

Education commission lists school priorities, Barker says

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Eight recommendations for improving American schools have been adopted by the Education Commission of States, Sen. John Barker, R-Buhl, Idaho Senate Health, Education and Welfare Committee chairman, reported Monday.

Barker, who attended the recent meeting in North Carolina, said in his report to the Legislative Council, "We have heard now from many directions about the problems of our schools. We have had an abundance of research, a plentiful supply of analysis and an impressive piling up of reports. Public concern is rising. What is needed now is action for excellence."

In a Post-Register telephone interview, Barker said a commission composed of about 50 business leaders came up with the following recommendations to improve public schools:

- Develop and put into effect as promptly as possible plans from the state for improving education in grades kindergarten through 12 in the public schools. There can be no economic progress without educational progress.
- Create broader and more effective partnerships

for improving education in the nation's states and communities. It means involving most business leaders in education.

- Marshal the resources that are essential for improving public schools. Local school systems should enrich programs and improve management to make the best possible use of resources.

- Express a new and high regard for teachers. States and school districts with the full participation of teachers should dramatically improve methods for recruiting, training and payment to teachers. This includes such things as "career leader," master teachers, etc.

- Make the academic experience more intense and more productive. States and school systems should establish firm, explicit and demanding requirements concerning discipline, attendance, homework, grades and other essentials of effective schooling.

- Provide quality assurance in education. Boards of education and higher education should cooperate with teachers and administrations on systems for measuring the effectiveness of teachers and rewarding outstanding performances.

- Improve leadership and management in the

schools. Principals should be squarely in charge of educational quality and their pay in relation to responsibility and effectiveness.

- Serve better those students who are unserved or underserved. States, school systems, principals, teachers and parents should work to reduce student absences and failures to finish schools.

"The federal government is not and should not be asked to bail us out," said Barker. "With fiscal problems easing in 50 states, we need to work together so that a more rigorous and more effective education will be found in the various states."

"Over the last 10 years, there has been a rising state of frustration. Hopefully, we can set some standards, some quality control, some accountability and performance incentives that will improve the public schools of Idaho and the nation's public schools."

Barker said he also attended as a education commissisoner from Idaho and reported it was the best attended by governors, legislators, teachers, educators and labor representatives. North Carolina Gov. John Hunt hosted the conference at Raleigh.