

**Task Force for Improving Education
Structural Change and Technology Subcommittee
July 19, 2013**

Present (in person or via conference call): Representative Reed DeMordaunt, Superintendent Tom Luna, Roger Brown, Cindy Wilson, Corrine Mantle-Bromley, Mike Caldwell (substitute for Cheryl Charlton), Mike Lanza, Anne Ritter, and Bob Lokken.

Mr. Lokken noted the focus of the meeting would be recommendations in the area of autonomy and accountability. Philosophically and from a governance perspective these two go hand in hand. If you push autonomy to the district, building and classroom level, you have to have accountability. The group needs discussion and brainstorming about these two topics. The next meeting will be to get to a specific recommendation.

As a recap, the group previously talked about pushing decision making as close to the student as possible to optimize outcomes. Ideally there are individual learning plans, students progressing at own rate, a system that allows decisions relevant to specific students to be made at the student level. The question then is what needs to be controlled at the state level. For example, the statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) needs to be controlled at the state level, busing decisions need to be made at the district level. Students and teachers will be more engaged with greater autonomy. But, there has to be accountability. Mr. Lokken asked for group discussion.

Mike Lanza asked if perhaps we are looking at accountability the wrong way. In Finland they don't have high stakes tests and their teacher evaluations are done by supervisors. It is not very complex. Teachers get a great deal of mentoring.

Bob Lokken commented that you can hold people accountable for actions or outcomes. We now have the ability to hold people accountable for outcomes.

Anne Ritter commented that the group has to be realistic. There are federal requirements to report and constitutional requirements. While the federal requirements are being loosened, it's probably not realistic to eliminate high stakes testing. It's important to stay within the realm of feasibility.

Dr. Mantle-Bromley stated that No Child Left Behind shined a light on where we were doing really poorly. We now have the capacity to look at how subgroups are doing. That's the only way to get those who are struggling identified and addressed.

Supt. Luna noted that Finland has a lot of autonomy and they do few evaluations, but it took them a long time to get there. They have a structure and foundation in place. Teachers have to have master's degree and schools recruit from the top of class. They have put things in place to achieve what they have achieved and the structure is in place at local level. It's admirable, but there are a number of things that have to be put in place first. It took Finland 30 years to get there. The group needs to look at teacher preparation and certification/licensure.

Ken Edmunds agreed that looking at teacher preparation is critical, and there is another subcommittee working on teacher preparation issues. It will be important to interface with the other group on what they are doing.

Supt. Luna will post Christina Linder's presentation on tiered licensure and the CCSSO document looking at teacher preparation programs and identifying three areas of leverage to work with. Ms. Ritter asked about the steps moving forward. If teacher prep programs are strengthened, then how do you move forward with allowing more autonomy? Rep. DeMordaunt commented that it would

require a phased in approach to get to a point where you can say more autonomy is the right answer.

Mr. Lokken discussed a couple of scenarios: one option would be to say we can't get anywhere near the 60% goal unless we address leadership. The group hasn't talked about leadership yet. There are two different executional models: personality based – no structural support for performance and, in effect, you have a system of happenstance and you get wide variation in performance. That's what Idaho has now. Another model designs a system and structure that puts support in place for high performance. That is what this committee is about that is structural change is necessary. A suggested approach would be that 60% is our goal and superintendents are responsible for getting to 60%. The South Idaho Superintendents have put together a strategic plan to get to 60%. Accountability below the superintendent level is a leadership issue at the district level. The superintendent is useless if they are only bureaucrats.

Accountability for superintendents could be a 5-year strategic plan and an annual accountability to move toward the goal. This turns up the visibility on districts that are not making progress toward the goal. How the district is managed under the superintendent level is not the purview of the state, because district dynamics are different.

Mr. Edmunds commented that the 60% goal is not a quality measure, it's a quantity measure. If we want to improve quality, the accountability is at the quality of education at a much lower level, perhaps 60% go on rate and zero remediation. That is one of the biggest issues with meeting the goal.

Ms. Ritter noted that boards are elected and are responsible for financial management and academic success of the district. The only employee a board hires is the superintendent. The superintendent hires the other staff. It's up to board to evaluate the superintendent's performance. In the Meridian District They have a strategic plan and they review it every year. It's been a great way to measure progress. That is a model that region 3 superintendents were talking about.

Supt. Luna commented that in talking about accountability, the group has talked about superintendent, teacher, and principal accountability. But there is a school board that needs to give its blessing to a direction. The group needs to think about how school boards are brought into this. They are elected. How do you hold them accountable? If a superintendent is doing the bidding of a board, then who ultimately should be held accountable.

The group talked about different measures toward the 60% goal and what are the determining factors for progress. The 5-star rating system has numerous measures for progress and performance. It was suggested that the 5-star rating system with criteria be posted to Edmodo.

Ken Edmunds suggested that the state needs to move to an outcome based model and then prescribe training for school boards. The group needs to determine what outcomes are desired and what tools are needed to support those outcomes. If there are learning plans for each student, schools need SLDS. There should be resources for board training and tools on how to evaluate superintendents. The state needs to say what the outcomes are and provide the tools and resources to get there.

Dr. Mantle-Bromley commented that teacher preparation is one of the most regulated programs in the state. For real improvement to occur, the standards need to change so that everyone is working on the same set of standards. Ken Edmunds noted that the other subgroup is looking at teacher professional development programs.

Supt. Luna commented that there is pre-service preparation and ongoing professional development. The state is doing a better job by setting higher standards and expectations and using leverage points to get better results from teacher preparation programs. Dr. Mantle-Bromley noted that if there is

pressure to get students out in 120 credits there is a conflict. She would love to see a move to a 5-year teacher preparation program. Ken Edmunds commented that this isn't necessarily a conflict if there is an "apprentice" level and mentoring and development. The other sub group is working on these issues, and this group needs to hear about those.

Rep. DeMordaunt asked Dr. Mantle-Bromley what do we need to do to attract individuals who are going to be good teachers. In his research, verbal and cognitive ability are predictors of an effective teacher. How can Idaho attract these people to the teaching profession? Dr. Mantle-Bromley answered that her program tracks the high school GPA and SAT scores of the students in her program. The GPA is higher than the average university student. The SAT scores are slightly lower, which tells her they are hard workers.

Rep. DeMordaunt asked how you know which individuals are good teachers when they leave the program and begin teaching. Dr. Mantle-Bromley answered that there has been no way to track that in the past, but the postsecondary statewide longitudinal data system will do that, and it is close to being ready. It will also show how University of Idaho graduates perform as teachers vs. teachers from other higher education programs.

Supt. Luna noted that the SLDS will be able to connect student achievement to the teacher and the teacher to the teacher prep program. Dr. Mantle-Bromley commented that many high-quality students are steered away from teaching by parents, peers, etc. Students get message that it's low pay and no respect. Mr. Edmunds noted that the SLDS gives multiple points for evaluating effectiveness of students and there are different ways to link them together. People will need to take into account the variables such as how long a teacher had a particular student, etc.

Rep. DeMordaunt brought the discussion back to what does the group want a recommendation to look like for accountability. Does the group want to set it at 60% and then it's up to the districts how to get there or does the group need to be more granular.

Dr. Mantle-Bromley commented that the 60% goal is too far out. There need to be more near term measures. Supt. Luna said that we know there are predictors for students going on – dual credit, college entrance exam, math achievement, etc. There are a number of things we know.

Bob Lokken commented that data and transparency are important to holding people accountable. Do local districts have the data to know what is going on? Just having transparency to the numbers is critical to knowing what is going on in their districts. Ken Edmunds agreed that most people don't have access to the data. Anne Ritter noted that their board gets ISAT and IRI test scores at every level. Those scores are available to the public, but most people are interested in their own kid and their own teacher.

Mike Lanza agreed that most parents don't look at district test scores. Data is important, but we need to be careful about what the data tells us about teacher, superintendents or the school board. What conclusions are we attempting to draw?

Bob Lokken replied that data is not conclusions. The data serves 2 purposes. How a district is doing toward the 60% goal. It will be necessary to back it up to measures that superintendents should be held accountable for. The data that matters is whether a district is hitting that goal and is a district making progress toward the goal. If a district has a low go on rate and high remediation and it hasn't changed for years, then there's a problem.

Anne Ritter commented that looking at the 60% goal is too late. Boards need to know how students are doing as they move through. The Board needs to know systemically how the schools are doing.

There need to be measures along the pipeline. She also noted that boards need to focus on data analysis and they need training.

Supt. Luna noted that the group hasn't included parents in discussions about autonomy. Ultimate autonomy is a parent choosing the best education for their student not based on district or school. Mr. Lokken commented that it's important to engage parents in the decision making process. He hears that districts are unresponsive to parent feedback. If a superintendent is responsible for the 60% goal, that creates impetus of change. What do you do if a district doesn't make progress based on their plan? There needs to be a mechanism for addressing deficiencies. Dr. Mantle-Bromley noted there are teams addressing underperforming schools.

Supt. Luna discussed the 5-star system, which focuses heavily on growth. There have been principals replaced and there have been restructuring efforts, but that is difficult in certain parts of Idaho because there aren't replacement educators available. Closing a low performing school is not an option in some parts of Idaho. Having a state plan to take over a school could be of benefit in a few cases. With the new 5 star system, it's a step toward addressing the low performing schools.

The group requested a presentation on how low performing schools are identified and what measures are taken to correct the deficiencies.

The group asked to have several pieces of information posted to Edmodo:

- Go on rates for schools and districts
- Remediation rates for schools and districts
- School 5-Star Ratings
- A list of predictors for students going on to college

Ken Edmunds commented that it is essential to get the link between the K-12 SLDS and the postsecondary data to be able to draw the correlations between a school's Star rating and its go on and remediation rates. There are indicators and they may need to be adjusted, but the relationships between the data and the tracking has not been there. There is work going on to interface with the postsecondary SLDS.

Bob Lokken suggested that if the 5-Star rating correlates to the go on rate, there should be an intervention plan for every school below a 5-Star rating or wherever the line is drawn. Ken Edmunds suggested that the group determine the outcomes and then allow autonomy and give schools the necessary tools. Need to identify the outcomes. Mr. Lokken commented that this focus group is not the group that needs to do the heavy lifting on the specifics of this model. Supt. Luna noted that there are efforts underway on this. Mr. Lokken suggested that information be posted on Edmodo.

Rep. DeMordaunt commented that perhaps we are not yet convinced that the 5-Star Rating system gets to the accountability level desired.

Dr. Mantle-Bromley suggested commissioning a statistician at one of the universities to pull all the data together and analyze the results. Anne Ritter suggested that perhaps the group ask questions and identify/recommend the work that needs to be done.

Supt. Luna suggested that a recommendation might be something like "we recommend a rating system that is aligned to the 60% goal and there are interventions for schools that are not meeting the rating system." This group is not going to have time to identify indicators and levels of performance for a certain rating, but the recommendation could be that all these things are aligned so that there is confidence that a system of accountability and data collection and reporting is in place that leads to the 60% goal, and then you let the Department and Board do the work to put a system in place.

Mr. Lokken noted that the group has talked about credentialing at the teacher level but not at the leadership level. But, accountability goes to the leadership level. Supt. Luna noted that you have to make sure the leader has the authority to control what they will be held accountable for. The state doesn't have anything in place to allow for a principal to make staffing decisions.

Mr. Lokken brought the meeting to a close and noted that the group needs to get down to specific recommendations at the next meeting.

The group's next meeting is August 1st from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. in the State Board of Education conference room and via phone.