

August 10, 2005

BOARD MEETS THURSDAY

CONSIDERS HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN PACKAGE

COEUR D'ALENE -- The State Board of Education will consider changing academic requirements for middle and high school students at its meeting in Coeur d'Alene Thursday, August 11.

The meeting will begin at 8 a.m. at North Idaho College in the Edminster Student Union Building in the Lake Coeur d'Alene Room.

This is the first reading of rule and policy changes designed to increase the rigor of middle and high school. Statistics show that while Idaho has one of the highest high school graduation rates in the United States, it has one of the lowest college attendance and graduation rates. In October 2004, State Board of Education President Rod Lewis announced the formation of an Accelerated Learning Taskforce to analyze the need to strengthen the high school curriculum and to better prepare students to continue their education or enter the workforce. Taskforce members included Board members, curriculum directors, a high school principal, teachers and representatives from higher education.

The changes to graduation rules would begin with the class of 2012. The taskforce recommendations include:

- Increase the number required math credits from four to eight and science credits from four to six.
- Require a postsecondary readiness plan by the end of 6th grade. Students would create a plan with the assistance of a counselor and their parents to take classes that relate to their interests and educational goals after high school. The plan can be changed to accommodate new interests and career goals.
- Add seven "career focus" credits to high school. Career focus credits would relate to the students postsecondary readiness plan and could include subjects like art, music, debate, drama, computer science, etc.
- Require students to complete a senior project and take a college readiness exam by the end of 11th grade.
- Create a cumulative "C" average requirement for middle school students in math, science, language arts and social studies.
- Ensure every Idaho high school offers advance opportunities for students like Advanced Placement, international baccalaureate, and dual college, high school enrollment.
- Require successful completion of pre-algebra before entering 9th grade.

Once the Board approves the proposed rule changes, the public will have the opportunity to comment. The rules and public comment will be reviewed again by the Board in November. The pending rules will go before the Legislature in January.

On the higher education agenda, the Board will also consider:

- Foundation funded supplements to presidential salaries. The Board approved the base salaries which are funded by state dollars at the June board meeting in Moscow.
- A contract extension for the Head Woman's Volleyball Coach at the University of Idaho.
- Fiscal Year 2007 line item and capital budget requests for the institutions and agencies the Board oversees.

On the K-12 agenda:

- The Board will be given a presentation on the data collection system "Just for Kids."
- The Board will review the work of the Performance Based Compensation Committee. The Committee, made up of teachers, legislators, superintendent, principal, school board member, and business representative, researched multiple performance based compensation systems for the last year. The committee will recommend the Board approve a pilot variable pay system that would supplement the state salary schedule. Teachers and administrators would be rewarded based on student achievement, collaboration, and professional development opportunities. If the Board approves the pilot plan the committee will approach a handful of districts to pilot the variable plan. Districts have the option of adding more criteria to their plans. The Committee will also continue to work on a base salary pay for performance system.