

**October 4, 2006**

## **HEARING DATE SET FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS PROPOSAL**

The State Board of Education will hold "open house" style public hearings on October 17, 2006 to gather feedback on raising high school graduation requirements.

Hearings will be held in five Idaho communities from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Constituents can offer written or verbal comments during the hearing, and ask questions about the proposal.

Dwight Johnson, Executive Director of the State Board, said the hearings are meant to gather feedback, but also to answer questions. "The hearings will be open house style, which means constituents can attend any time from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. to ask questions, get more information, and offer their feedback on the proposal," said Johnson.

The hearing schedule is set as follows:

- Blackfoot: Blackfoot School District, Board Room, 270 E Bridge Street.
- Boise: Boise State University, Student Union Building, Room Hatch A, 1910 University Drive;
- Coeur d' Alene: North Idaho College, Driftwood Bldg, Bay Room, 1000 W Garden Avenue;
- Moscow: University of Idaho, JA Albertson Building, Michael Boardroom (Room 311), 645 W Pullman Highway;
- Twin Falls: College of Southern Idaho, Student Union Building, Room 248, 315 Falls Avenue.

The Board will also accept written comments until October 25, 2006. Comments can be emailed to [board@osbe.idaho.gov](mailto:board@osbe.idaho.gov) or mailed to State Board of Education, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0037. Written comments receive the same consideration as verbal comments offered at public hearings.

The State Board of Education, which is responsible to set statewide graduation requirements, unanimously voted at its August Board meeting to raise Idaho's graduation requirements to be more competitive with other states' requirements, align high school requirements with university and college entrance requirements, reduce college remediation rates, make the senior year more meaningful, and help students be better prepared for the challenges of the 21st century workplace.

Beginning with the class of 2013, the plan requires students to complete three years of science and three years of math, with at least one of the math classes taken in the student's senior year. Students would also be required to take algebra I and geometry or classes that meet those standards.

Idaho has one of the lowest graduation requirements in math and science in the country. Current state requirements only require students to take two years of math and two years of science, versus four

years of English and three years of social studies and fine arts. English is the only course a student must take all four years of high school.

The Board included language in the rule to ensure students could meet math and science requirements by mastering standards in other courses including professional technical classes or other standards-based classes developed by districts.

While the state would require students to take an additional math and science course, the Board also intends to recommend incentives to reward districts who raise their requirements to four years of math and another incentive for districts to require students to meet algebra II standards. The Board will develop a comprehensive implementation plan which will include funding recommendations, as well as strategies to attract more math and science teachers, improve math curriculum, offer additional professional development for elementary and middle school teachers, and offer scholarships for students.

Students would also be required to take a state funded college entrance exam either the ACT, SAT, or Compass. Several other states including Wyoming, Illinois and Colorado require students to take the exam. The plan incorporates greater opportunity for students to take advanced classes and requires students to do a senior project including an oral and written component. Districts would have the flexibility to determine how to implement the project.

More than 10 states have raised their requirements in the past 12 months including Utah, Texas, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio.

Raising graduation requirements has been a top issue for the Board for two years. The Board revealed an extensive high school redesign plan in August 2005, but pulled back on the plan before forwarding it to the Legislature in January 2006.

During June and July, the Board hosted 13 roundtables statewide from Sandpoint to Soda Springs to gather feedback on ways to improve education. More than 450 people attended the forums, including superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, Legislators, community leaders, and business and higher education representatives. The new proposal reflects many of the suggestions given at the feedback forums.

After the public comment period closes, the Board will meet for a special board meeting in November to consider changes and forward the final rule onto the Legislature. Either the House or Senate Education Committee must approve the rule.

For more information on the proposal to raise graduation rates, visit <http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov> to read the proposed rule changes, background material, how Idaho's requirements stack up compared to other states, and view a side-by-side comparison of what the requirements are now and how they would change.