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April 10, 2020

Subject: COVID-19, Financial Impact and Employee/District Relations

Dear School Districts and Local Education Associations,

We write to provide additional clarification and advisement regarding the effects of COVID-19, including financial impacts, and our collective need to implement best practices communication, collaboration and partnership during these times.

Our students, parents and communities, of which we are all a part, are experiencing daily uncertainty regarding things just a few weeks ago were rarely a thought. The impacts and challenges presented by COVID-19 are broad and deeply felt. Despite these unprecedented levels of uncertainty, you - educators, administrators and school boards - have been unsurprisingly steady. In fact, COVID-19 in many respects has just amplified many challenges we collectively addressed pre-pandemic. The dual impacts of a community contagion and economic recession require our best leadership for our students and schools.

The fiscal impact of the current economic recession, like the duration of COVID-19, is unclear. However, we do know that federal stimulus, the state emergency fund, and non-earmarked local reserves cumulatively offer some hope, to a degree, of opportunity to maintain education services for our students. Both of our organizations are intimately involved with the developments at both the state and federal level with regard to legislation and financial impact and support. Not knowing exactly what the effects will be presents an immediate challenge for local negotiations.

Typically, in the springtime, the local education association and the school district begin the process of negotiations to come to agreement on such things as working conditions, salary and benefits, and other important items. This year is no different; however, at this time the actual level of funding each school district will receive is not determined. There are many moving parts in this equation, including federal stimulus money, as well as state and local reserve funds. The financial landscape is ever-changing for the time being. As such it is our organizations' joint recommendation that negotiations regarding any matter that has a financial impact to the district and/or local education association should be temporarily delayed until a better understanding of the financial picture of state and federal dollars is known. Doing this will ensure that all parties have a clear picture of genuine funding figures and are operating on the same facts, which will reduce confusion and conflict, and further our goal for collaboration and partnership at the local level.

If your local negotiated agreement addresses matters that do not have a financial impact and such matters are ripe for negotiations this year, there is no reason to delay these topics in negotiations, if that is the choice of the local education association and the Board.



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The Idaho School Boards Association and the Idaho Education Association continue to work hard to ensure that the voice of public education is heard throughout all discussions regarding these issues. It is this collaborative relationship between the two organizations that has benefited many communities throughout the state. We hope you share in our belief that collaboration and partnership during this time is critical. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. Likewise, our two organizations will reach out in the future once more information is forthcoming.

Sincerely,

IDAHO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Karen Echeverria  
Executive Director

IDAHO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Matt Aber-Towns  
Executive Director