

30 July 2014

Accountability and Autonomy Work Group
Structure and Governance Committee
Offices of the State Board of Education
650 West State Street
Boise, Idaho

Dear Accountability and Autonomy Work Group:

Listed below is a summary of the input received from Idaho School District Superintendents and Business Managers when queried as to which Idaho Codes or Administrative Rules poses barriers to school and district operations. Respondents were asked to list those activities that consume a great deal of time without a corresponding increase in student achievement. The responses have been grouped as items relating to the themes of Data Collection and Management, and Other.

Data Collection and Management

1. The Idaho System for Educational Excellence (I.S.E.E.) is still one of the greatest challenges schools and districts face to ensure the accurate and timely upload of data from the local to the state department of education. The transfer of data is not yet fully automated for all of the required data fields and still requires additional time and personnel for which the districts are not being compensated. The timing of the I.S.E.E. uploads from the districts to the state can be problematic depending upon the individual school or district calendar. There is frustration for Schoolnet, as an extension of I.S.E.E., inasmuch as the timeliness of the data and ease with which the data can be used to inform instruction in the classroom is far from being maximized. There is need for considerable technological improvement and consideration for the labor expense districts are incurring to compile and report student and staff data.
2. The Ways to Improve School Effectiveness (W.I.S.E.) is a planning tool schools and districts are expected to use in addressing areas of deficiency in student achievement. This is a labor intensive undertaking that somewhat duplicates the annual "strategic" planning now expected of districts. The school accreditation process now being coordinated through AdvancEd is somewhat duplicative as the student and staff data collected along with the self-assessment modules are repetitive of W.I.S.E. tool expectations. The identification of one measurement tool that will suffice for multiple purposes will reduce the work necessary to compile and report data.
3. Data collection and reporting pertaining to Special Education and Medicaid is becoming increasingly difficult with which districts are able to comply. It appears the collection and reporting of data has become more labor intensive as opposed to becoming easier and more efficient one would expect with modern technology. Changes in eligibility and reporting requirements particularly disadvantage smaller districts but have a negative impact on districts of all sizes.

4. Transportation policy and procedure changes are impacting districts. The data collection and reporting for what is perceived to be a more complicated reimbursement formula requires additional labor at the district level. Allowable expenses have been eliminated and the percentage of reimbursement for the remaining reimbursable items has been adjusted.
5. The data collection and reporting required by the Idaho State Department of Education, other than the specific areas previously listed, is of concern to superintendents and business managers. Facility plans, building maintenance requirements, technology plans, staff evaluation reporting, and school finance were listed as areas where the reporting is viewed to be excessive and perceived as the state department of education and/or the legislature as micro-managing the school districts. This is evidenced by the specific "line items" listed in the state appropriation for education each year.

Other

1. There is frustration with competitive grants, particularly as smaller districts with fewer staff members are perceived to be disadvantaged.
2. Proposed changes to certification, special education in particular, are viewed as having a greater potential to reduce the number of qualified applicants for open positions rather than increasing the number of candidates.
3. The time required for administrators to complete the Danielson Evaluation training is considered to be excessive.
4. There was reference to numerous state rules, pertaining to school district operations, requiring considerable time and manpower to comply with regulations and expectations. An IDAPA rule was mentioned as restricting a district's ability to re-enroll a formerly incarcerated student back into the school.

The additional requirement placed upon educators over time tends to be cumulative. Seldom are items removed from the list of things to be done. It is more common that additional expectations are added to an already full schedule of activities and expectations. The prospect of a periodic, perhaps annual review, of state laws, board policies, departmental procedures, and expectations with the intent to reduce or eliminate where possible gives hope to education professionals that have shouldered an increasing burden in recent years.

The work group's vision of a routine procedure to examine Idaho Code, State Board Rule, and Idaho State Department of Education Procedures could be characterized in the Board's Annual Review Nullifying All Cantankerous Laws Enacted (B.A.R.N.A.C.L.E.).

Respectfully Submitted,

Gaylen Smyer