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BOARD RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

Moscow - The State Board of Education accepted 26 sweeping recommendations aimed at improving academic achievement for students struggling to learn and speak English.

After several years of Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) results showing LEP students struggling to meet basic standards, the State Board of Education created a subcommittee to evaluate the status of limited English proficiency (LEP) programs in Idaho. The committee met over an 18-month period of time during which it identified gaps, evaluated deficiencies, and developed a comprehensive report with a set of recommendations the Board reviewed today.

LEP students are defined as students who do not speak English fluently. Idaho is home to close to 21,000 limited English proficient students. That number is expected to double in the next 10 years. While the large percentage of this population is of Hispanic origin, more than 80 languages are spoken in Idaho schools.

"These recommendations include significant changes on every level of LEP education. Improving academic achievement for LEP students must be a priority on every level. More training is needed for current as well as future teachers regarding the needs of these students," said chair of the committee and State Board member Blake Hall. "The Board is committed to seeing these recommendations through to implementation at the school, district and state level. The goal of this subcommittee and the recommendations is to ensure a greater a level of success for these important students."

The report recommended specific areas for improvement of LEP programs including recommendations for districts and schools, college and university teacher preparation programs and the state as a whole.

Current teacher training: The report recommends teachers, teacher's aides, and staff who work with LEP students receive a minimum of eight hours or one day of in-service training addressing ways to meet the academic and cultural needs of LEP students. The committee also recommends that districts encourage teachers and administrators who interact with one or more LEP students to take 30 in-service hours or three credit hours of training to improve their ability to meet the needs of LEP students.

Colleges/universities: The committee identified through surveys and discussions with teachers that there is a lack of instruction for teachers and administrators regarding the requirements of federal programs and preparation for providing standards-based education. It was recommended colleges

should offer LEP methodology classes to prepare all teachers to teach LEP students. The committee also recommends the Colleges of Education in Idaho perform a self-evaluation of their education programs. Subsequently, institutions of higher education would develop a plan and realign curriculum to educate teachers who will teach LEP students.

Parental Involvement: Recognizing parental involvement is essential for student achievement, the Board suggests that districts with at least five percent of LEP students develop a parent advisory council that is representative of the LEP student demographics in the district.

The recommendations and final report that was presented today concludes the work of the LEP subcommittee. However, educators, advocacy groups and policy makers will be brought together as specific needs arise, as identified in the report. The subcommittee included Board members Blake Hall, Paul Agidius, Marilyn Howard and Rod Lewis, as well as advocacy groups, educators, business owners, parents and a legislator.