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TASK FORCE FINALIZES RECOMMENDATIONS

(Boise). The Task Force for Improving Education today finalized recommendations to go to Gov. C. L. “Butch” Otter, who commissioned their work in December 2012.

“This group of stakeholders with diverse perspectives came together in a thoughtful and collaborative way to work toward a common goal. They spent considerable time examining issues and studying best practices to bring forward recommendations that have the potential to significantly impact education in Idaho.” said Richard Westerberg, State Board of Education member and Chair of the Task Force. *“I want to personally thank all of the individuals who provided their expertise and time in this process to ensure a better future for our kids.”*

The Task Force considered recommendations from two subcommittees geared toward meeting the State Board of Education’s goal that 60 percent of Idaho citizens ages 25-34 attain at least a one-year postsecondary credential by 2020. The recommendations adopted today are:

Mastery Based System

We recommend the state shift to a system where students advance based upon content mastery, rather than seat time requirements. This may require a structural change to Idaho’s funding formula and/or some financial incentive to school districts. We also recommend that mastery be measured against high academic standards.

Idaho Core Standards

We strongly endorse the rigorous and successful implementation of the Idaho Core Standards as an essential component of high performing schools. Higher standards in all subject areas help raise student achievement among all students, including those performing below grade level.

Literacy Proficiency

We recommend students demonstrate mastery of literacy before moving on to significant content learning. Reading proficiency is a major benchmark in a student's education. Students must learn to read before they can read to learn content in other subject areas.

Advanced Opportunities

We recommend the state ensure that all students have access to advanced opportunities by expanding post-secondary offerings while a student is still in high school.

Revamp the State's Accountability Structure Involving Schools

We recommend the state revamp the accountability structure involving schools. The existing structure that relies on compliance mandates should be replaced with a system that is based on accountability for student outcomes. The state has constitutional and financial authority and mandates to ensure a quality and uniform education.

Empower Autonomy by Removing Constraints

We recommend the Governor's Office, State Board of Education, and State Department of Education evaluate existing education laws and administrative rules and work with the Legislature to remove those which impede local autonomy, flexibility to adapt to local circumstances, and the ability of the schools to be agile, adaptive, innovative, and drive continuous improvement.

Annual Strategic Planning, Assessment, and Continuous Focus on Improvement

We recommend each district be required to have a strategic plan (and to renew it annually) that identifies and focuses district-wide continuous improvement toward statewide goals. Both the local board and the state should provide oversight to ensure that the plan is appropriate to local circumstances and aligns to and supports the state's goals. The plan forms the basis from which accountability will be structured and the superintendent will be evaluated.

Job-Embedded Collaboration/Professional Development Time

Teacher effectiveness is paramount to student success, and professional development is paramount to teacher effectiveness. We recommend structural changes to allow for job-embedded collaboration time. Time to collaborate is critical to effective teaching and implementation of higher standards and technology. Professional development must be regularly scheduled and ongoing.

Statewide Electronic Collaboration System

We recommend that a statewide electronic collaboration system be adopted for educators to share ideas and resources across the state.

High Speed Bandwidth and Wireless Infrastructure

We recommend the state expand the existing high speed bandwidth infrastructure to ensure every school (high school, middle school, and elementary school) has the bandwidth and wireless infrastructure necessary for simultaneous equal access and opportunity. This will require ongoing funding for the repair and replenishment of equipment.

Educator and Student Technology Devices

We recommend that every educator and student have adequate access to technology devices with appropriate content to support equal access and opportunity. Educator professional development is critical to the effective implementation of technology.

Restoration of Operational Funding

We recommend restoration of operational funding to the 2009 level. Although traditionally called “discretionary” funding, operational funds are the normal, reasonable costs of doing business and include such items as paying for heat, lights and fuel; transporting students in a safe manner to and from school; and providing timely and relevant content materials and training for teachers. A multiple year approach could be implemented to rebuild operational funding.

Career Ladder Compensation Model

We recommend a phased implementation of a Career Ladder of teacher compensation. The model proposed combines competitive salaries with incentives, rewards and accountability. Further, we believe it should be tied to a revised system of state licensure.

Enrollment Model of Funding Schools

We recommend a change from Average Daily Attendance (ADA) to Average Daily Enrollment/Membership. This will enhance fiscal stability and remove current barriers to personalized and/or mastery learning models that are required to meet the State Board’s 60 percent goal.

Tiered Licensure

We recommend a continuum of professional growth and learning that is tied to licensure. Movement through the system would be accomplished in a very specific, objective way using performance measures.

Mentoring

We recommend that each district develop a mentoring program for the support of new teachers based on the Idaho Mentor Program Standards. These standards provide a vision and guidelines for local planners to use in the design and implementation of a high-quality mentor program for beginning teachers. We recommend the state provide funding support for a mentoring program.

Ongoing Job-embedded Professional Learning

We recommend that districts provide regular professional learning opportunities, and we support ongoing funding for professional development. We recommend the use of the research-based standards of the National Staff Development Council known as Learning Forward. We further recommend that resources for educator learning be prioritized, monitored and coordinated at the state level.

Site-based collaboration among teachers and instructional leaders

We strongly encourage districts to restructure the traditional school day schedule to allow for job-embedded collaboration time. We support the creation of professional learning communities that increase educator effectiveness and results for all students. We recommend providing training models to districts for their use in training the members of the professional learning communities, and encourage models that focus on team outcomes and collective responsibility.

Training and development of school administrators, superintendents and school boards

We recommend continued training and professional development of school administrators, superintendents and school boards. The committee supports further development and implementation of the Idaho Standards for Effective Principals and the pilot work being conducted in the 2013-14 school year to further explore effective performance measures for school administrators. This includes ongoing implementation and support for administrator training in assessing classroom performance through observation.

Provide enhanced pre-service teaching opportunities through the state's colleges of education

We support the efforts of Idaho's higher education institutions to increase and enhance clinical field experiences for pre-service teachers.

Participation in the CCSSO's "Our Responsibility, Our Promise" recommendations to improve teacher preparation

We support Idaho's participation in implementing The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) "Our Responsibility, Our Promise" recommendations to help ensure that every teacher and principal is able to prepare students for college and the workforce.

The recommendations and final report from the Task Force will be delivered to the Governor in early September.

For a full list of the recommendations and supporting materials, visit

www.boardofed.idaho.gov/board_initiatives/Education_Improvement_Taskforce/08-23-13/index.asp

For more information on the Task Force or the State Board of Education, visit

www.boardofed.idaho.gov .

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