

November 5, 2003

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION VOTES ON RULES FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS, GRADUATION STANDARDS

Boise - During a Special Meeting on Tuesday, the State Board of Education took action on several regulations designed to improve educational opportunities for Idaho students. The State Board has the constitutional and statutory authority to guide education policy in Idaho. Rules reviewed at the meeting focused on critical issues including, quality, accountability, and school choice for families.

Board Chairman Blake Hall of Idaho Falls said, "This special meeting was called to address pressing educational needs effecting Idaho's public schools. The rules approved by the Board further the Board's important work in providing accountability in our educational system and assuring a high quality education for every Idaho public school student." Changes to existing rules were approved for charter schools, accountability standards, and teacher certification, including alternative routes to certification. The rules will now be forwarded to the Legislature for approval in the 2004 Session.

Charter Schools Temporary Rules - 08.02.04 Approved 7 to 1

The State Board is responsible for the oversight of all Idaho public schools, including public charter schools. Idaho's charter school rule was adopted by the Legislature in 1998 in an effort to provide parents more education choices for their children. Included in existing rule is a provision that the state board serves as the appeal body in the charter school application process. The rule directs that the state board will approve a charter if it determines that the charter application was not appropriately considered or was treated in an arbitrary manner by the local school board. In October of this year, the Board ruled affirmatively on the appeal of the Nampa II Charter School and approved the Nampa II Charter to operate as an Idaho public school. In approving this charter, the Board recognized the need for clarifying the rules relating to charter schools. The rule changes address:

- 1) Establishing a consistent process for the review and approval of public charter schools as well as a time-line for the approval process,
- 2) Limiting the number of founders' children who can automatically attend a charter school to not exceed 10% of that school's total enrollment,
- 3) Clarifying and establishing the appeals process,
- 4) Allowing the Board to delegate oversight of Board approved schools to an executive agency,
- 5) Eliminating the liability to local districts resulting from a public charter's approval by the Board, and
- 6) Establishing a process for Multi-District Public Charter Schools.

Prior to the Tuesday meeting, the Board received over 300 letters and e-mails from parents in all geographic regions of Idaho, indicating their support for the local control and parental choice that is provided by charter schools. Comments from parents include strong support for innovative teaching methods offered through public charter schools. These comments encouraged establishing a clear set of regulations to govern the approval of public charter schools in order to eliminate confusion for existing and new charter schools.

Proposed Rules: Rules Governing Thoroughness (Accountability) 08.02.03 Approved 7 to 1

Achievement and accountability standards have been adopted for all Idaho public schools. The 1997 Idaho Legislature directed the Board of Education to embark on the creation of uniform education standards and a statewide accountability plan. In response to this legislative mandate, a comprehensive assessment program was put in place in 2001. A comprehensive accountability plan that incorporates federal requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education earlier this year. In addition to addressing federal requirements, the plan includes a graduation requirement that all students must demonstrate proficiency in subject areas tested by the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT).

"It is the hope of all parents that our children graduate from high school with life skills and preparedness for the workplace. The Board is committed to providing for achievement standards in the process of educating our children, and it is a responsibility we don't take lightly," said Karen McGee, Board Member.

In response to comments that some parents and students may fear this new requirement, Board Member Laird Stone said, "I did not teach my children to be afraid of using the computer because it intimidated me - I helped them develop the confidence they needed to succeed. We must not convey the impression that we think they will fail; instead we must instill the expectation that they can and will succeed."

The Board voted to phase in the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) as a graduation requirement over a period of three years beginning in 2006. This allows time to refine the ISAT and assure the test provides a valid measure of Idaho achievement standards. As a result, educators will be able to identify problem areas a student may be experiencing in a particular subject and plan for appropriate remediation. The phased in approach for the graduation requirement allows for exemptions in 2006, fewer exemptions in 2007, and requires full implementation in 2008. This approach provides time to address concerns brought forward in the public hearings regarding high-risk populations.

Proposed Rules: Alternative Routes to Certification (MOST) 08.02.02.304 Approved 7-1

American Board Certification for Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) Approved 7-1

Idaho's Maximizing Opportunities for Students and Teachers (MOST) committee made recommendations to the Board creating three alternative routes to teacher certification and identifying an efficient process of certification. These recommendations comply with the No Child Left Behind Act requirements for "Highly Qualified Teachers." To comply with No Child Left Behind, Idaho schools must assure that a "Highly Qualified Teacher" is in the classroom in every core academic area by 2005-2006. Core academic areas include English, reading and language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.

The board also approved an online alternate route to certification. The American Board Certification (ABC) process provides a vehicle for individuals who already have a college degree to obtain an Idaho teaching credential without going through a traditional college program. The program is aimed at individuals who have career experience and training that is directly applicable to the classroom. The American Board Certification process includes a self-assessment, an advisor who will provide the candidate with support and advice to complete the certification process, online preparation materials, and detailed score results. American Board certified teachers will be part of an ongoing longitudinal study that will assess teacher retention rates and measure American Board Certified teachers' impact on student learning. The ABC process has been approved by the US Department of Education as a valid process that meets all requirements for certifying highly qualified teachers under No Child Left Behind.