



**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
April 27, 2020
Office of the State Board of Education**

A special meeting of the Idaho State Board of Education was held via Zoom teleconference on Monday, April 27, 2020. At this time, the Office of the State Board of Education is closed to the public in accordance with Governor Little's Stay at Home Order issued March 25, 2020 in response to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Board President Debbie Critchfield presided and called the meeting to order at 3:00pm (MST). A roll call of members was taken.

Present

Debbie Critchfield, President
Dr. David Hill, Vice President
Andrew Scoggin, Secretary
Emma Atchley

Dr. Linda Clark
Shawn Keough
Kurt Liebich
Sherri Ybarra, State Superintendent

Monday, April 27, 2020, 3:00 p.m. (MST)

BOARDWORK

1. Public Education – Issues related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

CARES Act Funding Update

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

Matt Freeman, Executive Director, shared an update regarding the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund that will be distributed as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The US Department of Education has released the second installment of funds for public institutions of higher education, which can be used to cover any costs relating to changes in instruction or interruptions in campus services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These expenses can include reimbursements to institutions who have already distributed prorated refunds for housing and dining, as well as hardware or software providing internet connectivity or technology access for students. Mr. Freeman stated that institutions must apply for and distribute the first installment of funds, which is intended to be allocated directly to students, before they are able to apply for and receive the second installment of funds. The second

installment of funds is approximately \$18 million, and Governor Little has approved institutions to apply for this portion of funding.

Elementary and Secondary Education Relief Fund

Mr. Freeman also shared that the US Department of Education has released the application for the Elementary and Secondary Education Relief Fund. The State Education Agency (SEA) is charged with allocating funds to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) based on Title I fund distributions for FY2019. 90% of the funds must be distributed to LEAs for the purpose of providing emergency relief funds to allow LEAs to continue to provide education services, such as remote learning opportunities, and to develop and implement plans for returning to normal operations following the COVID-19 pandemic. The remaining funds can be used by the SEA to address issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, and one-half of 1% of the total grant can be utilized for administrative costs. Idaho will receive approximately \$47.8 million, with approximately \$43 million being distributed to the LEAs and approximately \$4.8 million in reserve for the SEA. Approximately \$239,000 can be used for administrative costs.

Superintendent Ybarra shared that the US Department of Education has committed to approving applications and making funds available within 3 days. She reiterated that the funds will be distributed to the districts and charters based on their Title I fund distribution for FY2019, and discussed that the allocations will range from \$14,000-\$3 million depending on the size of the district or charter. The average allocation will be approximately \$289,055, and the State Department of Education is working to develop and application for districts and charters which will allow for descriptions of how they plan to utilize the funds. Additionally, the SDE has sent out a survey to the districts and charters to gauge other areas where they may need support.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

Postsecondary Education Update

Dani Dunstan, Chief of Staff to the President at Idaho State University, provided an update on the collaboration that is occurring between representatives of Idaho's public institutions of higher education. The conference calls for this group have transitioned to a weekly schedule. Ms. Dunstan shared that the focus of the calls is now on student success, effective communication, and recovery preparedness. The institutions are also working to finalize allocation methodology for CARES Act funding, and are continuing to monitor financial challenges for this fiscal year while preparing for financial challenges during the next fiscal year.

Ms. Dunstan discussed that institutions are preparing for virtual or delayed commencement events, as well as phased re-entry and contingency planning for the fall 2020 semester. Institutions' re-entry plans will likely mirror Governor Little's "Idaho Rebounds" plan, which details four stages of re-opening the state following the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Marlene Tromp, Boise State University President, shared

her excitement for BSU's digital commencement ceremony, as well as gratitude for her staff that are working to prepare for the event.

Board President Critchfield stated that, in light of continuing financial stress and uncertainty, the Board is aware that the institutions are necessarily considering a number of difficult options, including modifying or foregoing contracts, to balance their budgets. She also stated that the Board is supportive of the institutions reviewing what is allowable and making management decisions to sustain their core mission of educating students.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

K-12 Education Discussion

Student Emotional Health- See Tell Now-Tip Line

Board President Critchfield discussed the State-sponsored tip line known as "See Tell Now", which was established several years ago through the Office of Safety and Security. The "See Tell Now" line can be a method of getting help for others, but also serves a resource for getting help personally. Board President Critchfield discussed that the abrupt transition to distance learning from classroom learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as drastic financial and emotional burdens, can have a negative impact on students' mental wellbeing.

Superintendent Ybarra added that there have been many recent discussions regarding students' social-emotional health during the COVID-19 pandemic, and shared that the State Department of Education is working with twelve other states to collaborate on best practices for ensuring the mental and emotional wellbeing of students. She discussed several resources that will be available to students, teachers, and parents in the near future, as well as a project called "Idaho Lives" that recently released a suicide prevention training geared toward teachers, coaches, school administrators and staff, and parents. The "Idaho Lives" project has is also collaborating with the Garrett Lee Smith grant project to implement "Sources of Strength" in 19 Idaho middle and high schools and 10 elementary schools, which provides mental health and mentoring services for students.

Board Member Liebich discussed that strategic investments can be made with CARES Act funds, and inquired if the State Department of Education has the resources that are needed to effectively support these programs. Supt. Ybarra discussed that this area can always be reevaluated and improved upon, and that there are additional areas that need to be evaluated that will, in turn, relate to these initiatives and programs. Board Member Scoggin shared his appreciation for the availability of these resources, and added that these resources will be especially important moving forward following the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

Uniformity and Thoroughness of Instruction

At this time, the Board discussed intended uses of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund. Board President Critchfield sought feedback from the Board to gather potential uses for the funds, which included resources to support the learning gap as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the soft closure of schools, providing summer learning opportunities, and the uncertainty of the structure of instruction for the fall semester.

Superintendent Ybarra discussed the possibility of implementing a statewide Learning Management System (LMS). She stressed the importance of communication between students/parents/teachers, and discussed that implementing an LMS would be the best method to deliver any form of distance learning and monitor student outcomes. Supt. Ybarra also discussed that having an LMS in place would assist with ensuring uniform and thorough instruction throughout the state. Board Member Liebich voiced his support for this idea, and inquired if districts who are already utilizing Learning Management Systems have been more successful in delivering distance instruction during the soft closure than those who are not utilizing an LMS. Supt. Ybarra stated that the surveys being sent to the district will provide feedback on this issue, and discussed that providing the same opportunity and method for virtual instruction could provide a better learning experience.

Will Goodman, incoming President of the Idaho Education Technology Association (IETA), shared that the IETA will be sending out a survey to districts to gauge interest and current usage of Learning Management Systems. The IETA is comprised of technology directors from each region of the state.

Board Member Clark discussed that if an LMS were established, there would need to be extensive training to standardize the instruction being delivered. She also inquired if there would be a statewide system, discussing that if districts have Learning Management Systems in place, it will not provide uniform instruction. Superintendent Ybarra stated that the goal would be to have a statewide contract that districts could take advantage of, but not to force districts who already have an LMS in place to change platforms.

Board Secretary Scoggin shared his opinion that the implementation of an LMS should be the direction of Idaho education, in general, and added that many corporations are shifting to the use of Learning Management Systems for employee training and professional development. He also inquired if the State Department of Education has established a cost estimate for implementing an LMS in Idaho schools. Superintendent Ybarra reiterated that the goal of implementing a statewide LMS would be to provide districts who are not currently using an LMS with an opportunity to take advantage of the proposed statewide contract. Supt. Ybarra shared that the state is providing a similar opportunity with software for Individualized Education Plans for students with special needs. If a license were purchased for every student in the state, the cost would be approximately \$1.2 million, but this estimate does not take districts who are already

utilizing an LMS into account. Board Secretary Scoggin also discussed that a consultant should be utilized if a statewide LMS was implemented to ensure that the proper training and resources are available. Supt. Ybarra agreed, and discussed that she has consulted with the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance (ILDA) and the IETA to utilize their expertise on the matter.

Board President Critchfield inquired if the Board could assist with an expedited establishment of contracts and implementation of a statewide LMS if this is how the Board and the State Department of Education opt to use the relief funds. Matt Freeman, Executive Director, shared that the Board would still need to go through the RFP process, but could work with the Division of Purchasing to expedite the process.

Board Vice President Hill inquired about how the implementation of an LMS could affect higher education and the transition of dual credit courses. Board President Critchfield discussed that this would be an topic of conversation if and LMS is implemented.

Board Member Liebich voiced his appreciation for Supt. Ybarra utilizing IDLA and the IETA as resources, and discussed that it may be an easier transition if the state were to adopt an LMS that is already being utilized. He also discussed that a system should be in place before to the beginning of the fall semester. Mr. Freeman discussed that Idaho had a statewide LMS (Blackboard) in place at seven of the eight public higher institutions, which dissolved after several institutions sought alternative platforms.

Board Member Keough agreed with the need for an LMS, but discussed that the Board should be sensitive to the fact that districts may not want to participate for a variety of reasons, including a lack of access to technology and internet connectivity. Supt. Ybarra discussed that it will be important to have an LMS in place if there are further cuts to technology funding as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. She also shared her opinion that the Board should consider the needs of K-12 before considering the needs of higher education. Board President Critchfield stated that it would be beneficial to consider options for the K-20 system, while recognizing that there are different needs pertaining to K-12 and higher education.

Board President Critchfield discussed that the Board should develop a list of “wants” for a potential LMS, and the rest of the Board Members agreed. Board Member Atchley added that the Board should seek input from those who will be using the system rather than utilizing a “top-down” approach to implementing an LMS. Supt. Ybarra agreed, and stated that this issue was brought to her attention by teachers and parents in various areas of the state.

Board President Critchfield asked Mr. Goodman to work with the State Department of Education and the IETA to develop ideas and recommendations for K-12, and for TJ Bliss, Chief Academic Officer, to work with the Board to develop ideas and recommendations for higher education. Board Member Liebich discussed that it will be important to consider one-time implementation costs as well as the ongoing costs for an

LMS, as it relates to the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund. Board Member Clark added that this fund would only be applicable to K-12, and that there should be further consideration for the implementation of an LMS for the higher education institutions.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Ybarra shared several resources that are available for parents as students participate in distance learning. She discussed the Kahn Academy, which is an online resource for students worldwide that offers learning opportunities for Pre-K through 12th grade in the areas of arts, humanities, English language arts, and math. The Kahn Academy website also provides links to other resources for students and parents.

Supt. Ybarra also shared that the State Department of Education will host a webinar on Wednesday, May 6 for superintendents from other states to collaborate and share insights on how they are managing school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Districts will have the opportunity to ask questions and share resources.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

2. BAHR – Optional Retirement Program

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Scoggin/Atchley): I move to allow the plan-optional COVID-19 In-Service Distribution and COVID-19 Plan Loan Relief, and direct Board Staff to implement the terms outlined in the memo contained in Attachment 2, with the exclusion of provisions for new loans. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

Board Member Scoggin discussed that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allows for certain optional action pertaining to defined contribution retirement plans. The options, which are only available to those who meet criteria pertaining to certain personal or family impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic, allow for participants to: withdraw funds from their defined contribution plan without penalty and return funds for up to three years, request an extended loan payback option, and delay the payback of current loans that were already in place prior to the pandemic. This Board action mirrors PERSI actions that will not allow participants to take out loans with a higher threshold.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

3. BAHR – Board Policy II.B. Enactment

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Atchley/Clark): I move to suspend the uniformity and timeline provisions of Board policy II.B. pursuant to Board policy II.B.2.e. in response to the Governor’s declaration of emergency and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

Board Member Atchley, BAHR Committee Chair, introduced the item and asked Todd Kilburn, Chief Financial Officer, to give a brief overview. Mr. Kilburn discussed that the Board previously voted to amend Board Policy II.B. to allow the suspension of uniformity and timeline guidelines in the event of emergencies or extraordinary circumstances at higher education institutions, but did not vote to enact the amended policy. The purpose of this item is to enact the amended policy.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

- 4. PPGA – Board Policy IV.E. Career Technical Education – Educator Endorsements – Second Reading

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Hill/Liebich): I move to approve the second reading of Board policy IV.E. Division of Career Technical Education as provided in Attachment 1. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was entertained.

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Hill/Atchley): I move to adjourn the meeting at 4:40pm (MST). The motion carried 8-0.

The State Board of Education will be conducting a virtual Special Board meeting on Mondays at 3:00 pm during the COVID-19 pandemic to receive updates on the status of public education in Idaho and to take action as necessary.