



**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
May 4, 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, May 4, 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, May 4, 2020, 3:00 p.m. (Mountain Daylight Time)

1. Public Education – Issues related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

CARES Act Funding Update

Matt Freeman, Executive Director, provided a brief update on the status of CARES Act funding, particularly the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund.

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

Mr. Freeman shared that once institutions have signed agreements to receive the portion of funds that will be distributed directly to students, they can sign agreements for the institutional share. The portion of these funds for the institutions can be utilized to cover any costs that an institution has incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including reimbursement for pro-rated housing and hardware or software to allow remote student access to course materials. Mr. Freeman will share institution plans with the Board once plans from each of Idaho's 8 public institutions of higher education have been finalized.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Mr. Freeman shared that there is no new information regarding these funds, but mentioned that the Board will discuss potential uses for these funds later in the meeting.

Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

Mr. Freeman discussed that the application for these funds is due by June 1. There was no other new information regarding these funds.

Use of Funds

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Hill/Clark): I move to direct staff to move forward for data analysis for the following proposals and to identify sources of funds for those proposals. A roll call vote was taken and then motion carried 8-0.

Board President Critchfield discussed the three key areas of K-12 CARES Act funds, referencing the meeting agenda materials and the outline of proposed uses for the funds. She prompted the Board to discuss which initiatives they would like to pursue, in hopes of identifying areas of focus and asking Board Staff to investigate implementation methods and identify fund sources.

The first item that is outlined in the agenda material attachments pertains to a potential grant program that would assist with facilitating remote learning. Greg Wilson, Senior Education Policy Advisor to Governor Little discussed that the program would assist with providing devices for students and teachers, reliable internet connectivity, and related professional development activities. Mr. Wilson discussed that each district will have different technology needs, and that it will be important to evaluate these needs and assist schools as they transition to the next school year.

Board Member Liebich discussed that social distancing will likely be part of life until a vaccine is established for the coronavirus. He added that “blended” learning using technology and distance instruction will likely be a requirement moving forward, and that the Board should make strategic investments and consider an initiative that would promote access to devices and connectivity. Board Member Clark shared that she is supportive of a grant approach to distributing funds, as it would allow districts to make choices that are best suited to their individual needs, rather than a mandated system that may not be possible or productive for all schools.

Board Vice President Hill discussed that if devices are provided when internet connectivity is not available, the devices would not be useful. Mr. Wilson shared that he has reached out to the Idaho State Department of Commerce, which is represented as part of the Governor's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee, and agreed that it would be important to focus on the aspect of connectivity before moving forward with providing devices or implementing a Learning Management System (LMS).

Board Member Atchley asked for clarification on how the funds are distributed. Board President Critchfield stated that 90% of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds will be distributed to districts based on Title I funding distribution, and that the remaining 10% as well as the \$15 million as part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund can be utilized for grants or other projects.

Board Member Scoggin inquired about seeking input from teachers and administrators to consider initiatives. Board President Critchfield shared that the list included in the agenda materials has been compiled from suggestions from educators, the Governor's K-12 Emergency Council, various stakeholder groups, and ideas that have stemmed from previous Board conversations. She also mentioned that the list is not all-encompassing, but that it outlines the most prominent topics that have come up during the last several weeks.

Superintendent Ybarra discussed that the State Department of Education is compiling an executive summary of surveys that were sent out to the districts last week. The survey indicated that 30-50% of students do not have adequate internet connectivity or access to devices, and approximately 30% of the respondents do not have an LMS in place. Of the districts that reporting having an LMS in place, approximately 50% showed interest in a potential State contract for a new LMS system. Supt. Ybarra also discussed that if extended or rolling closures are necessary in the fall, there are districts throughout the state who will be at a disadvantage without an online learning platform for students. She shared that, based on rough estimates, a statewide LMS contract would cost approximately \$4 million; this estimate incorporates ongoing operating costs in addition to initial start-up expenses.

Supt. Ybarra discussed the implementation process for a potential LMS, and shared that it would be similar to the current Individualize Education Plan (IEP) program for students with special needs. If districts already have an effective program in place, they will not need to utilize a new statewide contract, but they will have to option to opt in.

Will Goodman, the incoming President of the IETA, shared that the ITEA sent out a survey last week regarding interest in Learning Management Systems as well as connectivity. Mr. Wilson discussed the importance of collecting as much data as possible, and shared that several surveys have been discussed during the K-12 Emergency Council meetings.

Board Member Keough shared that the issue of internet connectivity should be also be discussed by the Governor's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee as well as well as the State Department of Commerce, and shared this issue should be solved before the discussion of providing devices. Board President Critchfield stated that the purpose of this discussion is to identify the initiatives that the Board would like to approach as strategic priorities, and that all areas will be explored before any decisions are made. Board Member Atchley echoed Board Member Keough's comments, and stated that a

Learning Management System is not useful if all students do not have adequate connectivity and access to devices. Board Member Liebich added that it will be important to focus on training and professional development to ensure that the technology and LMS are used to their fullest capacity.

Board President Critchfield shifted the discussion to the next initiative listed in the agenda materials, which pertains to leveraging programs that are already in place to provide opportunities to summer learning while reducing and eliminating course fees. Board President Critchfield explained that this would provide relief to districts who are experiencing the burden of budget cuts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative would continue the partnership with the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance (IDLA) and Idaho Public Television (IPTV) to provide virtual and small-group learning opportunities for students over the summer. Mr. Goodman echoed Board President Critchfield's comments, and shared that the initiative would allow districts to move forward with summer learning opportunities without being hindered by budget constraints.

Board Vice President Hill discussed that most homes have televisions, but not all homes have internet connectivity; he inquired if homes with televisions but without internet connectivity would still experience the same benefits of the programs. Ron Pisaneschi, General Manager of Idaho Public Television, shared that IPTV has been offering educational content for grades 3-6, and is aiming to expand content for grades K-3 during the summer. This content will be available via television broadcast as well as an online platform in conjunction with IDLA. Mr. Goodman echoed these comments and discussed that IDLA will also aim to provide a synchronous call-in phone number to allow parents to connect to lessons for their children. IDLA will also seek to provide computer access for students in small groups who may not have access to devices at home. Mr. Pisaneschi added that IPTV will work to extend these programs into the fall if necessary.

At this time, Board President Critchfield discussed the distribution of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, which, as Mr. Freeman previously mentioned, will be distributed to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) based on the distribution of Title I funds. Board President Critchfield mentioned that there has been discussion of distributing funds to non-Title I schools or establishing a minimum amount to be distributed to each of the LEAs. Board Member Clark stated that further communication with the US Department of Education will be needed to ensure compliance with Title I guidelines. Board Member Liebich inquired if charters will be eligible for funds if the Board were to establish a minimum amount to be distributed to all LEAs.

Board President Critchfield discussed that the goal of these conversations is to eventually determine which initiatives the Board would like to pursue, which "buckets" of funds the monies will come from, and propose recommendations for Governor Little. Board President Critchfield stated that the initiatives outlined in the agenda materials

are solely focused on K-12, and that the Board will discuss initiatives for higher education during a future meeting.

Board President Critchfield also discussed the aspect of social-emotional learning, and inquired if the Board should approach an initiative that would support students' social-emotional needs. Board President Critchfield and Superintendent Ybarra will participate in a teleconference next week regarding this issue, and will bring back topics of discussion for the Board at a future meeting.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

Idaho Reading Indicator Clarification

Board President Critchfield discussed that the Board waived accountability requirements for the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) during a previous Special Board Meeting. She stated that students must have access to the IRI but are not required to take the exam, and that the IRI is available as a resource for districts. The results of students who opt to take the exam will not be used for accountability purposes. Board President Critchfield added that scores will be reported to the Board, by statute, but the Board will not utilize the results and will not recommend that anyone else utilize the results. Superintendent Ybarra echoed Board President Critchfield's comments.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

2. Re-entry Criteria – Update

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Hill/Keough): I move to approve the student re-entry minimum criteria as amended in Attachment 1. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

Board President Critchfield discussed that the Board established the re-entry criteria prior to Governor Little's guidelines as part of "Idaho Rebounds", and that the Board has amended the criteria to better align with the phases outlined within the "Idaho Rebounds" plan. The amendments include naming the Board as the supervising State Education Agency, the addition of the "Idaho Rebounds" documentation, replacing the term "social distancing" with "physical distancing", and adds a section that requires districts that opt to reopen during the 2019-2020 school year to have a contingency plan in place for immediate closures if necessary. Board President Critchfield also discussed that schools were not explicitly outlined in the "Idaho Rebounds" plan, and the goal of the Board's re-entry criteria is to provide guidance in those areas. She also shared that if an item is not discussed within the criteria, the "Idaho Rebounds" phasing should be referenced.

Board Secretary Scoggin discussed that Phase 2 (May 16-May 29) of the "Idaho Rebounds" plan allows for public or private gatherings of 10 or fewer, and inquired if this

guideline indicated that there will not be any schools reopening this year. Board President Critchfield stated that there can be exceptions for schools to offer different opportunities for small groups if they do choose to reopen. Board Vice President Hill inquired about the end date for the re-entry criteria, and Board President Critchfield stated that the Board will need to revisit the criteria and establish contingency plans prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

Board President Critchfield took a moment to address questions regarding the Idaho Athletics Association (IAA). The IAA is not associated with the Idaho State Board of Education, and has their own Board that provides guidance for their stakeholders and constituents. Board President Critchfield recently spoke with Ty Jones, IAA Director, who stated that the IAA has not yet provided guidance for school sports aside from what has been decided for spring spots. The IAA is waiting to make decisions for summer sports and is referencing “Idaho Rebounds” phasing as they prepare guidance for athletic directors and coaching staff as they plan their summer and fall schedules.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

3. Lawsuit – Statement

Board President Critchfield discussed that the Board met in Executive Session on April 30, and stated that Superintendent Ybarra has recused herself in writing from meetings pertaining to the pending litigation, so that the Board can adequately prepare for defense in the lawsuit. No vote was taken, and Board President Critchfield discussed options for representation.

In the spirit of transparency, Board President Critchfield also made the following statement: “The Board has discussed its options for legal representation in defense against the petition filed by the State Superintendent against the Board. The Board is currently represented in all matters by the Office of the Attorney General, and we are confident that the Office of the Attorney General will ably the Board in this matter, too. Given the State’s current budget crisis, we also believe this is the most fiscally prudent approach for Board legal counsel.”

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

At this time, Board President Critchfield voiced her appreciation for Idaho’s teachers and called attention to Teacher Appreciation Week. Several Board Members echoed her comments. Superintendent Ybarra added her appreciation for the work that has been done as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, and the flexibility of educators throughout the soft closure.

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

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Scoggin/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.