

November 16, 2005

BOARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES REVISED HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE

BOISE -State Board of Education members unanimously approved changes to increase high school graduation requirements beginning with the class of 2012.

The Future is Now! high school redesign initiative will now go before the Legislature in January 2006. Either the House or Senate Education Committees must approve the graduation rules.

The new graduation rules require students to take a college entrance exam during their junior year, complete a senior project and take more math and science classes in high school. Current state requirements only call for students to take two years of math and two years of science to graduate from high school. The Board agreed to extend for one additional year the phase in period for its new math requirements. Under the Board's proposed rules, students graduating in 2012 will be required to complete three years of math and three years of science. Students graduating in 2013 will be required to complete four years of math and three years of science. The Board's determination was based on comments from districts requesting additional time to develop the needed resources for the new math requirement. This phased in approach also allows districts to develop alternative accelerated math courses allowed under the rules.

"We must do more to prepare our students for life after high school," said Sue Thilo, State Board of Education member. "These recommendations are aimed at restoring the value of the high school diploma, while engaging students throughout their senior year."

The Board also reviewed preliminary cost figures associated with the proposal. Board members indicated they plan to ask the Legislature for the funding necessary to meet the requirements. Cost estimates presented to the Board included teacher training, student fees for college entrance exams and senior projects, and additional math and science teachers. Cost estimates also included amounts dedicated to the Idaho Digital Learning Academy to facilitate accelerated learning opportunities. The preliminary cost estimates include a gradual increase in funding: \$1.4 million for FY 2007, \$1 million for FY 2008, \$3.9 million for FY 2009, \$6.8 million for FY 2010, \$11.5 million for FY 2011, \$14.8 million for FY 2012, and \$17.1 million for FY 2013.

"We applaud the work and efforts of the Accelerated Learning Taskforce in bringing forward their proposal today," said Rod Lewis, President of the State Board of Education. "These recommendations will serve as a strong foundation in preparing our students for post secondary education or entry into the workforce."

In October 2004, 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, professional-technical educators, and the Governor's office. The taskforce met for seven months evaluating international statistics, national trends, current requirements in other states, and Idaho educational data. Taskforce members presented the rule 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 on the proposal. Prior to submitting the revised rules to the Board, the Taskforce eliminated the following provisions: a cumulative C average for middle school students, 6th grade post secondary readiness plan, and earmarking electives as career focused. The Board's vote today signaled the Board's final approval before sending the rule to the Legislature.

The Board acted on proposed physical education requirements for K-12. Board members indicated their support for more physical education in public schools. However, the rule was tabled to address specific issues raised by the Board. The Board expressed concerns over cost and capacity issues at the elementary school level and requested further discussion regarding the ability of students involved in extra curricular activities to qualify under the new physical education requirements.