the other problems that I see facing public k-12 education:

1. Dropouts. No school or district wants to advertise these numbers instead newspapers are publishing star rankings these days. But, I wonder if we need to collect information and make sure that this isn't the real problem that we are sweeping under the rug. With high schools requiring more for the high school diploma like additional math classes, passing state mandated tests, and completing senior research projects there has got to be tangible consequences to these amped-up requirements. Can we check dropout rates of all kinds and make sure this isn't a bigger problem? There are all kinds of dropouts as well. Some drop out of school and fill out paperwork and get the proper signatures. Some don't register to come back to school in the fall. Some students choose to get a GED and stop attending school. Some students complete their coursework and don't earn a diploma, they finish, they don't drop out, but they don't graduate. I have been to the Idaho Department of Education website and the last year of data they have available is 2006-2007. And as far as who completes high school but doesn't get a diploma is not expressly addressed in those past years. Could you ask that current, complete dropout information be made available? Could you ask that dropout numbers be included on the star ranking reports and publications?

2. Sex education. Of course there will always be teen mothers... and fathers! But, it seems to me that someone on the task force could be looking among our 49 states to see what kinds of programs are working to better educate Idaho's teenagers about the risks and consequences of sexual activity. Providing the districts with options and new ideas to assist or prevent this potential population sounds like a good way I would like to see my tax dollars spent. In my own neighborhood I witnessed a teenage couple get pregnant, get married and both of them dropped out of high school to work and care for their new family. Starting families right out of high school is another life plan that deserves attention

and preparation or at least acknowlegement from the state department of education. Many parents don't want schools teaching what they see as a moral or religious education, but even bringing teenage pregnancy up as a problem may help this education task force think of other methods to encourage parents to have these talks that can alter the future dreams of today's students.

3. Technology. Our Paul elementary was selected for a "pilot program" 1:1 deployment of iPads to students. I am not happy about this arrangement. I have found no research that proves that iPads in the hands of students, elementary or otherwise, improves learning. This company claims that test scores have risen in a Colorado school, but this information is not available for scrutiny, nor am I certain that this is reference is to an Elementary school and not a high school. I can find no independent party or university that has made a study of this type of technology system. I have also talked to many employees at Apple, Inc. to see if they have their own in-house manifesto showing that individual computers improve learning or increase test scores. But, that kind of research is not available because it hasn't been done, because it can't be supported or because no one is requiring it because we are all so dazzled by the bells and whistles. So, suffice it to say, I am not comfortable with my children being guinea pigs. And when I asked these pointed questions of my district administration I was told that it is their intention to get this 1:1 iPad deployment in every Elementary school in our district and state. When I asked how they were going to pay for that they informed me that they were going to work to pass legislation for the "state to pay for it." These kinds of attitudes about technology concern me. I don't have a problem with technology as a tool. But, this urge, demonstrated by my district superintendent and the recently rejected legislation, worries me that there may be another round of over-saturating our schools with this oh so sexy, and "un-debatably important" technology. Computer labs and classroom sets on wheels is an acceptable method of modernizing the schools from my perspective. So could you watch out for this potential "iPad in the hand of every elementary school student " plan? Could you be a voice for keeping technological modernization at a steady, sensible pace?

4. Merit pay. Before more pay-for-performance ideas spring up and float around, I think it would be valuable to analyze the responsibilities of the principals at each school. I don't think it is too much to ask or too much to teach to the public's mindset that it is the responsibility of the principals to make sure there is quality teaching going on. I expect, and I'm certain that it is part of a principal's job requirements to observe the classrooms. When a principal finds that a teacher is not performing at a quality level I expect the principal to meet with the teacher and do the hard work of communicating this evaluation. The principal's job is to start a dialog about what the principal is seeing and why the teacher persists in the particular behavior, then if there needs to be changes it is up to the principal to create an improvement plan with goals and dates and future observations. It is my suspicion that if principals' time was audited (maybe the state should do that) we would find that they are very busy people with a lot of meetings and responsibilities. And I think that we would also find that classroom observation and healthy, constructive management of the teachers and classrooms in their buildings is an all-around weakness. I think it is a sham to allow the public to believe that the bad teachers cannot be fired and that there is nothing that schools or districts can do. The reality is that it is the primary job and mission of the principals to perform consistent (not just at the end of the year) quality assurance measures. When improvement plans are followed through and teachers do not rise to meet their expectations the principals need to make further steps toward probationary measures and possibly even firing a teacher with all the correct paperwork and data. Unions are only there to protect teachers from unlawful termination. And when was the last time that anyone ever heard of a lawful termination? I haven't. Because it is hard work. It shouldn't be easy to fire a certified public servant. It is the hard work I expect of each and every principal, to keep quality teachers in the schools. Could you consider making this a point of conversation when they bring up more concerns about quality teachers?

Thanks for reading my LONG letter. If you think of any way I can get involved or help in this process, please let me know.

Sincerely,

To:
Subject: Improving public education in Idaho.

Some of us find it difficult to speak in public.

That does not mean that our ideas are any less valuable.

I watch and listen for news about the growth of Montessori in private and public schools.

Please, let me be a part of the dialogue.

I've compiled, here, some of what I consider to be some of the finer reflections of the Montessori educational method being shared on-line.

Please, take a few moments, here, as you would with someone able to stand and speak.
Thank you.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faYco1b-IJI&feature=youtu.be

https://www.facebook.com/buildingthepinktower/app_57675755167

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-flores-shaw/montessori-education-debate_b_1237451.html?ref=fb&src=sp&comm_ref=false

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQl-7Lmm4hE

http://www.public-montessori.org