



Idaho State Department of Education

STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY, 2015-2021

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VISION STATEMENT

Supporting Schools and Students to Achieve.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Idaho State Department of Education is dedicated to providing the highest quality of support and collaboration to Idaho's public schools, teachers, students and parents.

STRATEGIC PLAN INTRODUCTION

As Superintendent of Public Instruction, I am committed to supporting districts and schools to ensure a high quality education for all Idaho students so that they are ready to succeed in life. In keeping with this commitment, the Idaho State Department of Education's Strategic Plan establishes specific and measurable goals as well as the Department's strategies for achieving them. This plan will both clarify and focus the work of the Department, enabling targeted support to districts and unifying the efforts of Idaho's educators for the benefit of students statewide.

The plan embodies the Department's strong emphasis on improving K-12 education culture in Idaho, and will empower districts to provide high quality education while moving away from a rigid philosophy of over-testing, compliance, and a one-size-fits-all accountability structure. Moving forward, the Department will work with local districts to achieve high-level outcomes for students while also adhering to its guiding principles in order to ensure that this cultural shift occurs seamlessly.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The needs of children must drive any necessary change.
2. Every student can learn and must have a highly effective teacher in every classroom.
3. Current and new resources must focus on the demands of the 21st Century.

STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITY

The following statement in Idaho Code articulates the authority for the state to govern the public K-12 education system.

"The state board shall adopt rules, pursuant to the provisions of chapter 52, title 67, Idaho Code, and section 33-105(3), Idaho Code, to establish a thorough system of public schools with uniformity as required by the constitution, but shall not otherwise impinge upon the authority of the board of trustees of the school districts. Authority to govern the school district, vested in the board of trustees of the school district, not delegated to the state board, is reserved to the board of trustees."

Our plan acknowledges and honors the distinction of roles between the state and local districts. Indeed, the state seeks to partner with districts to improve education for all students.

THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department's new Strategic Plan builds on the State School Accountability Scorecard and the 2012 Governor's Task Force for Improving Education recommendations, which list 20 priorities that help to describe a new vision for Idaho's public schools. Some recommendations have since been completed, and I believe in the value of the 16 recommendations that are in the process of being implemented. This plan builds upon these recommendations and helps to integrate them into the work of the Department. They include:

- Transitioning to a mastery-based education system
- Retaining the Idaho Content Standards
- Increasing literacy proficiency
- Providing advanced opportunities for all students
- Introducing a new, mutually responsible accountability system
- Empowering districts with autonomy to innovate
- Maintaining continuous improvement through effective planning and progress monitoring
- Encouraging the development of *district-wide* collaboration systems
- Improving high speed bandwidth and wireless infrastructure
- Providing educators and students with technology in the classroom
- Enabling district autonomy through increased operational funding
- Utilizing the career ladder compensation model
- Funding schools through an enrollment model
- Emphasizing and encouraging teacher-to-teacher mentoring and collaboration
- Supporting teachers and leaders with job-embedded professional learning
- Providing teachers with enhanced pre-service training

The full summary recommendations are appended to this document.

OUR GOALS

The Department has articulated its goals for public education in Idaho in terms of outcomes for students, and will give districts and schools the necessary support to reach these goals. This plan also describes the supporting strategies which will drive the Department's work.

I have chosen to focus the Department's work on three goals, all of which will contribute to success for Idaho's students.

1. All Idaho students persevere in life and are ready for college and careers.
2. All education stakeholders in Idaho are mutually responsible for accountability and student progress.
3. Idaho attracts and retains great teachers and leaders.

OUR STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE EACH GOAL

The Department has adopted a set of strategies that will contribute to each goal's success. Each strategy has been assigned a responsible leader at the Department as well as underlying key projects that are either already underway or are planned.¹ While these strategies aim to codify the work that will have the most significant impact on each goal, we acknowledge that the work of all educators in Idaho impacts student achievement in ways far beyond this document's description.

GOAL 1: ALL IDAHO STUDENTS PERSEVERE IN LIFE AND ARE READY FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Strategy 1.1: Fully implement the Idaho Content Standards (TF 2)

Idaho's methodology for fully implementing the Idaho Content Standards is largely based in the expansion of successful teacher coaching programming, which will grow to include Math teachers in addition to the existing ELA component. This coaching model is designed to invest in human capital that remains in local districts and that meets local needs. Coaches focus on instructional shifts and work over time, face-to-face with teachers to help provide coherence and flexibility around the Idaho Content Standards, as well as immediate impact in classrooms. Long term, coaches will also include training administrators and regional cadres.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Provide funding for systems and professional development to enable progress monitoring
- Scale coaching program to include Math in addition to English Language Arts
- Promote and emphasize the importance of teacher-to-teacher mentoring (TF 15)

Strategy 1.2: Explore options and opportunities for students to attend pre-kindergarten

Historically, publicly funded Pre-K has only been available to a small group of students with special needs in Idaho. While some have called for optional, public and voluntary Pre-K, others have shown opposition to this idea. In order to better understand the possibility of offering state-funded public Pre-K for 3 and 4 year olds in Idaho, SDE seeks to explore options, needs and costs through research and, possibly, incubation programs.

Strategy 1.3: Implement multiple pathways to graduation

In order to implement multiple pathways to graduation, SDE will assert, provide and offer increased flexibility (alternative methods) for students to demonstrate competency in satisfying state and local graduation requirements. The Advanced Opportunities and GEAR UP programs will all contribute to this strategy, as will targeted efforts for special education and gifted and talented students.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Investigate alternate routes to graduation (including demonstrated mastery)
- Promote and emphasize career coaches and teacher-to-student mentoring
- Provide advanced opportunities to all students (TF 4)

¹ Note that strategies or projects that relate directly to the Governor's Task Force for Improving Education recommendations are indicated with a TF in parentheses, followed by the associated recommendation number.

Strategy 1.4: Improve the ways in which funding is leveraged to benefit students

The State Department of Education seeks to more purposefully allocate state funds for programs in a way that maximizes flexibility for districts. Historically, the budgeting process does not afford adequate attention to the mechanisms through which funds are disbursed, leading to unnecessary burden to districts using these funds. As a result of stakeholder feedback on this process, SDE is working with the appropriate state-level personnel to adjust funding streams and allow greater flexibility.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Support local school districts through a revised, strategic public schools budget which removes barriers and mandates to provide flexibility and local control
- Request funding for SDE priorities including career counseling, regional education centers, personalized learning, and the Career Ladder
- Leverage all federal funds, where possible, for district use

Strategy 1.5: Support technology in the classroom

SDE will endeavor to support districts to integrate locally chosen technology solutions that will improve student learning. While SDE seeks to offer feedback and guidance when asked, the state seeks to fund and empower each district to implement technology improvements.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Provide all schools with broadband internet and wireless networks (TF 9)
- Ensure that all students and teachers can use technology in the classroom (TF 10)
- Provide guidance and expertise to enable each district to choose an Instructional Management System that works best for them, and funds its implementation

GOAL 2: ALL EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS IN IDAHO ARE MUTUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT PROGRESS

Strategy 2.1: Increase district autonomy and ability to innovate

To implement this strategy, we recommend the Governor's Office, State Board of Education, and State Department of Education evaluate existing education laws and administrative rules and work with the Legislature to remove those which impede local autonomy, flexibility to adapt to local circumstances, and the ability of the schools to be agile, adaptive, innovative, and drive continuous improvement.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Reduce compliance-based rules and regulations where possible (TF 6)
- Encourage district-wide empowerment to choose their own electronic collaboration systems to avoid unnecessary centralization of information (TF8)
- Reduce line-item mandates to ensure flexibility with district discretionary funding
- Implement increased district flexibility under the New Every Student Succeeds Act

Strategy 2.2: Build a new accountability system

SDE will continue to work with the Accountability and Oversight Committee (AOC) from the SBOE to design and implement a fair and equitable accountability system, using a pipeline of support through district partnerships. The system will allow districts flexibility to support schools using locally-determined interventions, and better enable districts to react to feedback from schools. The state will work with districts to create their plans to improve struggling schools, guided by a clear set of improvement principles. The new accountability model will replace the star-rating system, which was revealed through feedback from the field to be difficult to understand and communicate to stakeholders. As we continue this work, we will receive further guidance from the US Department of Education as to how and what must be included in the Accountability System.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Prioritize the use of district strategic plans to drive improvement (TF 7)
- Rebuild school accountability plans so that they reinforce mutual accountability based on multiple measures of student performance, rather than compliance

Strategy 2.3: Establish a Mastery Education Network (TF 1)

Mastery education is being embraced by districts and schools across the country as a method of empowering learners, allowing more student voice and enabling students to learn at their own pace. At its core is the shift to learning as measured by a student's ability to demonstrate mastery, not seat time devoted to a subject or grade level. SDE will facilitate the creation of a voluntary network of schools that will begin to implement shifts toward mastery. During the first several years of this network, the state will convene these schools to learn from one another, support the schools where appropriate, learn from school innovations and best practices, and collect models for implementation to prepare for supporting additional schools in this shift. SDE will also investigate which state policies and rules impede a true mastery model, and work with state lawmakers to remove policy barriers to full implementation.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Investigate and initiate the necessary legislative policy changes
- Align funding and accountability models to the mastery education network
- Provide support and guidance to schools that opt-in to the mastery education network

Strategy 2.4: Engage and collaborate with diverse stakeholder groups to ensure mutual responsibility for K-12 education in Idaho

SDE will create a consistent process for the receipt of stakeholder groups' input. SDE will link its communications and feedback plan and the Community Relations Officer's work, allowing them to act in tandem with one another. SDE will continue to be present at stakeholder meetings and involved with their work, and will experiment with new approaches to structured consultation with stakeholders.

GOAL 3: IDAHO ATTRACTS AND RETAINS GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Strategy 3.1: Improve professional support for educators

SDE will work to enhance the experience of being a teacher in Idaho, both at the pre-service stage and in schools, by engaging districts to build their own capacity to train and support teachers.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Provide job-embedded professional development (including in support of the mastery-based education network) (TF 16)
- Provide school leader evaluation training (TF 18)
- Advocate for funding for a robust teacher mentoring program
- Allow more capacity-building activities to be used for administrator certification.

Strategy 3.2: Establish rural education centers

Idaho SDE will provide a central location of support for rural schools, enabling them to acquire the assistance and skills that their individual budgets do not allow, but that larger districts can often provide for themselves. This includes special education and English language learner support, recertification credit offerings, professional learning communities, substitute teacher pools, grant writers, and other specialized hires.

Strategy 3.3: Align systems to support educators

Idaho employs standards both for educators and for student learning. In order to be considered learner-ready and to continue to grow throughout their careers, educators should come out of teacher preparation programs with working knowledge of these sets of standards. This strategy seeks to ensure that teacher preparation programs are providing this knowledge of performance standards as well as incorporating the Idaho Standards of Learning.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Investigate school funding models that are aligned to the mastery-based education network (TF 13)
- Sustain and support the Career Ladder Compensation Model (TF 12)
- Engage colleges of education to adapt pre-service teacher training to Idaho Content Standards and mastery-based instructional practices (TF 19)
- Conduct State Specific Requirement Reviews of all teacher preparation programs in the state

Strategy 3.4: Communicate to change the culture and image of K-12 education in Idaho

The culture and image of K-12 education in Idaho are in need of a refresh, both in support of the Superintendent's budget and priorities, and to more broadly positively shift the public's perception of the teaching workforce. To drive change and tone, SDE plans to incorporate language in support of this culture change into all public facing communications (speeches, messaging, etc.) from the department, consistently highlighting the important work and value of teachers, and continuing to build strong relationships with reporters.

Strategic Plan Part 1 Appendix: Governor's Task Force for Improvement Education Summary Recommendations (September 6, 2013)

Link:

https://boardofed.idaho.gov/board_initiatives/Education_Improvement_Taskforce/Task%20Force%20for%20Improving%20Education_Final_09-06-13.pdf