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**For Immediate Release**

December 17, 2020

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**BOARD WAIVES COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAM  
GRADUATION REQUIREMENT FOR 2020-21 SENIORS**

The Idaho State Board of Education today unanimously approved a waiver of the Board’s rule requiring students take a college entrance exam in order to graduate from a public high school in Idaho. The waiver applies to students graduating at the end of the 2020-21 school year, including the summer term.

“This is something that we have been hearing about and discussing with school district administrators, with students and parents and I believe this is the appropriate action given the environment and the circumstances,” State Board President Debbie Critchfield said.

College entrance exams are normally taken by students during their junior year but the test was cancelled last spring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. About 80 percent of high school seniors took the exam this fall. Today’s action does allow local school boards to require the college entrance exam requirement if they choose. There are still opportunities for seniors to take it during the national testing dates between now and the end of the spring term.

## **Strong Families, Strong Students Grant Program**

The Board members heard updated figures on the number of families that have applied for federal coronavirus relief funds to assist with their children's education through Governor Brad Little's Strong Families, Strong Students program.

- Total applications filed: 39,930
  - 26,307 applications are completed and verified to date
  - 13,592 of the completed and verified applications were submitted by Idahoans who make \$50,000 or less (first wave)

Eligibility verification for a majority of people in the first wave has been completed, and nearly 4,000 have activated their ClassWallet® account and made purchases at the online marketplace. Grant recipients have until June 30, 2021 to make purchases. Those seeking reimbursement for education-related expenses already incurred, must do so by December 30, 2020.

Awards are based first on economic need. Once the first wave of applications are complete, second wave applications (from those making \$75,000 or less) will be processed until funding is exhausted. The SFSS fund totals \$50 million. It would cost nearly \$56 million to award grants to all who submitted completed and verified applications.

Eligible families receive \$1,500 per student up to \$3,500 per family for use to purchase computers, internet connectivity and services to benefit their children's education.

### **In other Board actions:**

- Approved Lewis-Clark State College's first-ever graduate program. LCSC was authorized to begin offering a graduate certificate for Nursing Management and Leadership beginning in fall 2021. The 13 credit program will be administered fully online and is intended to meet needs in central Idaho and in the Panhandle.
- Approved Boise State University's request to create a research institute for cybersecurity. The institute will coordinate cybersecurity research and

instruction at Boise State and support the new statewide cybersecurity program involving all three of Idaho's public universities.

- Approved an updated statewide Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan. A work group will be established and led by Board member Dr. Linda Clark to ensure the plan is distributed and used by schools statewide.

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