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STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELEASES PRELIMINARY INFORMATION ON BROADBAND CONTRACTS

(BOISE) -- The State Department of Education has released, today, details of the broadband service contracts acquired by local school districts to replace the Idaho Education Network.

Superintendent Sherri Ybarra and Will Goodman, her chief of technology, praised the school districts for their efforts “to ensure that students were held harmless” when it appeared broadband service might be lost.

A court ruling in mid-February voided the Department of Administration contract for the IEN and soon afterward the Idaho Legislature voted to give Supt. Ybarra \$3.6 million to distribute to districts to procure their own broadband service. Within a week of the governor signing the bill all of the districts had transitioned to their own service with the help of Goodman and his staff. Goodman praised the districts, noting “the districts did an incredible job getting their services switched quickly and at little disruption to the students.”

In a number of cases, districts were able to get broadband services at a lower cost than the state’s IEN costs. “We want to compliment the vendors, some of whom are providing service at or below cost in order to help support schools in this difficult time,” Goodman said. “They were as concerned about the kids as everyone else in education.” Working together, he added, the local school districts, the state department and the vendors “were able to weather the storm.”

The legislature is now considering a bill that would extend the superintendent’s authority beyond this fiscal year, which ends June 30, and provide funding to reimburse districts for broadband costs in the next fiscal year. “We appreciate the legislature’s confidence in our ability to do the job efficiently,” Superintendent Ybarra said, stressing that the work done by department staff to help the districts is an example of her vision to redirect the department as a service agency and resource for local school districts.

--More--



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The original distribution of \$2,000 per district was completed on Friday, March 6. That payment helped the districts as they worked at avoiding an interruption of service. The remaining distribution for the IEN replacement funds will be processed by next week. The first distribution was to cover all or part of the costs incurred by the districts, including any new infrastructure they needed. The second distribution will cover any remaining costs. If districts get replacement service below the \$2,000 figure for the rest of the school year, they will return the excess to the state.

Goodman noted several points to consider concerning the attached spreadsheet:

- The IEN total cost is multiplied by the term the district contract listed instead of a constant 4.5 months.
- Many of the districts' reported monthly costs became one-time costs after the SDE finished reviewing each contract. Most of the ENA contracts listed a one-time cost versus a monthly cost.
- The terms on the contracts varied.
- The SDE's review team will meet tomorrow to review any applications that were outside of the expected cost, had missing documentation, or had documentation that did not align to what was reported.
- This information is preliminary until the reviews are complete. The totals may change before final payment is made.

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