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## **Guided Pathways Work Continues**

By Debbie Critchfield, vice president, Idaho State Board of Education

The Idaho State Board of Education's guided pathways efforts are intended to enable Idaho students to plan and be prepared for life after high school.

Last fall, a workgroup comprised of education professionals from K-12 and higher education developed a budget proposal to create a "Parent Academy" program to engage and equip parents to guide and assist their child throughout their education. It is modeled after a successful program at the University of Arizona's College Academy for Parents. While the Parent Academy likely won't be considered by lawmakers this legislative session, we hope to bring it back next year. Meanwhile, workgroups are busy working on implementation plans for Guided Pathways recommendations and I want to provide a brief update on our work.

Three years ago, the Legislature approved funding for college and career advising programs statewide, enabling school districts to hire advisors and student mentors to pick and implement a model that best fits the district's needs from a list of a half-dozen Board-provided model templates.

With college and career advisors in place across our state, we are working to ensure they have clear lines of communication with people at all of our colleges and universities in order to better help students transition from high school to college. Many of our high school seniors give every indication that they plan to enroll in college or a career technical program, but then never show up on campus when the fall semester begins. We call it the "summer melt" phenomenon and a

contributing factor to this melt is that recent graduates often don't know who they can talk to about concerns or questions they have during the three-month summer lull between graduation and the beginning of their first semester in college.

We are working to create a coordinated support system for these students involving high school college and career advisors and counselors and their counterparts in the institutions so that students know who they can turn to for answers and encouragement. State Board researchers estimate Idaho's "go-on" rate from high school to college could increase 10 to 15 percent by curbing summer melt alone.

As with Parent Academy the Board also submitted a budget proposal to create a Summer Bridge Program for high school graduates to take up to six college credit hours during those summer months to keep them engaged and hopefully preempt summer melt. There are modest price tags associated with both proposals and we as a Board certainly understand competing budget priorities and the need to let these student success initiatives percolate a bit before they are formally considered by policy makers.

In the meantime, the Board and the Guided Pathways workgroups will continue to collaborate and find ways to improve existing programs and resources. Smoothing the pathway leading from high school to college will result in more college and career technical program graduates, and that is good for our state, and the careers and lives of its people.

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