



For Immediate Release

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BOARD APPROVES SLATE OF IDEAS FOR NEXT LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Idaho State Board of Education today approved a list of 16 legislative ideas that could become formal bill proposals introduced during 2023 legislative session.

The action occurred during the second day of the Board's June regular meeting held on the Idaho State University campus in Pocatello.

Most of the proposals are administrative but one would codify how public schools have been funded for the past two years, while another would create a program to help school districts, particularly in rural areas, "grow their own" educators.

Enrollment-based School Funding

The list includes a permanent shift to enrollment, rather than daily attendance, to calculate funding for public schools throughout Idaho. For three years straight, the Board has used its temporary rule-making authority to calculate school funding based on enrollment.

The first temporary rule was implemented during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to help stabilize public school funding thrown in flux because many parents chose to keep their students at home learning remotely, rather than attend school in-person. The latest temporary rule on enrollment was approved by the Board last February, expires at the end of the 2023 legislative session.

Governor Brad Little's 2019 "Our Kids, Idaho's Future" Task Force recommended permanently changing to enrollment-based funding.

Instructional Staff Apprenticeship Program

Another legislative idea would establish an apprenticeship program allowing paraprofessionals currently assisting teachers in Idaho public school classrooms to become teachers themselves without first earning a bachelor's degree. The program would create a career pathway for paraprofessionals, many of whom have been working in Idaho classrooms for many years, to achieve certification. Similar programs in other states have been successful by enabling school districts and charter schools to "grow their own" teachers to help address teacher shortages.

The full list of the Board's legislative ideas is posted on the State Board of Education's website under the June 14-15 Board meeting *Policy, Planning and Governmental Affairs Agenda, Tab 4:*

<https://boardofed.idaho.gov/meetings/board/archive/2022/0614-1522/05PPGA.pdf>

The Board's legislative ideas will be submitted to the Governor's office for review and approval before the ideas are developed into formal legislative proposals to be brought back to the Board for final approval later in the year.

Educator Shortage Survey

The Board also heard results from a recent informal survey of school districts and charter schools indicating there is a shortage of educators going into the 2022/23 school year. The survey conducted earlier this month indicated there are 702 open teaching positions statewide. More than half of the openings are due to recent retirements. There are a total of 19,262 educators throughout the state. More than half of the openings are due to recent retirements. Administrators also report difficulty in finding qualified candidates to fill open positions.

"I wish this morning we could say there is an easy solution, but this is very complicated," Board Member Dr. Linda Clark said. "There have been a lot of early retirements. Anecdotally, (educator) comments are about stress, pressure, lack of support, political issues and several said 'it's just not worth it.'" Clark said the problem extends beyond Idaho and that Board staff will contact administrators in other states and with education stakeholders to develop ideas for solutions.

Public Charter School Decision Affirmed

The Board unanimously affirmed a recent decision by the Idaho Public Charter School Commission not to renew the charter for the Another Choice Virtual Charter School.

The charter school appealed to the State Board to overrule the Charter School Commission's decision. The Board appointed a hearing officer, who held a hearing last month in Boise and recommended that the Charter School Commission decision stand.

"This is the first time a situation like this has occurred during my tenure on the Board," Board President Kurt Liebich said. "We take this very seriously and we have great confidence in the Idaho Public Charter School Commission. I think this matter was handled very well."

The Board also took the following actions:

- Approved updated five-year strategic plans for each of Idaho's four-year higher education institutions.
- Approved an online Bachelor of Business Administration program at the University of Idaho.
- Approved FY2023 operating budgets and compensation packages for the Board's executive director, the administrators of the Division of Career Technical Education and the Division of Vocational Education and the presidents of Idaho's four-year institutions.
- Reviewed collaborative budget line-item concepts from Idaho's higher education institutions for possible introduction 2023 legislative session.

The budget line-item concepts include:

- Expanding nursing programs at all eight public institutions along with other healthcare-related programs. The CEO of Portneuf Medical Center in Pocatello told the Board that there are currently 130 open nursing positions at his hospital alone and that there is a large need for additional healthcare professionals statewide.
- Improve student retention and degree completion initiatives systemwide.

- Continue the expansion of cybersecurity programs across the higher education system.
- Improve nuclear engineering facilities and programs offered by Idaho State University and the University of Idaho at their joint campus in Idaho Falls.

Staff will refine the budget line item proposals for final consideration by the Board during its August meeting.

- Approved a cost increase of the University of Idaho's expansion project of its 6th Street Greenhouse from \$815,000 to \$1.43 million due to inflation. The project received just one bid that exceeded the original budget.
- Approved a cost increase of the University of Idaho's modernization project of Parma Research and Extension Center from \$9.5 million to \$12.15 million, also due to inflation.
- Approved a resolution allowing Idaho State University to pursue reimbursement of institution reserve funds used as part of the Holt Arena renovation project. In April, the Board authorized an ISU request to use \$9.8 million in reserves to address seismic safety concerns discovered during the renovation project. Today's action authorizes the institution to issue revenue bonds to replenish its reserve fund.

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