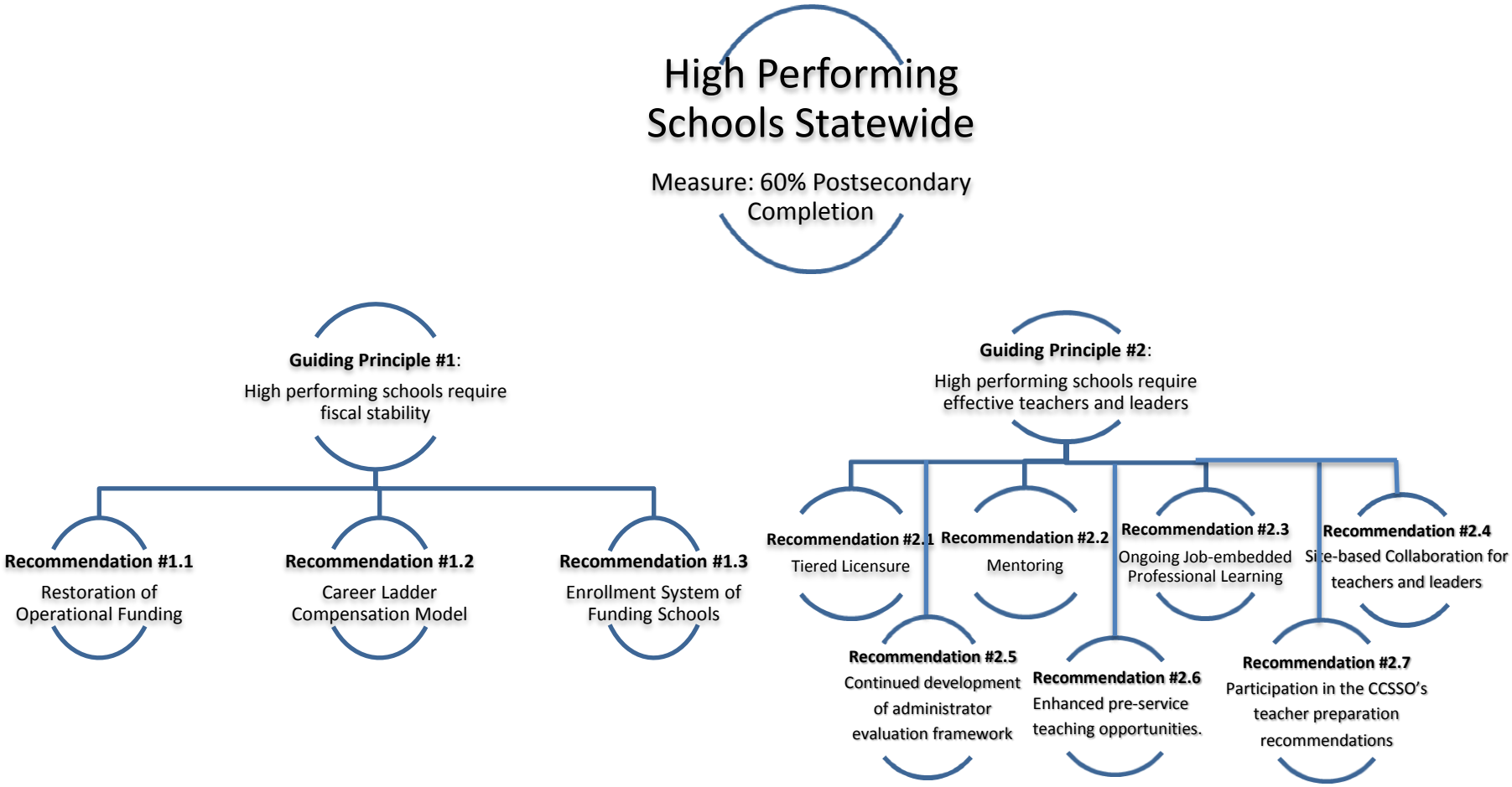
Task Force for Improving Education
Fiscal / Effective Teachers and Leaders Subcommittee



Executive Summary

In December 2012, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter announced that the State Board of Education would shepherd a statewide discussion regarding how to move education forward to benefit Idaho students. The Task Force is comprised of 31 members from across the state, who represent a broad and diverse group of stakeholders.

Several areas of focus emerged from the initial Task Force discussions, and subcommittees were assigned to develop recommendations to address three focus areas: Fiscal Stability, Effective Teachers and Leaders, and Structural Change. After separate fact finding and brainstorming meetings, the Effective Teachers and Leaders and the Fiscal Stability groups combined their work and discussions to further develop recommendations. The recommendations contained in this document reflect the work of that combined group.

The group believes that the following recommendations are critical to Idaho students in pursuit of the state's goal of 60% of Idaho's citizens ages 25-34 having at least a one-year post-secondary credential by 2020.

Guiding Principle 1: High performing schools require fiscal stability

In order for schools to achieve the student performance required of a world-class education system, the state needs a more equitable and adequate funding system. The committee identified several factors leading to the current instability including over reliance on supplemental levies, the teacher compensation model, and the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding model.

Recommendation #1.1: Restoration of Operational Funding

In 2008-2009, the Idaho Legislature funded school district operations with a Distribution Factor at $25,696.00 per unit. School districts saw a steady decline in the operational funding between that time and the 2011-2012 year when the factor reached a low of $19,626.00 per unit. In 2012-2013, there was minimal increase to $19,706.00 per unit and for the upcoming 2013-2014 school year it was increased to $20,000 per unit (still 22% below the 2008-2009 school year). The majority of the additional funding was appropriated for 2013-2014 and was distributed for technology, differentiated pay, restoring the experience "steps" on the salary grid, and teacher training.

Idaho's school districts have been hard hit with the reduction in operational (sometimes called "discretionary") funding. Costs for insurance premiums, utilities, fuel, and other operating expenses have significantly increased during the time in which operational funding was decreasing. Since these operational costs are not "discretionary" in nature, districts began the cuts with elimination of funds for professional development, content materials (previously called textbooks), elimination of bus routes and stops to name a few. As the recession worsened and operational funding was cut further, districts reduced mid-day kindergarten busing or went to alternate day kindergarten, cut calendar days (furloughing staff), moved to 4 day weeks, and ultimately cut staff to balance their budgets.

This situation has caused significant fiscal instability in Idaho's districts – instability that is further magnified by the increased reliance of districts on supplemental levies and the variation throughout the state in districts' ability to pass these levies.

Although traditionally called "discretionary" funding, the Distribution Funding provides operational funds that are the normal, reasonable costs of doing business. These costs include such items as

paying for heat, lights and fuel; transporting students in a safe manner to and from school; providing timely and relevant content materials and training for teachers.

Restoration of operational funding is not growth in government. It is restoration necessary for the operation of schools and districts. Idaho's districts are in dire need of this restoration. Fund balances are depleted, supplemental levies (where passed) are at levels that would be difficult to increase in most communities, and many districts have exhausted their ability to use "one time" funds to balance their budgets. Without restoration of these funds, many will face future years with no options other than cutting the school year (again), reducing staff, or asking taxpayers for (another) tax increase to maintain operations. This creates fiscal instability.

From 2003-2004 to 2008-09, operational funding was stable or increased slightly, evidence of the Idaho legislature's recognition of the need to provide adequate, stable operational funding. These were not years of excess, and a return to this level of funding is restoration rather than growth.

Total restoration of operational funding to the 2009 level would cost $82.5 million. However, a multiple year approach to restoration could be implemented. A 5-Year restoration approach to rebuild operational funding would cost $16.5 million per year.

Recommendation #1.2: Career Ladder Compensation Model

The current method of teacher compensation in Idaho is a second factor in the fiscal instability of the state's school districts. One of the primary drivers of the current teacher compensation model is the base salary. When the current model was implemented during the 1994-1995 school year, the Legislature set the base salary at $19,328. The Legislature set the base salary for the 2013-2014 school year at $23,123, which over time, is approximately a 1% increase per year. The result has been non-competitive salaries that make it difficult to hire and retain teachers. Potential movement on a complex pay grid is difficult to anticipate and budget. Districts that must pay above the state schedule to be competitive, have the added instability of funding their salary schedules. In addition, the current system lacks incentives and accountability.

The committee has researched pay systems throughout the United States and has considered merit pay systems, differentiated pay systems, and many of their variations.[1] The committee believes that the best system for Idaho is a simple Career Ladder that combines competitive salaries with incentives, rewards, and accountability. Further, we believe it should be tied to a revised system of state licensure. The proposed system is comprised of three tiers – each tied to a state license/certificate. Criteria for movement between the tiers include experience, additional credentialing, and accountability based on performance. Further, tiers two and three would include additional salary that can be earned for fulfillment of leadership responsibilities, including such things as curriculum development work, chairing collaboration teams, mentoring, and other responsibilities that the districts may determine. Funds would flow to the districts based upon the number of individuals in each of the top two tiers, and these funds would be paid out to the teachers for the work, as cited. This approach allows districts to determine the leadership responsibilities that are needed and allows teachers to select the roles they wish to fulfill and to be compensated for them. This approach would fund a major portion of the Mentor Program (Recommendation #2.2).

The Career Ladder is performance based. Specifically, each teacher moves up the ladder based upon credentialing and performance. Successful teacher evaluations are necessary for an individual to move to higher tiers and to remain placed on the tiers, as determined at the time of re-certification.

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[1] Task Force for Improving Education, June 21, 2013 meeting and July 12, 2013 meeting presentations and materials.

Funding of the Career Ladder will require additional (new) funds for public education in Idaho. It could, however, be phased in as necessary. Note: In year one, the current allocations for "differentiated pay" could be repurposed to fund the Career Ladder model. The Career Ladder will help to reduce the disparity in salary among Idaho's districts. While districts may continue to fund their salary schedules at rates higher than the state mechanism, the salary model will reduce the gap for districts and ultimately provide more stability for all districts.

The committee recommends a phased implementation of the Career Ladder – moving all teachers to the new salary schedule initially, and increasing the compensation tied to each tier over time to reach the recommended pay levels of a 40/50/60,000 salary schedule. Such a model will entice individuals to enter the teaching profession and provide incentives for them to improve their craft and to remain in Idaho. The committee also believes that the career ladder approach provides enhanced accountability based upon performance.

The total cost of a move to this salary schedule would be approximately $200-$250 million. Again, a multiple year approach could be implemented. A 5-6 year phase-in to include moving existing teachers to the new career ladder would cost approximately $40 million per year.

Supporting Recommendations:
The accountability model is predicated on a strong evaluation system.

- The committee endorses the ongoing implementation of the State Department of Education's new evaluation framework.[2]
- The committee recommends the continued training of principals as evaluators and encourages the incorporation of research-based evaluation techniques such as those identified in the recent MET study. [3]

Recommendation #1.3: System of Funding Schools

The Task Force believes that the present system of funding schools on Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is a factor of fiscal instability. The dual issues of unknown enrollment and unknown attendance present a double-edged sword for fiscal planning. Further, the ADA reporting requirements of the Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE) system have added to fiscal stress on districts due to the additional staff required to ensure accuracy and reliability of the data. It is our belief that a move to an enrollment (or membership) model would lessen the unknowns and diminish ISEE staffing requirements. It is also noted that ADA and Carnegie Unit-based funding are an impediment for districts to the move to personalized learning and the mastery learning provisions that are necessary to make a system truly personalized. A funding model based on "seat time" impedes the progress of a student toward mastery.

There are two financial methods of making the change from ADA to enrollment/membership-based funding. One plan requires no additional state funding and is based upon reallocation of the current funds in a different manner. In this model, divisors and minimums are adjusted to account for the fact that enrollment is higher than attendance (in order to keep the statewide unit-driven funding level), districts with an attendance rate above 95.2% will tend to come out behind while districts with attendance rates below 95.2% will tend to come out ahead. In the second model, divisors and minimums for calculating support units are not adjusted and enrollment is fully funded. The cost of model 2 is approximately $60 million.

[2] Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, Idaho State Department of Education.
[3] Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Policy and Practice Brief, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, January 2013.

The committee recommends the change from Average Daily Attendance (ADA) to Average Daily Enrollment /Membership even if additional funding is not available. This will enhance stability and remove current barriers to personalized and/or mastery learning models that are required to meet the 60% goal.

Guiding Principle 2: High performing schools require effective teachers and leaders

The classroom teacher is the most important school-related determinant of student achievement. Effective teachers increase student success, close achievement gaps and foster a student's ability to learn. This results in lower dropout rates, higher numbers of students going on to postsecondary experiences and increased employment and earnings opportunities. Strong administrators and leaders enable teachers to develop, grow and succeed in their profession.

Recommendation #2.1: Tiered Licensure

The committee recommends a continuum of professional growth and learning that is tied to licensure. Movement through the system would be accomplished in a very specific, objective way using performance measures. Evaluations based upon the Framework for Teaching (FfT) will begin in pre-service and continue throughout a teacher's career. Beginning in pre-service, candidates must meet the Idaho minimum state requirements of a "2" or "Basic" in all components of Idaho's statewide performance assessment, FfT. This performance assessment would be supported by multiple artifacts and evidence of the candidate's practice.[4]

An additional recommended measure of candidate effectiveness should be the candidate's ability to develop student learning objectives in order to assess student growth over the period of the candidate's clinical practice. These performance-based measures shall result in the development of an ongoing Individualized Professional Learning Plan (IPLP) created in partnership with the candidate's cooperating teacher and university supervisor. This plan (IPLP) will be submitted to the State Department of Education, along with the candidate's scores in the 22 components of the FfT, to inform required professional development and would also be collected as part of the state's longitudinal database on teacher performance and IHE performance. These documents will be required in order to apply for initial, novice licensure.

Upon being recommended for initial licensure, a NOVICE LICENSE (three-year license, non-renewable after 6 years) would be issued. Novice teachers could apply for a PROFESSIONAL LICENSE (five-year license, renewable dependent upon performance) after 3 years from the time of initial licensure. In order to transition to professional licensure, teachers must meet the Idaho minimum state requirements of at least "3" or "Proficient" in all components of the FfT. This part of the professional licensure performance assessment would be supported by multiple artifacts and evidence of the teacher's practice.

An additional measure of effectiveness proposed would be the teacher's ability to develop student learning objectives in order to assess student growth over the period of the candidate's clinical practice. Standardized state tests would also be considered as part of teacher performance.

After 5 years PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE, a teacher may apply to be considered for a MASTER TEACHER LICENSE (five-year license, renewable dependent upon performance). In order to transition to master teacher licensure, teachers must meet the Idaho minimum state requirements of at least "3.5" or "Distinguished" in a large number of components of the FfT. This part of the professional licensure performance assessment will be supported by multiple artifacts and evidence

[4] Tiered Licensure, Christina Linder, Idaho State Department of Education, July 12, 2013

of the teacher's practice. An additional measure of effectiveness proposed would be the candidate's ability to develop student learning objectives in order to show student growth. Standardized state tests would also be considered as part of teacher performance.

A teacher's ability to renew and maintain teacher certification would be dependent on proficient performance throughout the validity period (5 years for Professional and Master levels).

Supporting Recommendations:

- While Novice and Professional licensure could be implemented immediately, the committee recommends the State Department of Education work with stakeholders to clearly determine expectations and authentic measures to earn a master teacher licensure.
- Performance-based measures should result in the development of an ongoing Individualized Professional Learning Plan (IPLP) throughout a teacher's career, created in partnership with the teacher's administrator and a peer. This IPLP should be revised according to the teacher's performance evaluations and personal reflections throughout the period of professional licensure.

Recommendation #2.2: Mentoring

The committee focused time on researching and discussing best practices and models for developing high quality teachers.[5] According to the New Teacher Center, "New teacher support is a critical component of a comprehensive solution to achieving excellence in teaching quality. High-quality support programs for new teachers—often referred to as induction programs—not only increase the retention of beginning teachers, but also their impact on student learning."

The committee recommends the following:

Each district should develop a mentoring program for the support of new teachers that follows the guideline of the Idaho Mentor Program Standards.[6] These standards were developed in 2009 as a joint project of the Professional Standards Commission, the State Board of Education, and the State Department of Education in order to provide a vision and guidelines for local planners to use in the design and implementation of a high-quality mentor program for beginning teachers. These program Standards require that representatives from across the educational community come together for initial planning and continue together to monitor and evaluate for program improvement.

The state should provide funding support for a mentoring program. It is noted that the cost of providing master teachers to act as mentors for novice teachers is integrated into the Career Ladder model; however, costs for substitutes, training of mentors, etc. would be needed. The best practice model which provides for "release time" mentor, in which a trained mentor supports novice and struggling teachers would require additional funding of approximately $7,000 per novice/struggling teacher. [7]

Recommendation #2.3: Ongoing Job-embedded Professional Learning

To increase student achievement for all children in order to make sure they all are college and career ready, educators must have ongoing professional learning opportunities. Professional learning is critical to educators' ability to develop the new knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to better meet students' learning needs and enhance student learning results.

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[5] Task Force for Improving Education, June 21, 2013 meeting presentations and materials.
[6] Idaho Mentor Program Standards, January 2009.
[7] Is Mentoring Worth the Money? A Benefit-Cost Analysis and Five-year Rate of Return of a Comprehensive Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers, Anthony Villar and Michael Strong, Nov. 2007.

The committee recommends the following:

- Adhere to the research based standards of the National Staff Development Council now known as Learning Forward.
- Prioritize, monitor and coordinate resources for educator learning at the state level. Implementation of the Idaho Core Standards, Smarter Balanced assessment and technology will require ongoing funding and resources that should be built into the funding system.
- Provide ongoing funding for professional development and require that districts provide regular professional learning opportunities.

The committee supports the state's definition of Professional Development as:

A comprehensive, sustained, timely, and intensive process to improve effectiveness of teachers and administrators in raising student achievement, which:

a. Aligns with rigorous state academic achievement standards, local educational agency goals, school improvement goals, effective technology integration, and Idaho Core Standards.
b. Utilizes data driven instruction using a thorough review and continual evaluation of data on teacher and student performance to define clear goals and distinct outcomes.
c. Provides opportunities that are individualized enough to meet distinct and diverse levels of need for teachers and administrators.
d. Is facilitated by well-prepared school administrators, coaches, mentors, master teachers, lead teachers, or third-party providers under contract with the State Department of Education, school district, or charter school, and supported by external research, expertise, or resources.
e. Fosters a collective responsibility by educators within the school for improved student performance and develops a professional learning community.[8]

Recommendation #2.4: Site-based collaboration among teachers and instructional leaders

An education system that fosters collaboration among educators results in more effective teachers and leaders and improved learning outcomes for students. The committee studied best practices both in Idaho and around the country and recommends the following: [9]

- Strongly encourage districts to restructure the traditional school day schedule to allow for job-embedded collaboration time.
- Create professional learning communities that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students.
- Provide training models to districts for their use in training the members of the professional learning communities.
- Encourage models that focus on team outcomes and collective responsibility.

Recommendation #2.5: Continue development and implementation of a new administrator evaluation framework.

The committee supports further development and implementation of the Idaho Standards for Effective Principals and the pilot work being conducted in the 2013-14 school year to further explore effective performance measures for school administrators. This includes ongoing implementation and support for administrator training in assessing classroom performance through observation.[10]

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[8] IDAPA 08.02.03.013 Idaho Definition of Professional Development
[9] Schools As Collaborative Learning Communities, Carole Cooper and Julie Boyd
[10] Idaho Standards for Effective Principals, July 2013

Recommendation #2.6: Provide enhanced pre-service teaching opportunities through the state's colleges of education.
The committee supports the efforts of Idaho's higher education institutions to increase and enhance clinical field experiences for pre-service teachers.

Recommendation #2.7: Participation in the CCSSO's "Our Responsibility, Our Promise" recommendations to improve teacher preparation.
The committee supports Idaho's participation in implementing The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) "Our Responsibility, Our Promise" recommendations to help ensure that every teacher and principal is able to prepare students for college and the workforce. The CCSSO recommendations focus on licensure; program approval; and data collection, analysis, and reporting to improve the way we prepare our educator workforce. These recommendations are supported by the Colleges of Education at Idaho's public higher education institutions.[11]

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[11] CCSSO Teacher Preparation Grant Overview, 2013