

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding the Alignment of Idaho's School Age and Public School Accountability

ISSUE

Idaho's high school graduation requirements and accountability measures are currently based on a four-year period, yet the mandatory school age is set at 16. This misalignment creates challenges for schools as they strive to meet accountability goals.

BACKGROUND

Idaho requires students to take a college entrance exam during their 11th grade.

Graduation rates are calculated based on a four-year cohort, including two grades when students are older than 16.

High schools must achieve a 90% graduation goal and ensure college and career readiness through various courses and certifications, all completed during the 12th grade.

CONCERNS

Current school age requirements do not match the expectations set for student achievement.

Accountability measures are not aligned with the age at which students are completing critical milestones.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association proposes changing the required school age from 16 to 18, unless a student graduates early or obtains their GED. This change aims to better match the state's accountability expectations with the actual timeline of student achievements during high school.

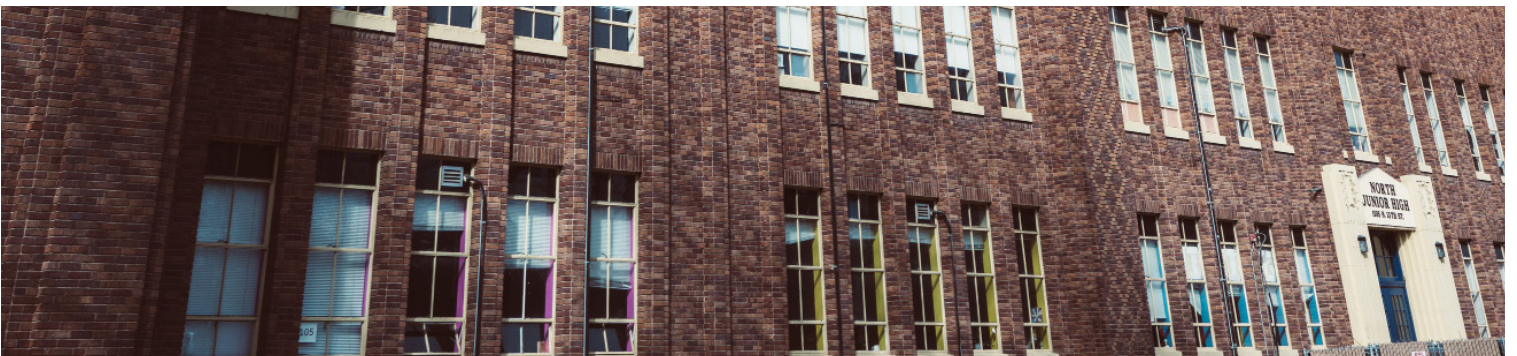
HERE'S WHY

Idaho's high school accountability relies on achievements in the final two years, when most students are over 16.

Aligning the school age with the accountability measures ensures a more accurate reflection of student progress.

Improved Alignment: Changing the required school age to 18 better aligns with the critical years for achieving graduation and college/career readiness goals.

Accurate Accountability: Schools can be more accurately assessed based on their performance during the entirety of a student's high school experience.



CONCLUSION

Aligning the school age requirements with the state's accountability expectations will contribute to a fairer assessment of schools and a more accurate representation of student achievements. This change reflects the evolving landscape of education and ensures that schools are held accountable in a manner that considers the realities of the modern high school experience.

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding K-12 Funding Formula Principles

ISSUE

Idaho's current public school funding system is faced with challenges that result in disparities among school districts and charter schools, affecting the services provided to students.

BACKGROUND

The Idaho Constitution mandates a "general, uniform, and thorough system of public, free common schools."

A majority of Idaho school districts rely on supplemental levies for operations, and charter schools cannot levy taxes for additional funding.

Inequities exist in passing adequacy of supplemental levies.

Currently, the Legislature does not allocate any funds for construction and maintenance of facilities.

The current funding practices have led to an uneven and incomplete public school system.

CONCERNS

Other proposals lack predictability, adequacy, transparency, and stability in the funding system.

Insufficient funding affects essential needs, competitive wages, and inflation adjustments for Idaho schools.

The absence of facility supports impact safety and quality learning environments.

The existing model fails to address the growing enrollment and specific needs of diverse student populations.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association resolves to collaborate with the Legislature and stakeholders for the adoption of a funding formula based on the following principles:

Predictability: Ensure the ability to accurately predict and budget for future years.

Adequacy: Provide sufficient funding for essential needs, competitive wages, and inflation adjustments.

Transparency: Clearly outline funding sources, expenditure details, and be easily understood by all stakeholders.

Stability: Avoid abrupt changes in funding from year to year.

Uniform and Thorough: Support

student growth, address special population needs, and attend to facility and safety requirements.

Quality Staffing: Recognize and honor staff experience, education, and allocate funds for recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Holds Harmless: Ensure no loss of funding for any Local Education Agency (LEA), with a consideration for growing enrollment.

Enrollment: Maintain funding based on enrollment to adequately staff, maintain facilities, and purchase materials.

Accountable: Tie funding to documented LEA goals, ensuring consistency in requirements for all recipients of public funding.

HERE'S WHY

Past attempts to revise the funding formula were not successful.

The 2019 Legislature approved HB 293, outlining definitions for a Student-Based Funding Formula model. The 2021 Legislative Session did not address the proposed model, leaving the issue unresolved.

These guiding principles provide a standard against which funding formula ideas can be evaluated.

CONCLUSION

These guiding principles aim to address the deficiencies in Idaho's current K-12 funding system, ensuring fairness, transparency, and adequacy. By adopting a funding formula aligned with these principles, Idaho can move towards providing a more uniform, thorough, and equitable education system for all students, educators, and taxpayers.



POLICY BRIEF

Understanding Open Enrollment Program and Building Capacity Limits

ISSUE

Recent changes in Senate Bill 1125 of the 2023 Legislative session overhauled the open enrollment options in Idaho schools, creating challenges related to building capacity and special program capacity.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill 1125 modified Idaho Code 33-1402, requiring districts to accept students from outside the district boundaries.

The bill allows transfers based on capacity issues at the grade level with parent consent but lacks exceptions for building or special program capacity. Special programs like Career Technical Education (CTE), Gifted and Talented programs, and Special Education have unique requirements and capacities.

CONCERNS

Capacity exceptions are tied only to grade level enrollment, neglecting building and special program capacities.

Special programs often have specialized equipment, certified staff, and unique locations, making capacity adjustments challenging.

The law may force enrollment in special programs even if the school/grade level housing the program has capacity issues.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Open Enrollment Decisions: Allow districts to consider building capacity and special program capacity in open enrollment decisions.

Reporting Sections: Modify the code to enable districts to report both building and special program capacity in required reporting sections.

Enrollment Requirements: Modify the code to consider special program enrollment requirements

as exceptions to the transfer requirement.

Parent Notification: Modify the code to add an exception allowing districts to transfer students to another school without parent consent when the current school exceeds capacity, with parent notification. These apply only for parents or guardians who knowingly enroll their kid in their non-resident school or district.

HERE'S WHY

Open enrollment is essential for school choice, but limitations tied solely to grade level capacity present challenges. Special programs, like CTE and Gifted and Talented, face unique constraints. The proposed changes aim to address these challenges and ensure fair and effective open enrollment.

Special Programs: Recognize the unique needs of special programs, allowing capacity exceptions to ensure proper functioning and quality education.

Building Capacity: Permit districts to consider building capacity when deciding open enrollment to avoid issues related to fire code, staffing, and lunch programs.

Enrollment Requirements: Acknowledge legal, age, proficiency, or skill level requirements for special programs, allowing verification for open enrolling students.

CONCLUSION

Open enrollment is essential for school choice, but limitations tied solely to grade level capacity present challenges. Special programs, like CTE and Gifted and Talented, face unique constraints. The proposed changes aim to address these challenges and ensure fair and effective open enrollment.

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding the Requirements for Paraprofessional Employment in Idaho

ISSUE

There is a shortage of paraprofessionals in Idaho, and recent changes in testing methods have made it difficult for school districts and charter schools to fill this important role.

BACKGROUND

Idaho is experiencing a shortage of paraprofessionals, impacting schools and students.

Changes by the testing vendor mean that school districts can no longer use a specific test to assess paraprofessional skills.

The new testing method is more expensive and has a burdensome waiting list, causing delays in hiring and retesting.

CONCERNS

The current testing method for paraprofessionals is costly, with an increased fee of \$80 per test.

The new testing system has a waiting list of up to one month, delaying the hiring process.

Retesting can take an additional month, affecting the quick placement of much-needed personnel.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association proposes changes to allow more flexibility in assessing paraprofessionals:

Amend IDAPA 08.02.02.10: Allow districts to use local assessments approved by the Idaho State Board of Education or existing approved paraprofessional subject matter competency tests.

HERE'S WHY

The shortage of paraprofessionals in Idaho is a challenge for schools. The current testing requirements, specifically the ETS-ParaPro (PRAXIS) test, have become a barrier for many potential employees. As of December 23, 2022, local districts can no longer use the PRAXIS test, and the new testing system is causing delays and increased costs for prospective paraprofessionals.

The proposed changes aim to provide a solution by allowing districts to use alternative assessments approved by the State Board of Education, offering more flexibility while still meeting federal requirements for paraprofessional employment. This flexibility aligns Idaho with other states and ensures local control with state oversight.



CONCLUSION

The proposed changes to the paraprofessional testing requirements seek to address the current challenges in hiring and testing. By allowing districts to use alternative assessments, Idaho can better meet the needs of schools, prospective paraprofessionals, and ultimately, the students who rely on these essential support staff.

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding Career Ladder Placement for School Nurse and Speech/Language Personnel

ISSUE

Recruiting and retaining highly effective school nurses and speech/language pathologists (SLPs) is crucial for the health and academic success of students in Idaho's public schools. However, the current system of placing new hires on the career ladder based solely on certificated experience in schools may not fully account for their valuable professional experiences outside the school setting, thus shifting the cost onto taxpayers to fill the gap.

BACKGROUND

Idaho faces a shortage of school nurses and SLPs across various grade levels, school districts, and the entire state.

School nurses and SLPs are currently placed on the career ladder based solely on their experience within the school system, which is not commensurate with what it costs to hire them.

Many school nurses and SLPs bring significant professional experience from outside the school setting.

Many school districts and charter schools are absorbing additional costs to pay higher salaries to attract and retain quality professionals in these roles.

CONCERNS

The current system does not consider valuable professional experiences outside of the school setting when placing new hires on the career ladder.

School districts and charter schools are grappling with the shortage by offering enhanced salary rates, which may not be sustainable in the long term.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association proposes amending Idaho Code 33-1004B to create a more effective mechanism for attracting and placing school nurses, SLPs, and other licensed individuals on the career ladder. This may include using a method similar to that for Career Technical Education (CTE) teachers, where specific years of industry experience determine the placement on the career ladder.

HERE'S WHY

The resolution aims to establish a fair system for determining the salaries of school nurses and SLPs based on their professional and/or in-school experiences. The goal is to support school districts in recruiting and retaining highly skilled professionals in these vital roles. By considering experiences both within and outside the school setting, the proposed changes seek to recognize the diverse expertise these individuals bring to the education system.



CONCLUSION

The proposed amendment to Idaho Code 33-1004B is designed to address the shortage of school nurses and SLPs by creating a more flexible and equitable system for career ladder placement. By acknowledging the valuable experiences of professionals both within and outside the school setting, Idaho can better attract and retain the high-quality staff needed to ensure the health and academic success of students across the state.

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding the Streamlining of ISBA Legislative Priorities

ISSUE

Members of the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA) actively participate in setting legislative priorities through resolutions, but the current process requires constant renewal. This resolution aims to streamline and maintain consistent priorities without the need for frequent renewals.

BACKGROUND

ISBA members bring forward resolutions annually, which expire every two years unless renewed.

The ISBA Executive Board proposes compiling a list of priorities that align with the members' will, eliminating the need for repetitive renewals.

The resolution does not prevent members from introducing new resolutions or editing existing ones.

This process allows for periodic review and amendments every other year.

CONCERNS

The current system requires constant renewal of resolutions, which can be time-consuming.

Priorities, such as local governance, funding options for school facilities, and opposition to public funds for private schools, have consistently passed as resolutions.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association proposes the continuation of legislative priorities without the need for constant renewal.

Local Governance: Maintain the authority of local school board members for strong governance and decision-making.

School Facilities Funding: Encourage the state to explore more

efficient funding options for school facilities.

Public Funds Allocation: Oppose the allocation of public funds to private schools without accountability or transparency.

Opposition to Undue Burden: Oppose legislation that burdens public schools with unfunded mandates or reduces essential funding tools.

HERE'S WHY

The resolution aims to continue consistent legislative priorities without requiring constant renewal. ISBA members have consistently supported resolutions related to local governance, school facilities funding, opposition to public funds for private schools, and resistance to undue burdens on public schools. Instead of renewing each resolution individually, this streamlined approach allows for continued focus on these important priorities.



CONCLUSION

By streamlining the process and continuing established priorities, the Idaho School Boards Association seeks to maintain a clear and consistent advocacy stance on key issues. This approach recognizes the ongoing importance of addressing local governance, school facilities funding, and opposing undue burdens on public schools without the need for frequent renewals.

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding Bond and Levy Election Communications

ISSUE

Informing the public about bond and levy elections is crucial for an informed electorate, yet current Idaho statutes may restrict school districts from sending essential reminders to voters through various means. This resolution seeks to amend these statutes to provide more flexibility in communication.

BACKGROUND

Adequate public information is vital for democratic elections, ensuring active voter participation.

Current Idaho Code § 34-913 and § 34-914 limits school districts from the neutral encouragement of voting through text messages, school marquee notices, or other informal means.

Idaho Code § 34-913 and § 34-914 mandate that election results can be declared invalid for noncompliance, potentially impacting neutral communications from school districts and other local governments.

CONCERNS

The current statutes may hinder school districts from sending reminders to voters through less formal and more frequent means.

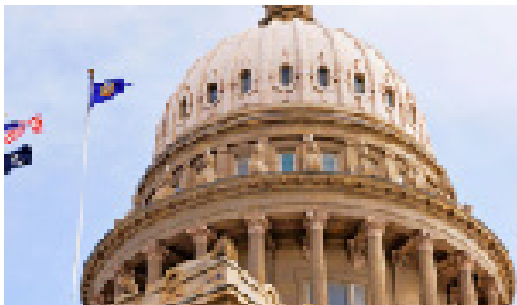
Strict compliance requirements could jeopardize the validity of election results for noncompliance with communication rules.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association proposes amending Idaho Code § 34-913 and § 34-914 by moving the requirements of § 34-913.1.5 and § 34-914.1.4 to Idaho Code § 74-604. This change is aimed at aligning the language with the intent of the statute and providing more flexibility to taxing districts to send brief messages reminding voters of elections or directing them to websites with more detailed information, including required disclosure language.

HERE'S WHY

School districts need more flexibility in communicating brief messages and reminders about elections in order to garner more voter turnout.



CONCLUSION

By amending the existing statutes, this resolution aims to empower school districts to better communicate with voters about bond and levy elections. The proposed changes provide more flexibility for districts to share brief messages and reminders through various means, ultimately promoting an informed electorate and active participation in the democratic process.