

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Dwayne Umbarger at 1:30 p.m. on January 23, 2001 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present:       Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes  
                                      Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department  
                                      Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research Department  
                                      Judy Steinlicht, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Others attending:        See Attached List

On behalf of the School Finance Coalition, Mark Tallman and Craig Grant, presented an overview. Mark and Craig shared the presentation of the testimony covered in the attached, "Recommendations of the School Finance Coalition" (Attachment 1), "Statement of the School Finance Coalition" (Attachment 2) and "Comparison of Positions: Coalition, State Board, Task Force and Governor". (Attachment 3)

Discussion resulting from the presentation was whether or not there was a constitutional problem with taking the cap off the Local Option Budget (LOB) if that effort was more than 25% of the total available to the district. It is believed that it was a federal impact aid issue. The committee also wanted to know what the coalition was suggesting in terms of state assistance so the burden would not rely so heavily on property tax. A specific recommendation was not made in this area because their first hope is that with more accurately funding the base, this won't be so much of an issue. They are just identifying the problem right now.

Concerning the coalition's position on the Governor's proposal to cut \$2 million from in service programs, the coalition would favor restoring the funds in the base. School districts do bring people in from their communities for in service technology and they get information from the internet that does not cost hard dollars, but it isn't known that a study has every been made on what things the districts are doing. Goals are needed for the years to come to know what we want for our schools and know where we want to be in the future.

The taxpayers are not interested in investing more money in the school system unless they can see a return on their investment. The coalition responded that they feel they have a pretty good system of accountability with QPA. They are willing to do whatever is wanted, but they need to know what it is that is expected. They have seen improvement on the state and national assessment levels, have seen more kids come out of unsatisfactory levels and more kids taking upper level subjects. Measurable improvement came out of the last cycle. The coalition is pretty confident that if results are viewed over the next several years that you will be able to see that the job is getting done.

The public probably does not understand QPA, but they need to understand the results of what is happening. Perhaps they need a marketing specialist to interpret the progress that their students are making. That progress is now dictated by how the local news media interprets it. The QPA standards were set very high at the beginning and it is taking a long time to reach that standard, but we are getting there. It is very important to have those standards out there. The schools need to be able to see where they started and where they are going. It is time for discussion for setting a long range plan for education.

Meeting was adjourned. Next meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2001.