



For Immediate Release

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BOARD DISCUSSES K-12 PRIORITIES

The Idaho State Board of Education focused much of its regular Board meeting today discussing priority areas for Idaho's K-12 education system.

The priority areas are:

- Early literacy
- Middle Grade Math
- High School Graduation
- Chronic Absenteeism

The Board reviewed the annual report from its Accountability Oversight Committee, including a review of key student performance metrics through the 2021-22 school year. Data has revealed pandemic impacts on both academic performance and attendance, and full recovery has not yet been achieved. The committee made recommendations related to improving performance across the priority areas, including:

- Maintain Idaho's commitment to Governor Brad Little's early literacy initiative, including financial and support resources and focus on students most affected by the pandemic.

- Support the work of the newly formed Middle Grades Math Work Group, which will bring recommendations to the Board this winter. Encourage Local Education Agencies (LEAS) to spend resources on math interventions, accelerated instruction and professional development to improve math instruction.
- Direct LEAs to establish early warning systems to identify students at risk of dropping out and prepare to intervene and offer supports to keep them in school.
- Collaborate on ways to help districts and schools to reduce absenteeism.

“As I stated in a recent article, in education I have found that the tyranny of the urgent often distracts us from the important,” Board President Dr. Linda Clark said. “That’s why it is so important for all of us as leaders at all levels to clearly establish priorities for our schools and students, and to stay focused on those priorities. As a Board, we will stay focused on these areas, and we expect to have useful tools available to our districts and charter schools in the coming months.”

Empowering Parents Program Update

The Board also was briefed on the Empowering Parents program final report for the current year developed and submitted to Governor Brad Little earlier this month.

The report includes information such as the number of students served – more than 49,400 statewide and where they live in Idaho.

It also includes steps taken to improve purchase procedures to tighten controls.

Report highlights include:

- 89 percent of the purchases were for eligible items.
- Only one percent of purchases (less than 500) were for ineligible items
- Two percent of the purchases(1050) were potentially eligible, pending further review by the Parent Advisory Panel and the Board, and over just over 3,500 purchases (8 percent of the total) did not include sufficient documentation for a determination to be made.
- Odyssey has agreed to reimburse \$180,000 for purchases made that were ineligible
- Odyssey is negotiating a settlement with the State Department of Purchasing to return interest earnings on grant funds.

- Improved business procedures are in place better outlining responsibilities for Odyssey, the online platform vendor and the office of the State Board of Education to verify eligibility before purchases are made

Superintendent Debbie Critchfield and the Empowering Parents Advisory Council have met several times and will make recommendations to the Board in October both to refine eligible purchases and continue to improve the program.

Other Board actions include:

- Approved a request by Boise State University to increase the budget for the design phase for its planned north end zone addition at Albertsons Stadium. If the Board approves construction, the addition is expected to cost \$32 to \$40 million.
- The Board also gave Boise State the go ahead to enter into a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Boise to develop the Lusk District near the west side of campus. Boise State owns property within the district and the proposed development would include student house, parking, retail, office and service uses. The Board also approved Boise State’s plan to sell the Park Apartments to the city as part of the Lusk District development.
- The Board also approved the University of Idaho’s plan for a long-term lease of university property to the Home Depot for a 136,000 square foot store in Moscow. U of I leaders say the proceeds from the lease will benefit the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Several Moscow residents have contacted the Board office in recent days expressing concerns that the store will affect local businesses. “This is not the only piece of property available,” Board Member Kurt Liebich said. If we don’t approve this deal, they, (the Home Depot) want to be in the Moscow market and they will find another piece of property, so I think this is right for the students at the University of Idaho.”

The Idaho State Board of Education today also approved three education-related legislative proposals for the 2024 legislative session.

Included in the proposals is draft legislation to clarify and improve protections for student and educator data; enable the Board office to offer PERSI retirement benefits to incoming non-classified employees who are not already vested in

PERSI; remove statutory requirements that Idaho's postsecondary institutions report student transfer data to the State Board of Education. The proposal would move those requirements to Board policy, to make it easier to adjust when programs and technologies change.

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