



SHERRI YBARRA, ED.S.
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

650 W. STATE STREET, 2ND FLOOR
BOISE, IDAHO 83702
(208) 332-6800 OFFICE / 711 TRS
WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV

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www.sde.idaho.gov

Media Contact:
Kristin Rodine
Public Information Officer
208-332-6807
krodine@sde.idaho.gov

Superintendent Ybarra votes to replace ‘Common Core’ standards

(BOISE) – Proposed legislation to adopt new Idaho content standards for math, science and English Language Arts and to replace certification standards for school personnel moved forward from the House Education Committee Thursday morning, and a short time later Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra urged the State Board of Education to support the legislation to eliminate the Common Core and adopt the revised standards.

Board staff had recommended the board oppose the legislation, but after lengthy discussion, board members voiced support for the new standards as long as concerns were met about the costs of aligning assessments with the standards. Superintendent Ybarra’s motion was revised to endorse the measures if the Legislature committed to adequate funding for aligning the assessment and for work school districts will need to implement the new standards. But that motion failed, with six board members abstaining from the vote; none voted against it.

Superintendent Ybarra, a member of the board, stressed that endorsing the legislation would send a message to the public, who have pushed for replacement of the controversial Idaho content standards, first adopted in 2011, known as Common Core.

“The perception of the public is these are Common Core standards, and they are still not happy,” Superintendent Ybarra told the board.

“We did what legislators and the public asked us to do. We did the work and followed the process, set by the State Board of Education, of reviewing and revising standards,” Superintendent Ybarra said.

“These new standards are streamlined, simplified, clear and still rigorous.”

“These changes were done by educators, they were done by parents, they were done in alignment with the review process,” she told the board.

Although most did not cast votes, board members said they support the new standards and the thorough and deliberate process facilitated by the State Department of Education and conducted by committees of educators, parents, legislators, school board members and administrators.

That process also drew strong praise across the street at the Statehouse, including representatives of the Idaho School Board Association and the Idaho Education Association, who commented on the involvement of educators.

Rep. Julie Yamamoto, R-Caldwell, made the motion to send the standards bill and resolution to the House floor with a “do pass” recommendation. She commended the SDE’s handling of the standards process, saying “it was led with such intentionality, with such respect for the teachers of Idaho.”

Idaho’s standards review and revision process culminates in the State Board adopting the standards and forwarding them to the Legislature. But the board did not adopt the revised math, ELA and science standards, nor the new certification standards for school personnel. So House Education Committee Chairman Lance Clow drew up measures to accomplish standards adoption through legislative action.

The House and Senate Education Committee played a key role in development of the standards, communicating their expectations to the superintendent and to the State Board. Some legislators served on the content standards committees, and the Legislature also convened an interim committee that met during the summer and fall of 2020.

“I made a promise to the Legislature in 2020 in a joint letter with the State Board of Education that we would review and revise these standards,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “And I keep my promises.”

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