

August 20, 2003

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ADDRESSES PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

(Boise) In a move to establish parity funding for children enrolled in Idaho's public charter schools, the Idaho State Board of Education passed three motions in their recent Board meeting that will have the effect of raising the per child allotment for students enrolled in distance learning programs.

Prior to the new Board policies, funding for approved distance learning programs, delivered through the state's public schools, was approximately half the traditional public charter school allotment per student. State Board Chairman Blake Hall said three areas of policy were addressed in order to restore balance to the public charter school funding formula. Reforms were made in the areas of average daily attendance, equity funding, and federal funds.

"The motions made at the Idaho Falls State Board of Education meeting brought the funding formula for public charter schools into balance and will ensure a fair allotment of public school dollars for each student," said Chairman Hall. Hall instructed State Superintendent Marilyn Howard to implement the new policies effective for the 2003-2004 school year.

Board member and charter school subcommittee chairman Laird Stone pointed out that new education technologies, such as distance learning, provide opportunities to enhance student achievement throughout the state. Distance learning offers numerous options to reach out to students, especially in the more rural areas of Idaho.

As a result of the charter school subcommittee findings, Mr. Stone proposed the following motions. The first two motions passed on 7-1 votes, and the funding review passed unanimously on an 8-0 vote.

The motions follow:

Average Daily Attendance

Idaho Code 33-1002(5) Daily Average Attendance provides that "the State Board of Education shall establish rules setting for the procedure to determine average daily attendance..."

IDAPA 08.02.01.250.06 Average Daily Attendance. "In a given school year, the average daily attendance for a given school is the aggregate days attendance divided by the number of days school was actually in session."

Idaho Code Section 33-1003"(c) provides a special application of student attendance in distance learning programs or individualized computer education programs by providing the consideration of a student's documented contact hours on a schedule different than standard school schedules.

Students obtaining their education by virtue of distance learning programs actually control the amount of days their distance learning school is in session.

There is no section of code containing any provisions requiring the calculation of student attendance time by a Monday through Friday weekly recording.

Based on these points, in order to address the flexibility that is required by current technology I make the following motion:

Motion One:

To direct staff to prepare a written interpretation of IDAPA 08.02.01.250 dealing with average daily attendance that student attendance hours for an approved distance based learning program or individualized computer education program be based upon a 24/7 calendar, with student's documented contact hours to accumulate and carryover up to the maximum number of hours of required instructional time annually for each defined category. (Motion Passed 7-1)

Equity Funding

Idaho Code 33-5210(1) states that all public charter schools are under the general supervision of the state board.

Idaho Code 33-105 states that "the state board shall have the power to make rules for its own governance and the governance of its executive departments and offices..."

Idaho Code 33-1009 provides that the state board is responsible for "Payments of the state general accounts...and payments of monies other than the state general account appropriation that accrue to the public school income fund..."

Current Idaho Code directing the funding of public schools is based on legislative intent that educational funding should follow the child. In this way equity and fairness can best be maintained for institutions delivering education to Idaho's children particularly in light of districts' open enrollment policies and delivery of education by non-traditional means.

Motion Two:

I move that, beginning with the 2003-04 school years, to the extent it is not inconsistent with state or federal law or our federal consent decree, the allocation of both state and federal funds be administered so that funding follows students. Funding will be based on average district per-pupil budgeted expenditure of the previous year for multi-district public charters and non-resident students. Funds come from the district of student's residence. The SDE will deduct the funds for public charter schools from the allocation to the resident districts and send them directly to the public charter school where the students are enrolled. Public charters may receive additional funding for special needs students if the State and Federal requirements for such funds are fulfilled. (Motion Passed 7-1)

IDVA has raised questions with the State Department of Education regarding the amount and types of federal funds that it has received. In reviewing their concerns the core question is whether the computations or transmittals of those funds were in error.

I.C. Section 33-1009(5) allows a review of apportionments made to any school district to determine if an error was made in computation or transmittal of funds. IDVA is a school that receives funds through a district and believes that the funds sent to the district to be passed to them was not computed correctly.

Motion Three:

To direct staff to review the distribution of Federal funds to determine if the Public Charter Schools have or have not received their proper allotment of funds, and then report to the board on findings at the October meeting. (Motion Passed 8-0)