

November 2, 2005

TASKFORCE REVISES HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN PLAN

BOISE -After reviewing public comments and meeting with education stakeholders, the Accelerated Learning Taskforce, made significant modifications to Idaho's plan to redesign high schools and middle schools.

The taskforce will present those changes to the State Board of Education November 16 during a special meeting in Boise for final review of the proposed rule. Any rule changes must be approved by the Legislature.

The office of the State Board of Education will hold a telephone news conference to discuss the changes to the plan Thursday, November 3, at 2:30 p.m. MST. Reporters please call 1-888-476-3762 and enter 289065.

"The Board received hundreds of comments on the high school proposal," said Sue Thilo, State Board of Education member and Chair of the Accelerated Learning Taskforce. "During the last month, we've listened and reviewed the comments carefully. We've also met with stakeholders about the proposal to determine the best way to proceed. The revised plan will increase rigor in key subjects in our schools, ensuring every year in high school counts. It also addresses the significant concerns that we heard from the public."

The revised high school redesign plan includes:

- Increasing statewide graduation requirements to four years (eight credits) of math. Currently Idaho students are only required by the state to take two years (four credits) of math. The new proposal would specify all students take Algebra I and Geometry. Of the remaining four credits, two credits must include a course in advanced math such as Algebra II or an alternative advanced math class offered by the local school district. Students can opt-out of the requirement to take advanced math but are still required to take a math course. The remaining two credits of math are the student's choice. The requirements begin with the class of 2012.
- Increasing statewide science graduation requirements to three years (six credits). Currently Idaho students are only required to take two years (four credits) of science. Of the six credits of science, four credits must be a "lab" based science as explained with additional language in the rule. The requirement begins with the class of 2012.
- Offering advanced opportunities. Schools would be required to provide advanced academic opportunities or provide opportunities for students to take courses at a post-secondary campus. Advanced opportunities include: Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual-credit for high school students to take college level classes, Tech-Prep. The requirement begins in 2007.
- Require students to complete a senior project. Students would be required to complete a senior project that includes a research paper and oral presentation. Districts would have discretion as to how the project is structured. The requirement begins with the class of 2012.
- Require students to take a college entrance examination like ACT, SAT or COMPASS by the end of their 11 th grade year. Students are not required to receive a particular score. The requirement begins with the class of 2012.

- Require students to take Pre-Algebra before entering the 9 th grade. The requirement begins with the class of 2012.

"Whether a student is planning to attend college or entering the workforce we want to enable that student to be prepared for her/his future. These recommendations focus on helping our students be 'ready' for the next step after high school," said Rod Lewis, President of the State Board of Education. "By putting more emphasis on core subjects such as math and science, we are hoping to provide the foundation for additional opportunities for our students."

The taskforce removed the following:

- Career focused electives. The original plan called for students to designate eight career focused electives.
- C-Average in middle school. According to the original plan students would need a C-average in core classes before entering 9 th grade.
- Post-Secondary Readiness Plan. Currently students are required to do a learning plan in the 8 th grade. The original proposal required 6 th graders to begin the learning plan.

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, State Department of Education officials, high school administrators, teachers, representatives from higher education, and the Governor's office. The taskforce met for seven months evaluating international statistics, national trends, current requirements in other states, and Idaho data. Taskforce members presented the changes to the Board at the August board meeting where Board members gave their initial approval. The Board also held six public hearings throughout the state to gather feedback as well as receiving written comments.