



**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
July 15, 2020
Office of the State Board of Education**

A special meeting of the Idaho State Board of Education was held via Zoom teleconference on Wednesday, July 15, 2020. 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
Andy Scoggin, Vice President
Kurt Liebich, Secretary
Linda Clark

Emma Atchley
Dave Hill
Shawn Keough*
Sherri Ybarra, State Superintendent

*Except where noted

Wednesday, July 15, 2020, 3:00 p.m. (Mountain Daylight Time)

Prior to beginning discussion of the agenda items, Board President Critchfield stated that Board Member Keough was attending a concurrently scheduled meeting of the Governor's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC), and would join the Board Meeting once the CFAC meeting adjourned.

PLANNING, POLICY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

1. Public School FY 2021 Budget Holdback - Letter of Support – 5% Targeted Holdback Plan

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Clark/Atchley): I move to approve the letter of support as set forth in **Attachment 1**. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 7-0. Ms. Keough was absent from voting.

Board Member Clark introduced the item and asked Greg Wilson, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Little, to provide background information. Mr. Wilson explained that the Governor issued a statewide memo on May 8, 2020 to school district superintendents and charter school administrators notifying them of his intent to issue an executive order at the beginning of FY2021 for a 5% (approximately \$98.7M) holdback of General

Funds for school districts and public charter schools. The holdback will assist with addressing a potential, estimated 8.5-14.5% (between \$350M and \$595M) decrease in revenue during the next year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Wilson added that Governor Little is adamant that 5% will be the maximum amount that will be held back from the K-12 budget.

Governor Little has proposed targeted General Fund reductions, which are outlined within the meeting agenda materials. Board Member Clark stated that this holdback was determined with consideration for student learning, and that certain sections of the General Fund budget were chosen that would least affect student learning and ensure a degree of uniformity among districts and charters across the state. She added that the areas that were selected are areas where federal funds can potentially compensate for the holdback. Mr. Wilson stated that Governor Little has requested a letter of support from the Board and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to move forward with this plan.

Board Secretary Liebich discussed that it may be helpful to put the holdback into perspective for members of the public, adding that the General Funds budget is approximately \$4B with roughly half of that amount being allocated for public education. He noted that federal stimulus funds will be applied to compensate for portions of the holdback, and shared his opinion that Governor Little's plan for the holdback is balanced while minimizing the impact to student learning. Board Secretary Liebich also discussed districts' dependence on supplemental levies, and stated that the legislature will need to monitor actions at the local level as levies are put forward in order to recompense financial challenges as a result of the holdback.

Board Vice President Scoggin inquired about the methodology for determining the areas of the General Fund that would be cut. Board Member Clark shared that the holdback was discussed at length during meetings of Governor Little's K-12 Emergency Council. Mr. Wilson shared that efforts were made to shield student learning as much as possible with consideration for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. Board President Critchfield also discussed Governor Little's collaboration with other states, noting that while a 5% holdback is nothing to be celebrated, Idaho is in a better financial position than its neighboring states.

Board Vice President Scoggin asked for clarification regarding the \$10M reduction to the classroom technology line-item, and referenced the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds and CARES Act funds that would be discussed later in the agenda. Board Member Clark stated that this is an excellent example of a cut that was made with the supplemental federal funding in mind.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

2. Digital Divide Committee Update – Recommendations

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Clark/Hill): I move to approve the recommendations outlined in Attachment 1. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

Board Member Clark prefaced the item by sharing that two subcommittees stemmed from the K-12 Emergency Council: the Fall Reopening Committee and the Digital Divide Taskforce. Last week, the Board approved the Idaho Back to School Framework that was drafted by the Fall Reopening Committee, and Board Member Clark shared that this item will provide recommendations from the Digital Divide Committee, which has been meeting since early June to identify solutions for addressing the “digital divide” in Idaho’s classrooms.

The Digital Divide Taskforce is co-chaired by Board Secretary Liebich and Greg Wilson, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Little, and is comprised of school technology directors, administrators, business leaders, and legislators. The taskforce divided into six subcommittees in order to more thoroughly address the “digital divide”: Device, Connectivity, Learning Management System (LMS), Professional Development, Communication, and Vision and Strategy.

Board Secretary Liebich provided a report on the work that has been done by the taskforce so far and shared the taskforce’s recommendations, in conjunction with the State Department of Education and Superintendent Ybarra’s staff, for the utilization of federal funding. He discussed that some districts were more prepared than others during the sudden school shutdown in the spring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and elaborated that the taskforce’s recommendations will play a key role as the implementation of blended learning will be inevitable during the fall and in the future. The taskforce recommendations will provide assistance to schools as they operate in different stages of the Idaho Back to School Framework, and can be found within the meeting agenda materials.

Board Secretary Liebich discussed “the four legs of the stool” that make up blended learning: 1-to-1 devices, connectivity (or access to connectivity), a dynamic learning management system, and professional development for teachers, parents, and students to aid in the utilization of new technology. He also discussed the guiding principles of the group, which aim to support local education agencies, trustees, and superintendents without being prescriptive, provide resources to help facilitate local plans, and to provide uniform and thorough education while ensuring that the achievement gap does not continue to grow. He shared that one of the group’s focuses is creating an economically stable model that allows for the incorporation of ongoing expenses, rather than just focusing on the initial cost.

Board Secretary Liebich provided a summary of the available funds that could be applied toward the Digital Divide Taskforce’s recommendations, outlining the \$3.8M as part of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) State

Educational Agency (SEA) funding as well as the \$30M grant that was awarded by the Governor's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC). He noted that \$1M of the ESSER SEA funds is dedicated to supporting social emotional learning. Board Secretary Liebich also added that there are several other funding sources available for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and discussed the breakdown of expenses for devices, connectivity, a learning management system, professional development, and IT staffing. Outlines of the available funding sources and the breakdown of expenses can be found within the meeting agenda materials.

Board Vice President Scoggin inquired about a prior discussion of having several learning management systems for districts to choose from. Superintendent Ybarra shared that her staff worked on the Request for Proposal (RFP) in conjunction with the Digital Divide Taskforce LMS subcommittee. Will Goodman, Director of District Programs for the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance and co-chair of the LMS subcommittee, echoed Supt. Ybarra's remarks and shared that any LMS providers that meet the technical and functional requirements outlined within the RFP could be added to the state "menu" for LEAs purchase from. He also stated that districts can be approved to purchase an LMS not on the state "menu" once it is signed off on by the State Department of Education to ensure that technical and functional requirements are being met.

Board Member Clark inquired if it is not possible to deliver a quality online learning experience to students without a proper LMS. Mr. Goodman discussed his opinion that an LMS is a key element in being able to deliver a quality online education program.

Board Member Atchley shared her concerns that rural districts will not have the time or staff capability to write grants to receive funds for blended learning initiatives, and asked how the process would work for districts who do not have a grant writer on their staff. Board Secretary Liebich discussed that the spirit of the work being done by the Digital Divide Taskforce is to keep things simple and to encourage districts to be as concise as possible while creating an expectation that district superintendents will consider blended learning elements. He added that grant applications will be an opportunity for districts to outline how they plan to use the funds and which areas they need to improve upon or supplement to implement an effective online education program.

Superintendent Ybarra echoed Board Secretary Liebich's comments and elaborated that the process would not consist of a lengthy grant application, but rather a checklist of the technical and functional requirements of the LMS RFP. She also discussed that local boards will need to be informed as districts move forward with their applications.

Board Member Keough joined the meeting at 3:41pm.

Board Member Clark reiterated Board Member Atchley's question, and inquired if there would be a minimum grant amount to ensure that smaller districts will receive enough funds. Supt. Ybarra shared that there are minimums, and added that the distribution methodology would be discussed during the next item on the agenda.

Board Member Hill inquired if grant applications would be addressed sequentially as they are received or if a certain amount of funds would be held for each district. Board Secretary Liebich stated that the State Department of Education has defined a distribution methodology, and discussed that the intention is to alert districts that there are funds available for them to apply for and prompt planning for how the funds could potentially be utilized within each district.

Board President Critchfield pointed out that the purpose of this item is to approve the Digital Divide Taskforce recommendations, and that the first item on the State Department of Education's agenda is to discuss the methodology for the distribution of the ESSER SEA reserve funds.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

3. CARES Act Funding – ESSER Funds – 10% State Education Agency Reserve – Grant Program

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Ybarra/Liebich): I move to approve the methodology for determining amounts each LEA is eligible to receive from the ESSER 10% SEA Reserve funds as identified in Attachment 2 with priority for funding the purchase or enhancement of a learning management system. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

Superintendent Ybarra introduced the item and discussed that the State Department of Education staff collaborated with the Digital Divide Taskforce, among others, to determine the distribution methodology for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) 10% State Education Agency (SEA) reserve funds. She asked Karen Seay, Director of Federal Programs for the State Department of Education, to discuss the methodology.

Ms. Seay discussed that the methodology is outlined within the meeting agenda materials, and shared that all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and charters will receive an allocation for expenses related to a Learning Management System (LMS). She outlined that the base allocation for each LEA or charter is comprised of the following: a \$5,000 base allocation for each LEA or charter for implementation or setup fee pertaining to an LMS, a \$700 base allocation for each LEA or charter for professional development pertaining to blended learning or distance education, and \$8.80 per student base allocation for each LEA and charter for the LMS licensing fees, additional professional development, and resources and materials.

Board Secretary Liebich discussed that discussed that learning management systems operate on a per-seat, per-year basis. He stated that the Board should recognize that

the allocation that Ms. Seay outlined will cover the costs for the 2020-2021 school year, but it will be important to work with the Legislature to make these expenses a priority across the state or for LEAs and charters to reprioritize existing funding to maintain the ongoing expenses.

Board Member Clark inquired if the ESSER SEA reserve funds (\$3.8M) are completely allocated for a learning management system. Ms. Seay responded that the ESSER SEA funds are allocated for a learning management system, and stated that the ESSER funds have a performance period of approximately 27 months, expiring in December 2022, while the funds granted by Governor Little's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC) must be utilized by December 31, 2020. She stated that the CFAC funds have several restrictions, including the fact that expenses must be related to the COVID-19 pandemic and cannot already be included in the budget approved by the local school board. Board Member Clark inquired if LEAs who already have an LMS in place could use the funds to renew their license, and Ms. Seay stated that LEAs would be able to utilize ESSER funds for this expense, but not CFAC funds, since it would be considered a preexisting expense as approved by the local school board.

Board Member Clark requested clarification on the wording of the motion, discussing that the action the Board took during the June Board Meeting, held June 10, 2020, allowed LEAs to select the use of awarded funds for an LMS, professional development, devices, and/or connectivity. Board President Critchfield stated that a learning management system was noted as a priority during the June Board Meeting, but that it would not be the only item for which LEAs could apply for funds.

Supt. Ybarra read the motion and echoed Ms. Seay's comments, reiterating that LEAs that already have an LMS in place are not able to apply CFAC funds to that expense, but could utilize ESSER funds to renew or upgrade their current LMS. Board President Critchfield repeated that LEAs can apply for the ESSER funds for an LMS, professional development, devices, and/or connectivity, with priority being given to an LMS.

Ms. Seay stated that the distribution methodology for the ESSER SEA reserve funds that was previously outlined is intended for the licensing for an LMS, professional development relating to an LMS, and resources and materials. Board Member Clark discussed that if these items must be related to an LMS, the motion is not in agreement with the action the Board took during the June Board Meeting.

Marilyn Whitney, Deputy Superintendent of Communications and Policy for the State Department of Education, discussed that Ms. Seay had outlined the distribution methodology, and added that there is added flexibility in terms of the timing and uses of ESSER funds as opposed to the CFAC funds. Board President Critchfield stated that the motion does not exclude a district from applying for funds if they are not intending to utilize the funds for an LMS. Board Vice President Scoggin echoed Board President Critchfield's comments and reiterated that the implementation of an LMS is priority, but districts may also utilize funds for devices, connectivity, and professional development in relation to the implementation of a blended learning program.

Board Member Clark stated that the motion is consistent with the action the Board took during the June Board Meeting, but the distribution methodology that Ms. Seay presented is focused on expenses related to an LMS. Board President Critchfield discussed that if a district already has an LMS in place, they can request ESSER funds to support and supplement that cost, as well as the other areas related to blended learning programs. She also reiterated that an LMS is a priority but not a requirement, and Supt. Ybarra added that the funding requests will prompt districts to discuss their vision for blended learning programs in their schools and their plan for utilizing the funds in relation to the Digital Divide Taskforce's recommendations.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

4. Coronavirus Relief Fund – Grant Program

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Ybarra/Atchley): I move to approve the methodology and distribution of funding as described in Attachment 1 and the grant application in substantial conformance to the form proved as Attachment 2. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 8-0.

Superintendent Ybarra introduced the item and discussed that the methodology for distribution of the Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC funds) and the grant application are included within the meeting agenda materials. She referenced Board Secretary Liebich's presentation of the Digital Divide Taskforce's recommendations earlier in the meeting, and reiterated that the funds would be distributed to support the implementation of blended learning programs in the areas of 1-to-1 devices, connectivity, a learning management system, and/or professional development.

Board Secretary Liebich discussed that one of the guiding principles for the Digital Divide Taskforce is to deliver resources to the children and families who need it most, and noted that part of the distribution methodology stems from the percentage of children receiving free and reduced lunch. He also discussed that \$5M of the \$30M of CFAC funds will be reserved for districts who require incremental resources to support the implementation of blended learning programs.

Supt. Ybarra added that superintendents across the state aided in the composition of the distribution methodology, and aimed to be sensitive to rural districts who may need additional funds.

Board Member Atchley shared that it is important to recognize that the CFAC funds cannot be used for expenses that are already incorporated into the district's budget, and that districts have the option of using the ESSER funds to supplement items that are already incorporated into their budget. She provided the example that districts who do not currently have a learning management system in place could use the CFAC funds

for an LMS, but districts who *do* have an LMS in place would not be able to use CFAC funds to upgrade their license or cover ongoing expenses related to the LMS.

There were no additional comments or questions from the Board.

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

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Scoggin/Atchley): I move to adjourn the meeting at 4:38pm (MST). The motion carried 8-0.

The State Board of Education tentatively plans to convene weekly for a virtual Special Board Meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic to receive updates on the status of public education in Idaho and to take action as necessary.