Task Force for Improving Education
Structural Change Subcommittee

Goal

High Performing Schools Statewide

Measure: 60% Post-Secondary Completion

Principle

Guiding Principle:
Structural changes are required to reach 60%

Guiding Principle:
High performance work environments are required

Strategies

High Expectations

Autonomy & Accountability

Innovation & Collaboration

Recommendations

High Expectations

Mastery Based System

Content mastery, rather than seat time requirements

Idaho Core Standards

Rigorous and successful implementation of the Idaho Core Standards is an essential component of high performing schools

Literacy Proficiency

Students master literacy before moving on to content learning

Advanced Opportunities

Provide all students advanced opportunities by expanding post-secondary offerings while in high school

Autonomy & Accountability

Revamp State's Accountability Structure Involving Schools

Revamp the current accountability structure from its compliance mandates to a system based on accountability for student outcomes.

Empower Autonomy by Removing Constraints

Thoroughly review state laws and rules and remove constraints to allow local flexibility to local dynamics and empower autonomy

Annual Stratgic Plans Focused on Improvemt

Districts shall have a strategic plan, refreshed annually, focused on continuous improvement and aligned with the State's goals. This plan is the basis from which accountability is governed.

Innovation & Collaboration

Job Embedded Collaboration Time

Regularly scheduled, ongoing collaboration and professional development is essential to highly effective teaching

Statewide Electronic Collaboration System

Educators need a framework for sharing ideas and resources across the state

High Speed Bandwidth and Wireless Infrastructure

Every classroom in the state has bandwidth and connectivity to simultaneously support equal access and opportunity

Educator and Student Computing Devices

To ensure equal access and opportunity, every educator and student has adequate access to a computing device

Executive Summary

The Structural Change Subcommittee met from March 2013 through August 2013 to make recommendations in the areas of structural change and technology in education. The subcommittee's focus was on improving how we educate Idaho students and how we pursue the goal of 60% of Idahoans age 24-35 having at least a one-year postsecondary degree or certificate. The following is our overall goal, the guiding principles, strategies, and recommendations for reaching this goal.

We believe that these 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.

The Goal

The goal of these structural change strategies is for Idaho to have a uniform and high-performing public K-12 education system, as measured by the State Board of Education (SBOE) goal of 60% of people entering the workforce having some post-secondary degree or certificate. This is required to prepare our students for the future.

Guiding Principles

In pursuit of strategies that would transform Idaho education to ultimately achieve the 60% goal, we settled on two guiding principles. As these shaped our thinking and helped focus the many ideas we explored, these principles are worth communicating.

Principle #1 **Significant structural change is absolutely necessary if the state is to achieve the 60% goal.**

There is an axiom that goes "the current [education] system is perfectly designed to produce the results we are currently getting." Today, Idaho's education system is perfectly designed to produce 39% of Idahoans (25-34 years of age) with at least a one-year degree or certificate.[1] Thus to achieve the 60% goal, we must make significant structural changes. Tactical and program-level changes might be necessary, but alone they will not be enough. For example, raising budgets by 15% across the board, if we could afford to do so, would certainly help restore the system to the pre-2009 state. Perhaps it would also allow us to add some new programs and/or grant staff a 5% raise. However, those measures, regardless of their individual merits, would hardly raise achievement from 35% to 60%.

Structural change requires changing the way people work today. It changes how decisions are made, resources such as time and budget are allocated, priorities are set, and people in the system view and approach their jobs.

Strategy #1 **High Expectations**

Research shows that achieving new levels of performance begins with setting high expectations. Perhaps the best illustration of this in education is a quote from former Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who in referring to some experiences during her time as the Provost of Stanford University said, "If you have low expectations of even the best students, they will live down to them."[2]

Expectations identify the gap that drives mastery and continuous improvement. So our first strategy is to set high expectations across the state, as a cornerstone of high-performance system.

Recommendation #1.1: Mastery Based System

We recommend the state shift to a system where students advance based upon content mastery, rather than seat time requirements. This may require a structural change to Idaho's funding formula and/or some financial incentive to school districts. We also recommend that mastery be measured against a high academic standards.

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[1] Idaho State Board of Education

[2] Education and National Security, Condoleezza Rice, 5th Annual Excellence in Action National Summit on Education Reform, November 27, 2012.

Currently, Idaho's education system focuses on how many instructional hours, also referred to as seat time, a student receives. Students are promoted from grade level to grade level based on age, regardless of whether they have mastered the content knowledge or standards at each grade level.

However, simply eliminating instructional time requirements is not enough. There must be benchmarks students must meet throughout their K-12 education, rather than one competency test at the end of their schooling. In the report *It's Not a Matter of Time*, the authors suggest a time-based system must be replaced with a competency-based system with the following components:

- "Students advance upon mastery.
- Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
- Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
- Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
- Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions."[3]

Instituting a mastery-based or competency-based system in Idaho may require a change to the public schools funding formula written in Idaho Code, which currently distributes funding to schools based on average daily attendance, and/or a financial incentive to school districts to promote students based on mastery.

As a Task Force, we strongly believe the classroom of the future will include more technology, fewer traditional textbooks, and more personalized/differentiated learning. The classroom of the future precipitates a mastery-based model where the focus is on outcomes, rather than inputs. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the state shift to a system where students advance based upon content mastery that is measured against high academic standards, which may require revising the public schools funding formula in Idaho Code and/or creating a financial incentive in addition to the public schools funding formula.

Recommendation #1.2: Idaho Core Standards

We strongly endorse the rigorous and successful implementation of the Idaho Core Standards as an essential component of high performing schools. Higher standards in all subject areas help raise student achievement among all students, including those performing below grade level.

The Idaho Core Standards are a higher standard—or expectation—of what a student should be able to know and do at each grade level.[4,5] Standards build upon each other to ensure a student has the knowledge and skills required to succeed after high school in post-secondary education or the workforce.

Research shows that when statewide systems adopt high standards, all students rise to the expectation, including students who struggled under the previously lower standards.[6] The

[3] It's Not a Matter of Time: Highlights from the 2011 Competency-Based Learning Summit, Chris Sturgis, Susan Patrick, and Linda Pittenger, iNACOL and CCSSO, July 2011.

[4] A Comparison of the Idaho English Language Arts Standards to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, Achieve, July 2010

[5] A Comparison of the Idaho's Mathematics Standards to the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics, Achieve, July 2010

[6] High Standards Help Struggling Students: New Evidence, Constance Clark and Peter W. Cookson Jr., Education Sector, November 2012

Idaho Core Standards are a major step in helping Idaho students achieve the goal of 60% of Idaho's population having some form of post-secondary degree or certificate by 2020.

Along with adoption, rigorous and successful implementation of the standards is critical. Without the necessary funding, professional development, time and resources required, teachers and principals will not be prepared to teach to the higher and more rigorous standards.

After an analysis of the adoption and methodology behind the Idaho Core Standards and ensuring the state has maintained its independence in its ability to create and adopt standards, curriculum, and assessment, the Task Force strongly endorses Idaho's decision to raise academic standards for all students by implementing Idaho's Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts. Rigorous and successful implementation of the Idaho Core Standards is an essential component to preparing Idaho's students to meet the Task Force goal.

Recommendation #1.3: Literacy Proficiency

We recommend students demonstrate mastery of literacy before moving on to significant content learning. Reading proficiency is a major benchmark in a student's education. Students must learn to read before they can read to learn content in other subject areas."

Another expectation we hold for students is reading proficiency. According to research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school dropout, which suppresses individual earning potential as well as the nation's competitiveness and general productivity."[7]

Knowing how to read proficiently enables a student to read and learn content in other subject areas. The Task Force recommends students demonstrate mastery of literacy before moving on to significant content learning.

We acknowledge that this recommendation and Recommendation 1.1 appear to be in conflict. Third grade is currently used as a reference; however, with a mastery-based system, grades will become irrelevant. What remains relevant is that reading proficiency is a prerequisite to moving on to mastery of other subject areas.

Recommendation #1.4: Advanced Opportunities

We recommend the state ensures that all students have access to advanced opportunities by expanding post-secondary offerings while a student is still in high school.

As we shift towards a mastery-based system of education, it necessitates that we provide opportunities for our advanced students who progress and master content more quickly.

Beyond necessity, advanced opportunities have also proven to be an effective strategy for raising college readiness rates among students. A study of dual enrollment in Texas found that "high school students who had completed a college course before graduation were nearly 50 percent more likely to earn a college degree from a Texas college within six years than students who had not participated in dual enrollment."[8]

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[7] Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010.

[8] Taking College Courses in High School: A Strategy for College Readiness, Ben Struhl and Joel Vargas, Jobs for the Future, October 2012.

Currently, there are a number of advanced opportunities programs in Idaho. The 8-in-6 program helps Idaho students complete 8 years of schoolwork (2 years of middle school, 4 years of high school, and 2 years of postsecondary or trade school) in just 6 years. Students accomplish this by taking online courses over the summer and by taking online overload courses during the school year.

The Dual Credit for Early Completers program allows students who have completed all their state-required high school graduation requirements early (with the exception of the senior project and the senior math requirement) to take up to 36 college or professional technical credits of dual credit courses, 12 Advanced Placement exams, or 12 College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams paid for by the state.

The Mastery Advancement Program gives students the opportunity to earn a scholarship for completing high school early.

In order to engage and retain our advanced students, the Task Force recommends the state expand upon current advanced opportunities and post-secondary offerings for all students while in high school.

Principle #2 **A foundation of high-performance schools is a high-performance work environment.**

Before we embark on selecting strategies, we must have a vision of the future education system that we desire and the type of system that would achieve the 60% goal. That vision assisted us in sorting through strategies and selecting focus areas.

The vision of a uniform, high-performing school system, across Idaho, must be rooted in creating a high-performance work environment in our schools. Scientific research shows that in complex work, such as educating students, there are three vital components to a high-performance environment: higher purpose, mastery, and autonomy.[9,10]

The higher purpose inherent in education is obvious.

In mastery, we are not speaking to a state of being, but rather to the continual pursuit of improvement and forward progress. Mastery in this form is addressed both in the area of professional development (the work of the Effective Teachers and Leaders Subcommittee) and in the structural changes to support continuous improvement, innovation, and a supporting governance structure.

Autonomy is perhaps the most challenging in light of our historic approach to public education. Simply put, autonomy is people's need to be empowered to take ownership for results and to have the flexibility to address challenges and local dynamics they face in pursuit of results for our students.

Our vision is a system that pushes decision making as close to the student and parents as possible and adapts to the needs of the student. Autonomy is vital to both teachers and administrators fulfilling their potential as educators. However, pure autonomy, without accountability for results, would be *laissez-faire* and certainly fail both the state's constitutional mandate, as well as the state's fiduciary

[9] The Puzzle of Motivation, Dan Pink, TED Talk, 2009.

[10] Policy Implications of Finland's Model for Teacher Preparation, Support, and Autonomy, Alison Henken, George Washington University.

responsibility with taxpayers' monies. Thus, the concept of autonomy must be wed to accountability for outcomes.

Strategy #2 Autonomy and Accountability

Autonomy is critical for two reasons. First, autonomy ignites empowerment, engagement, and ownership for results. Second, local circumstances vary greatly and change frequently, thus optimal decisions can only be derived from local knowledge of factors material to the decision. A pointed illustration of this was the Task Force's survey of best practices in some of Idaho's schools today. Without exception, these efforts were initiated not because of, but in spite of, state rules. State laws and rules are made in a slow and deliberate manner – this is simply the nature of the instruments in play. This and other outside factors diminish local accountability and detract from an agile, innovative, and continuously improving education system.

Historically, the state has exercised its authority and accountability for our education system via laws and rules that dictate and micro-manage how things are done and how money is spent. Certainly the Constitution and taxpayers' monies allow the state this authority. On the other hand, at the other extreme, tossing money over the wall and walking away is not in keeping with the expectations of the citizens of the state. The answer to this dilemma lies in outcomes-based accountability. Plainly put, the state should set goals for the public education system, allocate monies, and then hold local leadership accountable for progress against those goals. This meets the financial stewardship obligation, the constitutional mandate, and the moral obligation of educating our children to the best of our ability.

Recommendation #2.1: Revamp the State's Accountability Structure Involving Schools

We recommend the state revamp the accountability structure involving schools. The existing structure that relies on compliance mandates should be replaced with a system that is based on accountability for student outcomes.
The state has constitutional and financial authority and mandates to ensure a quality and uniform education.

Historically this has been executed primarily through laws and rules that dictate how things are done locally, while seemingly little effort has been invested in setting goals, establishing expected outcomes, adapting to local factors, and/or effectively responding should a district continually struggle. This situation must be revamped.

The Task Force recommends the state revamp the accountability structure involving schools. The existing structure that relies on compliance mandates should be replaced with a system that is based on accountability for student outcomes.

The revamped accountability structure should exhibit the following characteristics:

1. An annual rhythm, in support of the continuous improvement aim.
2. The accountability model centers on the district strategic plan, as outlined in Recommendation #2.3.
3. The annual cycle should begin with the state publishing an "Annual Planning Memo" that outlines key themes, templates, and items of interest for the districts in their planning process. This will set expectations and provide a common template to streamline the planning process for everyone.
4. Each district builds their own strategic plan, founded on improvements in student outcomes, and identifying the key focus areas for that district (as is outlined in #2.3).
5. At year end, each district produces their Annual Status Report. The report outlines progress towards their strategic plan in student outcomes, achievements, struggles, and key lessons learned from the prior year.
6. Should districts be underperforming and continually struggling to make forward progress, the local board and state board should collaborate, and if necessary, make

leadership changes. This is a dual accountability structure – as is mandated by the constitution and taxpayers' monies, and the children who are being underserved by the district leadership.

In revamping the accountability structure, several concepts should be avoided as they are counterproductive to the local district and the students in that district. First, accountability from the state level should focus on and stop at the superintendent level. The state is not in a position to "reach around" and meddle in manners lower than that; these should be the domain of local leadership. Second, accountability reinforced by withholding resources from the district is counterproductive and must be avoided.

Recommendation #2.2: Empower Autonomy by Removing Constraints

We recommend the Governor's Office, State Board of Education, and State Department of Education evaluate existing education laws and administrative rules and work with the Legislature to remove those which impede local autonomy, flexibility to adapt to local circumstances, and the ability of the schools to be agile, adaptive, innovative, and drive continuous improvement.

This recommendation is one of "addition by subtraction." The state should meticulously comb through the existing administrative rule and prune any rules that dictate <u>how</u> the schools are run, with a focus on things that limit the flexibility, decision making, and agility of schools to continually adapt and improve.

Additionally, it may be necessary to put rules in place that prevent other outside influences from limiting the autonomy in the schools. Who places those restrictions is irrelevant, they have the same corrosive effect. As long as the schools are operating within the laws, and in pursuit of the state's higher goals and purposes, administrators and teachers should be allowed to "figure it out" at a local level.

Recommendation #2.3: Annual Strategic Planning, Assessment, and Continuous Focus on Improvement

We recommend each district be required to have a strategic plan (and to renew it annually) that identifies and focuses district-wide continuous improvement towards statewide goals. Both the local board and the state should provide oversight to ensure that the plan is appropriate to local circumstances and aligns to and supports the state's goals. The plan forms the basis from which accountability will be structured and the superintendent will be evaluated.

The Task Force recommends each district be required to have a strategic plan (and to renew it annually) that identifies and focuses district-wide continuous improvement towards statewide goals. Both the local board and the state should provide oversight to ensure that the plan is appropriate to local circumstances and aligns to and supports the state's goals. The plan forms the basis from which accountability will be structured and the superintendent will be evaluated.

The plan must address key strategic areas:

a. The plan must be data driven, specifically in student outcomes, and outline current strengths and key areas for improvement.
b. The plan must set clear, measureable targets, based on student outcomes – both long term and short term.
c. The plan must define focus areas for improvement.
d. The plan must address specific local plans for technology, innovation, and collaboration.
e. The plan must specify plans for professional development of staff.
f. The plan must encourage community and parent engagement.

g. The plan must describe high-level budget priorities.

The completed strategic plan is submitted to the state for review. Target assessment and best practices are reviewed. The targets should be aggressive, but achievable. Any requested changes by the state are negotiated between the local leadership and the state.

Strategy #3 Innovation and Collaboration

Core to how our schools continually transform themselves in pursuit of the 60% goal are the two strategies of innovation and collaboration. It should be the norm that schools are embracing new ideas, new technologies, sharing best practices, and continually improving.

These strategies, by there their nature, cannot be initiated from the statehouse down. These must be initiated and driven locally, as the strategies require agility, engagement, and continual small changes that are tested, proven out, and shared. The cumulative effects, over time and across the state, will add up to big breakthroughs. Additionally, collaboration is critical as it provides the support, the diversity of perspective, and the ability for good ideas to spread virally and be further enhanced. Technology is obviously a vital infrastructure that underlies these strategies, especially in our geographically scattered and rural state.

The state plays a vital role in these strategies in providing the infrastructure, ecosystem, and incentives in support of local schools in the pursuit of these strategies. Additionally, the state's role in supporting the innovation and collaboration strategies also coalesces with Strategy #2 and the need for removing barriers and providing accountability structure that secures commitment to continual improvement.

Recommendation #3.1: Job-Embedded Collaboration/Professional Development Time

Teacher effectiveness is paramount to student success, and professional development is paramount to teacher effectiveness. We recommend structural changes to allow for job-embedded collaboration time. Time to collaborate is critical to effective teaching and implementation of higher standards and technology. Professional development must be regularly scheduled and ongoing.

Teacher effectiveness is paramount to student success and professional development and collaboration is paramount to teacher effectiveness. However, time is a major obstacle in teachers being able to collaborate. Short periods of sporadic professional development are no longer sufficient. Professional development must be of substantial time and delivered regularly (i.e. weekly or monthly).

State instructional time requirements are also an obstacle to incorporating collaboration time. However, a shift to a mastery-based model, as recommended earlier in this document, would render minimum instructional hours irrelevant. Instead, the focus would be on results, and collaboration time would be structured toward attaining those results.

The Task Force recommends structural changes to allow for job-embedded collaboration time. Time to collaborate is critical to effective teaching and implementation of both higher standards and technology. Professional development must be regularly scheduled and ongoing.

Recommendation #3.2: Statewide Electronic Collaboration System

We recommend that a statewide electronic collaboration system be adopted for educators to share ideas and resources across the state.

The same technology innovations and tools that will open learning opportunities to students will also open collaborative opportunities for teachers. Educator collaboration must not be

limited within the school or district. Through the use of technology, teachers will be able to connect virtually, create learning communities, and share resources no matter their geographic location. The Task Force recommends that a statewide electronic collaboration system be adopted for educators to share best practices and resources across the state.

Recommendation #3.3: High Speed Bandwidth and Wireless Infrastructure

We recommend the state expand the existing high speed bandwidth infrastructure to ensure every school (high school, middle school, and elementary school) has the bandwidth and wireless infrastructure necessary for simultaneous equal access and opportunity. This will require ongoing funding for the repair and replenishment of equipment.

The benefits of technology in education are abounding; however, classroom technology is not innovative in and of itself. What is innovative is the teacher's ability to harness the technology as a tool or resource. In order to promote the use of technology in the classroom, the state must provide an infrastructure that enables schools to effectively implement technology and best practices associated with technology.

Currently, the Idaho Education Network (IEN) connects every public high school with high speed bandwidth. In future phases, the IEN plans to expand the bandwidth infrastructure to cover schools serving students below grade 9. The bandwidth is managed so that when a school district approaches its threshold, the bandwidth is increased.

During 2013, the Idaho Legislature restored funding for a wireless environment in each public school serving high school grades.[11] The State Department of Education (SDE) awarded a contract for a wireless managed service. This wireless infrastructure will be an extension of the IEN broadband system. School districts that have chosen to opt in will receive the wireless service during the 2013-2014 school year.

The Task Force recommends the state expand the existing high-speed bandwidth infrastructure to ensure every school (high school, middle school, and elementary school) has the bandwidth and wireless infrastructure necessary to create equal access and opportunity for all students. This will require ongoing funding for the repair and replenishment of equipment.

Recommendation #3.4: Educator and Student Computing Devices

We recommend that every educator and student have adequate access to a computing device to support equal access and opportunity. Educator professional development is critical to the effective implementation of technology.

Technology infrastructure does not stop at bandwidth and high-speed infrastructure. In order to create a uniform system of education as the Idaho Constitution requires[12], connectivity must be down to the individual student. Equal access and opportunity for all students, no matter where they live in Idaho, requires bandwidth, wireless technology, and a device.

One of the major findings in Project RED[13], a study of impact of educational technology in nearly 1,000 schools, was that lower student-computer ratios improve outcomes. In schools where the student-computer ratio was higher than 1:1, there were larger percentage gaps between expected and actual student use of technology tools. Additionally students in

[11] Senate Bill 1200

[12] Constitution of the State of Idaho, Article IX Education and School Lands, Section 1.

[13] Project RED, The Technology Factor: Nine Keys to Student Achievement and Cost-Effectiveness, The Greaves Group, The Hayes Connection, One-to-One Institute, 2010.

schools with 1:1 ratios had more control over their learning, as opposed to students who had infrequent access to a variety of devices.

Another major finding in Project RED was that teacher professional learning and collaboration (at least monthly) is one of the strongest predictors of implementation success. According to the report, "Teachers must continually hone their ability to create and improve the 21st century computer-enhanced learning environment. Professional learning is essential for their growth in effectively integrating education technology."

Furthermore, educational technology is not at its apex. We expect technology to continue to develop and expand. This will require the education system to embrace new and changing technology over time in a number of ways. One of the main obstacles school districts face in implementing technology is dedicated funding. There is a level of annual funding required to maintain and replace equipment, as well as provide professional development around effective integration of technology.

The Task Force recommends that every educator and student have adequate access to a computing device to support equal access and opportunity. Educator professional development is critical to the effective implementation of technology.