

**Task Force for Improving Education
Structural Change and Technology Subcommittee
August 5, 2013**

Present (in person or via conference call): Mike Caldwell, Bob Lokken, Cindy Wilson, Anne Ritter, Cheryl Charlton, Mike Lanza, Roger Brown, Linda Clark, Ken Edmunds, Superintendent Tom Luna

Bob Lokken welcomed the group and asked for a roll call. He then told the group the task today was to distill the conceptual conversation around autonomy and accountability down into specific recommendations.

Linda Clark, co-chair of the Fiscal Stability/Effective Teachers and Leaders Subcommittee, was on the call to give an overview of her subcommittee's work to date. Dr. Clark shared that the recommendations her subcommittee is working on center around mentoring and professional development in technology and the Common Core. They began by identifying elements that contribute to fiscal stability.

First, they saw a need to change from attendance to enrollment reporting for state funding. Tim Hill, at the State Department of Education, is running the numbers on that and will report back to the Fiscal Stability/Effective Teachers and Leaders Subcommittee on August 12th. The scenario is looking at what the model would look like if it was implemented without additional funding. Funding based on attendance is currently a major barrier to mastery learning.

Second, districts have been forced to hire more staff to report data for funding through ISEE. Limiting the reporting requirements would be beneficial.

Third, how teachers are paid contributes to fiscal instability. Districts who pay off the state salary schedule can't hire or retain people. Districts who hire above the state salary schedule are fiscally instable. The subcommittee has been working with Christina Linder on changes to certification and licensure that would dovetail with a new salary schedule. They are looking at a three-tiered licensure.

Fourth, the biggest issue of instability is the need to restore operational funding to the same levels as 2009, or \$5,000 per unit. Districts across the state are currently teetering on collapse because of financial instability.

Mr. Lokken asked whether the subcommittee had discussed a different way of allocating funding, rather than tying funding to specific programs or line items. Dr. Clark said there had been some conversation around operational funding and that districts may be better off if it was broken down more specifically, such as line items for utilities, health insurance, etc. However, as a whole, the subcommittee hasn't talked much about it. They didn't feel it was an instability issue.

Roger Brown commented that currently operational funding is called discretionary funding. Dr. Clark confirmed, but added that it's not really discretionary, because it must be used for things like heat, lights, etc. Mr. Brown replied that for transparency reasons we may want to change the name. Dr. Clark said the Idaho Association for School Administrators (IASA) has spent the last few years trying to help people understand there's nothing discretionary about those funds. The only thing that had been discretionary about those funds was textbooks and professional development, but those went away with the budget cuts.

Ms. Wilson asked for an explanation of how the three-tier salary schedule will recruit and retain teachers. Dr. Clark said there are three levels of pay-- \$40,000, \$50,000 and \$60,000. The \$40,000 level would be more competitive for students in college and would make education a more viable career choice. In the \$50,000 and \$60,000 tiers, \$2,000 would go into a pool to pay teachers who mentor, serve on teams, etc. The advantages of the three-tier schedule is that it's more competitive, more simple, it allows people to earn a higher wage in a shorter amount of time, it keeps people in the profession, it's tied to licensure and evaluation, it's fully paid for by the state, and it allows small school districts to keep their teachers.

Mr. Edmunds asked what percentage of teachers would fall into each tier. Dr. Clark responded that all beginning teachers would come in as novice, the first step, but they don't have a sense of what the percentages in each tier will be when it's fully implemented. Teachers will be able to move between the tiers. The subcommittee has been focused on how to implement this in pieces so that it's affordable. They're sensitive to how much money is available, but they feel it's their job to point out what needs to happen and alternative ways to get there.

With no further questions for Dr. Clark, the subcommittee moved on to talking about autonomy and accountability recommendations. Mr. Lokken suggested the recommendation may lie in strategic plans. At the beginning of the task force meetings, New Plymouth presented on their annual plans and how staff was held accountable. The Southern Idaho Conference of Superintendents put together a plan on how they wanted to be held accountable. Mr. Lokken suggested superintendents be required to put together a five-year strategic plan annually, and then the plan is submitted to the state so there's clarity around what a district is working to improve upon. In New Plymouth, the superintendent would provide teachers with data to develop the plans, and then he reviewed them. At the end of the year, there was accountability on how well they did, and the sequence started over again. Mr. Lokken envisions something similar between the state and the school district superintendent.

Anne Ritter said the Meridian school board works with the superintendent and approves the plan on a three-year cycle. The superintendent's evaluation is tied to the goals they set each year in the strategic plan, and the goals are both qualitative and quantitative.

Mr. Lokken said the strategic plans should be based on data with clearly measurable goals. The state would set goals and priorities, then ask superintendents to do the same and hold them accountable for the results. If you married that with pruning down the education laws and rules to specific outcomes the state would like to see, then superintendents can figure out how to make progress towards that goal. It would be up to the local superintendent to lead his team, and there would be dual accountability to the state and the local school board.

Mike Caldwell agreed with the four possible recommendations Mr. Lokken posted on Edmodo last week, although he said he'd like to see examples of specific laws or rules that would be pruned. He suggested adding a fourth strategy to the overall framework—parent involvement. He believes that in order to have significant structural change, there has to be parent involvement.

Ken Edmunds commented he's not sure how to develop a system that mandates or requires parent involvement. Mike Lanza said a couple of districts have experimented with this in Idaho. In Idaho City, they have a penalty system for parents who aren't attending parent teacher conference. It got higher participation, but the superintendent there didn't describe it as cultural change. Don Coberly in the Boise School District experimented with administrators in eight schools to try to increase the participation at parent teacher conference through direct phone calls inviting parents. Participation

percentages increase from single digits to 45-55%. They found parents either didn't feel welcome in the school environment, or they thought that by engaging they would put their students in a more difficult position with their teachers.

Mr. Lokken didn't think this was an area for state involvement, because you can't force a parent to engage in their student's education through law. Superintendent Luna suggested focusing on things we have control over and using the bully pulpit to encourage parent involvement. Cindy Wilson suggested requiring a parent component in the district's strategic plan. Mr. Lokken suggested the state require districts to submit a strategic plan towards the 60% post-secondary completion goal, based in data, that addresses specific categories. Superintendent Luna suggested making a bold statement at the first of the recommendations, such as "If parents choose not to become involved, our best efforts may not be enough." Mr. Caldwell suggested creating an incentive program for parents to be involved. Mr. Lokken suggested posting any other specific ideas about parent involvement on Edmodo.

He then directed the conversation back to pruning the laws and rules dealing with education. The subcommittee doesn't have time to go through the entire laws and rules book. Ms. Ritter suggested simply making a recommendation that it be gone through. Superintendent Luna recalled under Fred Tilman's time as chairman of the House Education Committee that the Legislature passed a law that repealed all the education rules and told the State Board of Education to put back only what was needed. Mr. Lokken suggested the recommendation be that the State Board of Education and State Department of Education prune the existing statutes and rule book with an eye toward autonomy, accountability, innovation, collaboration, and high expectations.

Mr. Lokken then moved on to dual accountability. He suggested superintendents be accountable to schools boards AND to the state. The school board employs the superintendent, but the state is the one who distributes funding and carries the Constitutional mandate for a uniform system of education. Currently, you have to have a license to become a superintendent in the state. Licensure doesn't have anything to do with performance. Under dual accountability, if a superintendent in a district is not meeting the performance measures in the district's strategic plan, then the state would have the authority to revoke the superintendent's license.

Superintendent Luna told the group the closest accountability we have to that system now is through federal school improvement grants. If a school is persistently low performing, federal funding is made available, but if you choose to accept it you have to make choices, like replacing the principal or replacing a portion of the staff.

Mr. Lanza asked whether it made sense to suggest some kind of measure that replaces a principal or teacher for not meeting performance outcomes, or whether the focus should be strictly on the superintendent. Mr. Lokken responded that the state doesn't have the level of visibility or situational context to make personnel decisions below the superintendent level.

Superintendent Luna remarked that the Five Star Rating System requires one- and two-star schools to put together an improvement plan, and the state provides them with extra resources, but it doesn't specify what happens if the same schools continue to be low achieving for many years. There may need to be other consequences for schools that remain one- or two-star schools for many years.

Ms. Ritter suggested a better approach would be to make a superintendent's license renewable every so many years and performance has to be proven in order for the license to be renewed.

Ms. Wilson asked if the school board is the only group that evaluates the superintendents. Ms. Ritter responded in the affirmative. Ms. Wilson asked if there was a framework for evaluating superintendents, like the Danielson Framework for teachers. Ms. Ritter responded in the affirmative and said there is a lot of training happening right now around evaluating administrators.

Mr. Lanza asked whether strategic planning was common in school districts. Superintendent Luna responded that it varies depending on how well they're doing academically.

Ms. Ritter noted that the statute that refers to the obligation of the board of trustees is going to be rewritten by ISBA. A strategic plan requirement might fit perfectly there.

Mr. Lanza suggested making the strategic plan a requirement of the school board, as well as the superintendent. Mr. Lokken pointed out that it's the school board's job to hire the superintendent and be intimately involved in the development of the strategic plan.

Superintendent Luna asked whether the subcommittee wanted to require strategic plans of all districts, or just one- or two-star schools. Mr. Lokken thought all districts ought to have a strategic plan. Cindy Wilson noted that districts will need help in creating strategic plans.

Since the group was out of time, Mr. Lokken suggested he and Camille Wells draft specific recommendations and send to everyone to look at over the next two weeks. He sees two specific tactics out of the conversations about autonomy and accountability. First, there is a need to prune the laws and rules related to education. Second, there needs to be a dual accountability system that uses strategic planning for continuous improvement as a forcing function to move toward the 60% goal. The subcommittee agreed to this plan. Mr. Lokken encouraged the group to use Edmodo to comment on the proposed recommendations. The first draft should be out before the end of the week, and task force members need to take the time asynchronously to review and make specific edits to the recommendations. The August 19th meeting will be dedicated to a final review and deciding how to reach consensus. The full task force will meet on August 23rd.