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For Immediate Release

March 30, 2020

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BOARD DISCUSSES POSSIBILITY OF EXTENDING “SOFT CLOSURE” FOR K-12 EDUCATION

The Idaho State Board of Education said today it may consider extending its soft closure directive to school districts and charter schools in response to the changing situation and ongoing efforts in Idaho and across the nation to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The Board’s soft closure directive was approved last week and lasts through Monday, April 20. Any decision to extend it will occur after consultations with the Governor’s office and state public health officials this week, Board President Debbie Critchfield said. “Our first priority is the safety of our students and school staff and to provide support to administrators and local boards. The State Board will continue to discuss what operations will look like when schools do reopen and when it might occur. We’ll gather more information and be prepared for further discussion and a decision next week.”

Districts and charter schools continue to develop and implement “remote learning” options (e.g., online, video, teleconference, packets) throughout the state.

The Board also heard an update from higher education institutions about various steps taken to move instruction online. All eight colleges and universities are now

teaching classes remotely. “Our entire public system is working hard to respond to a situation that is changing almost daily. The State Board will continue to hold weekly special meetings to do what we can to support our schools, local boards and college and university presidents in order to serve our students as best they can and complete the school year,” Critchfield said.

In the meeting’s only action, the Board approved a waiver for workplace readiness assessments and technical skill assessments for high school students taking Career Technical Education courses for the remainder of the school year.

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