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**Article: Guided Pathways Recommendations**

By Debbie Critchfield, Vice President, Idaho State Board of Education

In June, Idaho State Board of Education President Dr. Linda Clark wrote a column about the efforts of a workgroup I am involved with that is looking for ways to better prepare all of Idaho's high school students for success after graduation. The Guided Pathways workgroup convened during the summer to discuss barriers and develop solutions to prepare students to make college and career choices after high school. Those discussions helped us develop a list of recommendations addressing three areas:

- Assist parents in guiding and supporting their student's path after high school
- Encourage students to start thinking and planning college and career choices
- Improve the system so that the transition from high school to college is smoother

The State Board of Education was provided the list of recommendations earlier this month. As Dr. Clark stated in her earlier piece, the Guided Pathways recommendations "emphasize early learning, planning, guidance and preparation." The workgroup prioritized the recommendations. At the top of the list is a "Parent Academy" program designed to engage with, and enlist parents in their child's education to better equip them to guide and assist their child along the way. The concept would be modeled after the [University of Arizona's College Academy for Parents](#), where it has been successful. Variations of the Parent Academy are

already being explored at Boise State University and the College of Southern Idaho.

Parent learning objectives for the Arizona program include:

- Understanding the importance of maintaining a high grade point average in the core academic classes and how elementary coursework relates to future majors, degrees and careers
- Learn about different types of colleges and universities and the outcomes associated with various degree levels
- The critical role that parent's advice, encouragement and involvement can have in the level of education that their child can achieve

The Guided Pathways workgroup would like to replicate a version of this program in Idaho to help parents understand various options available to their child throughout their education. In order to launch the program, the Board approved a budget request to the legislature for a coordinator position at each of the eight public institutions to facilitate these academies.

The recommendations include providing transition coordinators or "near peers" (college students who advise students on what to expect and how to prepare for the postsecondary transition) in each of our high schools. The workgroup also recommends we find ways to free up our high school counselors to focus more time advising students. All too often, our counselors are called on to perform other duties in schools across the state, which take away from time spent advising students. The legislature provided additional funding to school districts and charter schools for college and career advising and mentoring programs starting in FY2017.

Other recommendations include improvements designed to bring a "system-ness" approach to our entire educational system. For example, adopting common high school and dual credit transcripts statewide would make it easier for school counselors to work with students taking dual credit courses from multiple institutions, help students by limiting the number of transcripts they need to transfer to the college they choose after high school, and help college registrars process incoming student transcripts.

The Guided Pathways concept is included in the recommendations developed by Governor Otter's Higher Education Task Force. Technical workgroups will need

to be convened to work out details. I've included the full list (below) of all 16 recommendations listed in priority.

It is important to note the Guided Pathways recommendations do not favor pushing students to pick traditional college or career technical programs. They are designed to prepare students, with their parents' assistance, to make their own education and career plans. What we are ultimately trying to do is create a smoother pathway for our students to achieve successful employment.

### **Guided Pathways Workgroup – Prioritized Recommendations**

1. Parent Academy
2. Communication/Outreach to parents and students, increased parent and student engagement
3. Transition Coordinators or Near Peers statewide (in all high schools), consistent first year postsecondary experience
4. Parental Portal – resource for college and career advising and career exploration
5. Common Transcripts (HS/Dual Credit)
6. School counselor roles/duties defined (eliminate non-school counselor duties from current tasks)
7. Simplify Advanced Opportunities administration
8. BEST, AVID, etc. (Student Type) programs funded/provided statewide
9. Create a uniform K-12 career exploration class
10. Liaison/better customer service/reduce confusion (between K-12 and postsecondary)
11. Uniform technology (including postsecondary titles for advisors, single identified point of contact, consistent use of defined transition coordinator model)
12. Senior Projects (expand to include more career exploration/internships) – require to be more meaningful
13. New standards of Life Skills added to existing content standards
14. College and Career Advising Centers around the state with trained staff in college and career advising
15. 8<sup>th</sup> grade advising overhaul (start earlier)
16. System-like approach to school district and charter school college and career advising plans (develop best practices)

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