

LEN B JORDAN OFFICE BUILDING
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March 18, 2020

Dear Idaho Senate and House Education Committees,

Thank you for your letter of March 9th. We are committed to working with you to review Idaho's content standards in a manner that reflects Idaho's needs and values through a collaborative process with the Legislature, educators, parents and the public. We share your goal to seek compromise and agreement on the content standards.

Below are responses to the specific requests in your letter. All information and responses provided are contingent on coordination with the legislative interim committee contemplated by SCR 132 (2020) to avoid duplication of effort.

Content Standards

The process to review content standards includes a review committee consisting of Idaho educators with experience in the content area. At a minimum the committee will include both elementary and secondary instructional staff as well as postsecondary faculty from four-year and two-year institutions, public school administrators, and parents of school-aged children. We also ask that you help us in identifying representatives from the Legislature to serve on each content review committee.

A. Math

- a. Explicitly state grade levels at which students should demonstrate mastery of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts. Integrate these basics with critical thinking and real-life problem solving throughout the standards to ensure more connections to science, business, and other related disciplines.
- b. Reduce the number of standards, use less complex verbiage, and prioritize the more important concepts without marginalizing the accuracy of the standards.
- c. Ensure the standards are age and grade level-appropriate especially in the early grades, emphasizing the concrete nature of young minds.
- d. Make certain that standards requiring problem solving are age appropriate and do not exceed the knowledge standards accepted for each grade level.

We will ensure that the review committees have specific instruction to include these considerations in their process and that the resulting work reflects these points.

B. English Language Arts

- a. Idaho Standards should have explicit, systematic and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension.

- b. Provide better balance between fiction and non-fiction reading materials, emphasizing value-rich, historically important, and uplifting literature (particularly American and English literature).
- c. Reduce the number of standards, use less complex verbiage, and prioritize the more important concepts.
- d. Renew Idaho's focus on content-rich English Language Arts standards by prioritizing the basics of reading and writing, with less emphasis on analysis, style, and complex writing forms in the lower grades.

We will ensure that the review committees have specific instruction to include these considerations in their process and that the resulting work reflects these points.

C. Science

- a. Please remove the supporting content (curriculum) from the incorporated by reference document immediately. Local school districts are responsible for curriculum.

The Superintendent favors removing supporting content, and will recommend such to the State Board of Education, which can be accomplished immediately through a waiver.

- b. Provide balance in standards that have been politicized. (e.g. include both positive and negative aspects of energy sources).
- c. Focus on age appropriateness for science, ensuring that these basic concepts are understood before delving deeply into theoretical science. Additionally, please ensure that standards requiring problem solving are age appropriate and do not exceed the knowledge standards accepted for each grade level.

We will ensure that the review committees have specific instruction to include these considerations in their process and that the resulting work reflects these points.

D. ESSA Assessment

- a. Use some items (questions) on the assessments that have been written or approved by experts in Idaho, and that all items to be used on the new Idaho assessment reviewed by a complement of experts and others in Idaho.

This will be assigned to the Bias and Sensitivity Committee for review. This committee is established in Idaho Code §33-134.

- b. Ensure that this test is not based on Common Core. Please explore assessment options including removing Idaho from the SBAC consortium and cancelling the SBAC contract.

The State Board will be discussing the state assessment at its April meeting.

Process

We believe the process of rewriting the content standards should take place beginning immediately and be completed as soon as possible while creating excellent standards. We expect schools will use current standards during the rewrite process.

In reviewing/rewriting the standards, we would like to see the Board and the Department look at nationally recognized quality standards from a variety of sources, including states such as Florida, Massachusetts, Texas and Nebraska, and compare and contrast these standards with Idaho's. From this work, develop what Idaho teachers, parents, and administrators believe to be

the best set of standards considering age appropriateness, readability, quality of content, and sequential nature.

We will ensure that the review committees have specific instruction to review, discuss and consider standards adopted by other states.

Please provide estimated costs such as requirements for a new test, and fulfilling federal accountability requirements. However, the first priority should be the needs of the students, secondly parents and teachers, and third, accountability to the federal government.

The State Department of Education has prepared cost estimates for a new assessment and will provide them to the germane committees and the interim committee.

When selecting the committees to rewrite the content standards please include people who understand current issues with Common Core, retired teachers who have used previous standards, parents from across the state who have expressed interest, administrators with a variety of perspectives, as well as experts from other states. Bring together experts from across all grade levels to evaluate sequencing of concepts and grade level appropriateness.

The review committees will be comprised of a diverse set of educators and stakeholders as described previously.

Please embed traditional American civics throughout K-12 standards.

Pursuant to Idaho Code §33-1602, instruction in citizenship is required to be delivered in all elementary and secondary schools. Citizenship instruction shall include lessons on the role of the citizen in the constitutional republic, how laws are made, how officials are elected, and the importance of voting and of participating in government. The civics and government standards are embedded in the social studies standards for each grade level. As part of the content standards review process, a review committee will evaluate the current civics and government standards at each grade level and make recommendations for improvement.

We would like you to develop a clear progression of content from one grade to the next that is aligned from early learning to post-secondary education to continue increasing student knowledge and skills over time.

The review committees will be asked to consider recommendations on developing a matrix showing the progression of content from one grade to the next. This will help to identify gaps that can be addressed in the recommendations for the content standards review.

While rewriting the standards, keep in mind the professional development needed to implement them. Please address financial literacy in all grades at appropriate places in the standards.

Financial literacy is currently included in the state social studies content standards as part of the economics content. A coordination of what currently exists within subject matters for financial literacy can be reviewed and provided to review committees to avoid duplication. Similar to the civics and government standards, the review committee will be asked to look at the standards for each grade level and make recommendations to the grade and crosswalk with the mathematics content standards with the intent of incorporating financial literacy in mathematics courses.

Curriculum, Instruction, Student Assignments

While it is not in the Legislature's purview to be involved in curriculum, instruction, and/or student assignments, we do request that the State Department of Education utilize the appropriated resources to provide enough support to schools and teachers so the standards can be implemented in a suitable fashion. Engaging instruction, meaningful assignments, and interaction with parents are each critically important, and hopefully will be accomplished in every classroom across Idaho. Please work with school boards and district administrators to ensure they understand their roles in choosing curriculum, using the best instructional techniques, and giving students meaningful assignments.

Passage of S1285 (2020) would require training of all school district and charter school board trustees or directors. Should this bill become law, the State Board will work with the Idaho School Boards Association for the development and delivery of training. In addition, there are existing qualified trainers identified to provide training to school district and charter school leadership in the areas of governance.

Other Issues

During the House Education committee's administrative rules review of the omnibus docket several additional issues were discussed at length. The House Education committee would like to identify four issues that garnered commentary. While the House Education committee believes these issues are on the State Board and Department of Education's radar, there is value to confirm our interest in seeing them addressed.

1. Review the standards for initial certification in order to reduce paperwork and other requirements which cause unnecessary expense, time, and work for the colleges but don't truly improve the quality of graduating teachers. Work with the teacher preparation programs to provide them more flexibility through the streamlining of this process.

The Superintendent has already committed to convening a broad-based review committee of all the teacher preparation standards over the next 18 months (see letter attached).

2. Remove the senior math requirement while still requiring six math credits for graduation.

The Superintendent will bring this forward to the Board at its April meeting.

3. Consider not requiring veteran teachers to be evaluated on all evaluation standards every year.

Idaho Code requires all certificated staff to have an annual evaluation. Additionally, instructional staff and pupil service staff who do not have an evaluation would be impacted in their ability to move on the career ladder or to receive the professional endorsement and the new advanced professional endorsement. School districts currently have the ability to focus on different domains as they are relevant to an

individual's professional practice and level of experience. The Office of the State Board of Education will continue to work with school districts and charter schools on how to document their decisions to not rate a specific component, but rather focus on other domains or components based on a staff person's individualized professional learning plan.

4. Evaluate social studies and other endorsement requirements considering the difficulty small and rural schools have in hiring endorsed teachers in some subjects. Please consider a consistent degree of difficulty for the various disciplines. The Superintendent has already committed to convening a broad-based committee to review all the teacher preparation standards over the next 18 months.



Debbie Critchfield
President
State Board of Education



Sherri Ybarra
Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Department of Education



IDAHO

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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February 26, 2020

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I appreciate your support for taking a thoughtful, measured approach to reviewing and revising Idaho's teacher certification standards and want to take this opportunity to share my thoughts about how to proceed.

Rather than bring forward only 20 percent of the certification and endorsement standards next year as the Department typically does, I plan to have a broad-based committee review all the teacher preparation standards over the next 18 months. The review committee would include educators, legislators, parents and others interested in reviewing, streamlining, and simplifying certification standards and endorsements.

The committee will be tasked with reviewing the standards with the goal of reducing requirements that cause unnecessary expense, time, and work for our higher education institutions but have no correlation to improving the quality of teaching. The goal would be to provide our teacher preparation programs with more flexibility and opportunity to innovate.

The work would begin this summer with the intent to bring changes to the Board of Education in Nov. of 2021 for review and approval of the Legislature in 2022.

I look forward to working with you and to having members of your committee participate in this important process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherri A. Ybarra".

Sherri A. Ybarra, Ed.S.
Superintendent of Public Instruction