



Idaho State Department of  
Education

*STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY, 2020 - 2025*

Superintendent Sherri Ybarra

Revised 8-5-2021

## **VISION STATEMENT**

Supporting Schools and Students to Achieve.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Idaho State Department of Education is dedicated to providing the highest quality of support and collaboration to Idaho's public schools, teachers, students and parents.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN INTRODUCTION**

As Superintendent of Public Instruction, I am committed to supporting districts and schools to ensure a high quality education for all Idaho students so that they are ready to succeed in life. In keeping with this commitment, the Idaho State Department of Education's Strategic Plan establishes specific and measurable goals as well as the Department's strategies for achieving them. This plan will both clarify and focus the work of the Department, enabling targeted support to districts and unifying the efforts of Idaho's educators for the benefit of students statewide.

The plan embodies the Department's strong emphasis on improving K-12 education culture in Idaho, and will empower districts to provide high quality education while moving away from a rigid philosophy of over-testing, compliance, and a one-size-fits-all accountability structure. Moving forward, the Department will work with local districts to achieve high-level outcomes for students while also adhering to its guiding principles in order to ensure that this cultural shift occurs seamlessly.

### *GUIDING PRINCIPLES*

1. The needs of children must drive any necessary change.
2. Every student can learn and must have a highly effective teacher in every classroom.
3. A positive culture and climate are key to success.

### *STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITY*

The following statement in Idaho Code articulates the authority for the state to govern the public K-12 education system.

"The state board shall adopt rules, pursuant to the provisions of chapter 52, title 67, Idaho Code, and section 33-105(3), Idaho Code, to establish a thorough system of public schools with uniformity as required by the constitution, but shall not otherwise impinge upon the authority of the board of trustees of the school districts. Authority to govern the school district, vested in the board of trustees of the school district, not delegated to the state board, is reserved to the board of trustees."

Our plan acknowledges and honors the distinction of roles between the state and local districts. Indeed, the state seeks to partner with districts to improve education for all students.

## **OUR GOALS**

The Department has articulated its goals for public education in Idaho in terms of outcomes for students, and will give districts and schools the necessary support to reach these goals. This plan also describes the supporting strategies which will drive the Department's work.

I have chosen to focus the Department's work on four goals, all of which will contribute to success for Idaho's students.

1. Ensure all Idaho children are reading on-grade-level by third grade
2. All Idaho students persevere in life and are ready for college and careers.
3. Collaborate with all Idaho education stakeholders to support student progress and achievement.
4. Idaho attracts and retains great teachers and leaders.

## **OUR STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE EACH GOAL**

The Department has adopted a set of strategies that will contribute to each goal's success. Each strategy has been assigned a responsible leader at the Department as well as underlying key projects that are either already underway or are planned.<sup>1</sup> While these strategies aim to codify the work that will have the most significant impact on each goal, we acknowledge that the work of all educators in Idaho impacts student achievement in ways far beyond this document's description.

### *Goal 1: Ensure all Idaho children are reading on-grade-level by third grade*

#### **Strategy 1.1:** Implement a Kindergarten screener to assess readiness

As students begin their education, it is critical to identify their readiness for school and remediate potential obstacles. A comprehensive screener can provide actionable data on a student's educational, soft skills, and emotional development. Tailored instruction and support based on the screener results can ameliorate obstacles to learning and support long-term educational success.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Conduct background research and benchmark analysis on existing screener options.
- Summarize costs, benefits, and logistical implications for potential Kindergarten screener options, including the expansion of existing programs and the acquisition of new tools.
- Institute new contract (whether amendment to existing vendor agreement, sole source, or RFP) for most appropriate screening option.
- Develop training and implementation plan for chosen Kindergarten screener.
- Implement new Kindergarten screener.

#### **Strategy 1.2:** Provide resources to families and students for early education opportunities

The SDE is committed to providing resources to families and students for early education opportunities. Providing quality professional development opportunities along with evidence-based materials to families with young children is a means to set up all students for academic success.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Participate on the Idaho Early Childhood Advisory Council
- Recruit and retain schools to participate in the Cultivating Readers Through Evidence -Based Practices in Instruction & Coaching

#### **Strategy 1.3:** Strengthen professional development support for teachers in grades K through 3

Multiple programs within the State Department of Education provide resources and professional development for K-3 teachers. This strategy will focus on creating a cohesive professional development plan utilizing the expertise and resources of different departments focused on increasing the reading achievement of K-3 students.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- The SDE will fund Regional Learning Centers to provide technical support and professional development for teachers and leaders.

- The SDE will host an annual K-3 Literacy Summit with a focus on the science of reading instruction and integration of literacy into content area subjects.
- The SDE will provide professional development and resources to support the implementation of Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in school districts.
- The SDE will support elementary schools participating in the Idaho Mastery Education Network in implementing mastery-based education at the K-3 grade levels.
  - This support will come through the mastery communication, which will “provide ongoing statewide outreach and communications to increase awareness and understanding of and promote interest in mastery-based education for teachers, administrators, parents, students, business leaders, and policymakers;”
- The SDE will provide an assessment and professional development to support it that allows schools to monitor K-3 student achievement in reading.

**Strategy 1.4:** Increase the number of reading coaches

It is the intention of Content & Curriculum to increase the number of K-3 focused reading specialists available to support our Idaho teachers statewide with the goal of ensuring all Idaho children are reading on grade level by third grade. Multiple strategies are being developed to that end.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Regional ELA Instructional Coach Contracts
- The SDE will host an annual K-3 Literacy Summit
- Regional Learning Centers Pilot Program with Content Specific Coaches
- Investigate and implement a K-3 reading specialist program, such as LETRS

**Strategy 1.5:** Provide additional opportunities for teachers to become reading specialists

Increase the number of reading specialists to work with teachers of younger students (K-3) by providing instructional techniques to ensure that all students are reading at grade level by the end of the school year. K-3 literacy coaches will be assigned to CSI schools and will be part of the STAT team for that school/district. Provide more opportunities for teachers to complete Literacy Endorsement K-12 including Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Course or Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Assessment.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- K-3 Literacy Summit
- Regional ELA Instructional Coaches
- Regional Learning Centers Pilot Program with Content Specific Coaches
- Support additional pathways for teachers to complete Literacy Endorsement (K-12) via higher ed collaboration.

*GOAL 2: ALL IDAHO STUDENTS PERSEVERE IN LIFE AND ARE READY FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS*

**Strategy 2.1:** Provide ongoing support for implementation of the Idaho Content Standards

Idaho Content Standards “represent the expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade.” (IDAPA 08.02.03.007 14 Definitions A-G)

Implementation support begins with a regular standard review process to confirm that Idaho has the best standards for teaching and learning followed by professional development for stakeholders to ensure appropriate implementation and curricular review to provide guidance to

schools and districts in choosing appropriate materials. In addition, formative and summative assessment tools should be built to support and assess student learning outlined in the standards.

These activities support teachers and districts, driving teaching, learning, and assessment through the expectations of the standards as set into IDAPA.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Standards Review - Every 6 years teams of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members review standards in each content area and suggest appropriate changes to the Superintendent to be taken to the State Board of Education to be presented to the legislature for administrative rules.
- Classroom Capacity Builders in ELA, Science, and Math work with teachers, schools, and districts to ensure appropriate implementation of the standards and assessment tools. Regional Learning Centers Pilot Program with Content Specific Coaches
- Assessment support to teachers and districts showing alignment of standards and assessments as well as the use of assessment tools as learning tools.
- Capacity Builders support schools to improve teaching and learning through school-wide implementation of best practices as measured through state assessments.
- Ongoing expansion of the IMEN network through Idaho to increase student mastery of the standards.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that strategies or projects that relate directly to the Governor's Task Force for Improving Education recommendations are indicated with a TF in parentheses, followed by the associated recommendation number.

**Strategy 2.2:** Ensure funding is strategically aligned to benefit students

The Public School appropriation and statutory language determines how funding is distributed and utilized in Idaho’s public schools. The State Department appropriation determines the resources available to provide services to support Idaho’s public schools. The appropriation process begins with the Superintendent making a Public School budget request and a State Department budget request. The steps outlined below will help ensure the needs of public schools are made known.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Work with the executive team to facilitate the inclusion of student-focused priorities in both the Public School and SOPI budget requests submitted annually.
- Ensure the budget facilitation process with each program includes discussions about measuring the return on investment for their requests.

**Strategy 2.3:** Support technology in the classroom

Increase the total number of Idaho students who are interested in Computer Science as a career. To accomplish this, we need to increase the number of computer science teachers across Idaho.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Continued support and implementation of students earned Industry Technical Certifications programs such as Microsoft Imagine Academy and Create Idaho Adobe
- GIMM Lab collaboration with Idaho GEAR UP
- Development of a Computer Science planning tool for district use (In collaboration with Idaho Universities, IDLA, STEM Action Center and Industry)
- Regional Learning Centers Pilot Program with Content Specific Coaches

**Strategy 2.4:** Ensure conditions for learning are in place to support student learning and school safety

Through training and professional development, provide opportunities for Idaho educators to expand their understanding, knowledge, and skills related to soft skills and emotional learning, trauma informed practices, and other related areas that promote strong conditions for learning in Idaho schools.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Develop and deliver SEL professional development course options.
- Facilitate access to free Youth Mental Health First Aid training for Idaho school communities.
- Facilitate access to free Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper training.
- Develop, deliver, and facilitate access to free and low-cost online Title IX training.
- Develop, deliver, and facilitate access to professional development focused on mental health practitioners and their role in our schools.

*GOAL 3: Collaborate with all Idaho education stakeholders to support student progress and achievement*

**Strategy 3.1:** Improve Conditions for Learning

This strategy aims to improve the behavioral health and wellness supports necessary for an effective and safe learning environment for all Idaho students. Across our state many districts, community agencies, healthcare providers, and nonprofits are engaged in supporting our school

communities through efforts related to the soft skills and emotional development of students. Each of these separate efforts may have a slightly different lens and/or approach to this work; with some areas of focus including, adverse childhood experiences, trauma informed practices, resiliency skills, peer led student wellness, community school models, positive behavior intervention strategies, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, youth suicide prevention, anti-bullying, and school violence, etc. This strategy will lead these disparate efforts towards a united goal to improve the conditions for learning for all students throughout our state while ensuring district autonomy and supporting their ability to innovate.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Conduct statewide environmental scan of school-based behavioral health and wellness services at a district and school level.
- Collaboratively define a vision statement for serving the whole child in our state. Establish consensus-based definitions of common terms in this field, including: soft skills and emotional learning, behavioral health and wellness, student wellness, civic education, whole child education, trauma informed practices, etc. The shared vision and definitions will support alignment between statewide leadership and local efforts, strategies, or other related initiatives.
- Inventory and align existing efforts, initiatives, programs, services, and training amongst stakeholders to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- Provide recommendations to Superintendent Ybarra on actions to address areas of concern or opportunities to improve conditions for student learning in Idaho schools.

**Strategy 3.2:** Provide targeted support for identified districts to accelerate growth

The Idaho Consolidated State Plan describes Idaho's accountability system for identifying schools in improvement based on the requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, reauthorized as Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). Although the Idaho Department of Education has many systems, processes, and supports in place for Idaho's underperforming schools across departments, this strategy will improve support to schools through a collaboration between the Federal Programs and the Content and Curriculum departments. Currently, the Idaho Building Capacity project capacity builders and the content coaches work in isolation of one another. Through strategic planning to unite the work of the capacity builders and content coaches, this strategy will significantly strengthen targeted support in improving achievement for identified schools.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Co-draft a proposal to unite the content coaches (classroom capacity builders) into the Idaho Capacity Building (IBC) project and present the proposal to the executive team the first week of January.
- Obtain approval to move forward with the proposal plan.
- Involve the university IBC regional coordinators, school improvement coordinator, math coordinator, ELA coordinator, and the directors of Federal Programs, Content and Curriculum, and Assessment & Accountability to implement the Plan Components of the proposal.
- Develop a communication plan to 1) notify the IBC university partners and the current ELA and math coaches/specialists of the SDE's shift in supporting schools, and 2) to roll out the new support system.

**Strategy 3.3:** Strengthen the Idaho Mastery Education Network



Idaho Mastery-Based Education defines a learning environment where students are empowered, competencies are demonstrated, learning is personalized, and mastery is recognized. Through our work on school culture, curriculum and assessment, instruction, and policy, we create practices and systems of Mastery-Based Education that support all students in meeting rigorous outcomes, defined by competencies, standards, and goals for our learners.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Develop a communication plan to “provide ongoing statewide outreach and communications to increase awareness and understanding of and promote interest in mastery-based education for teachers, administrators, parents, students, business leaders, and policymakers;”
- Enhance the efforts of the Idaho Mastery Education Network (IMEN) through the creation of Mastery Advisory Groups (MAGS) with the specific purpose of fulfilling the specific goals outlined in statute.
- Develop an evaluation plan to measure student progress and implementation of mastery efforts throughout the state.
- Create a plan that promotes the awareness and use of the Idaho College and Career Readiness Competencies at all levels of implementation. (Background: the competencies were written and approved by the Idaho State Board of Education. The work of the IMEN to enhance their usability by identifying subskills and creating performance level descriptors was done for the benefit of ALL Idaho educators, students, and administrators. They should NOT be solely associated with mastery education or the IMEN.)

**Strategy 3.4:** Engage and communicate with the field to ensure mutual responsibility for K-12 education in Idaho.

Engage with and communicate with all education stakeholders to relay important information about K-12 education, including our values, goals and performance. Regular/consistent communication builds trust and recognizes the SDE as the go to source of information for K-12 education

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Develop an annual communications strategy/plan including identifying key messages from the strategic plan, audiences to target and vehicles for engaging with stakeholders
- Develop key messages and positions from which communication to the public is grounded.
- Make website improvements to foster dynamic content rather than static content. – Improve layout so values and goals and accompanying metrics are more prominent
- Conduct a social media audit to identify current level of engagement and identify audiences and opportunities to improve outreach.

**Strategy 3.5:** Build positive relationships with policymakers.

Engage with and build relationships with local and state policy leaders to ensure priorities are communicated and supported.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Strengthen relationships and meaningful engagement with key legislators by keeping legislators informed on SDE activities and priorities
- Solicit feedback from legislators on key initiatives

**Strategy 3.6:** Communicate clearly and consistently strengthen to trust and build relationships

Our internal communications strategy ensures that everyone is on the same page, knows the goals, and uses consistent messaging.

Ensure that communications clearly articulate the superintendent's vision and that messages are consistent both internally and externally. The Superintendent's staff need to understand and be able to articulate their roles and responsibilities in implementing strategies that support the goals of the strategic plan.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Develop and share an annual communications plan identifying key events that occur annually and update regularly.
- Facilitate regular meetings with directors to ensure clear communication and understanding of priorities is shared across the department using the communications calendar to drive priorities.
- Consistently review external communications, presentations and event promotion to ensure they are on message and are consistent with and clearly articulate the superintendent's goals.

#### *GOAL 4: IDAHO ATTRACTS AND RETAINS GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS*

##### **Strategy 4.1:** Strengthen impact of the rural education centers

Across the State Department of Education, support and services are provided to rural local education agencies (LEAs) throughout Idaho.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Develop a trifold identifying regional supports to attract and retain great teachers and leaders across the SDE departments and publish this document on the website and disseminate to rural LEAs.
- Initiate a Regional Rural State Technical Assistance Team (RRSTAT): Convene quarterly meetings with directors to identify how each department is supporting rural LEAs on a regional basis and identify where the work intersects in attracting and retaining great teachers and leaders. The team will identify key supports needed for rural LEA implementation.

##### **Strategy 4.2:** Align programs within the department to support educators

Provide ongoing, relevant, and actionable professional development that aligns, supports, and provides guidance for all Idaho Content Standards. Provide curriculum reviews that support the standards and help schools and districts in choosing appropriate materials. Classroom Capacity Builders in ELA, Science, and Math work with teachers, schools, and districts to ensure appropriate implementation of the standards and assessment tools to ensure appropriate implementation and help support and guide teaching and learning.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Classroom Capacity Builders in ELA, Science, and Math will work with teachers, schools, and districts to provide professional development to help ensure appropriate implementation of the standards and assessment tools. Regional Learning Centers Pilot Program with Content Specific Coaches to extend to all content areas. Regional Learning Centers could also lead and facilitate a statewide mentorship program for first - third year teachers.
- Curriculum coordinators in partnership with educators to continue to provide content specific professional development that helps support the Idaho Content Standards.
- Curriculum Review and Implementation facilitated by the Content and Curriculum Team to provide guidance to schools and districts in choosing appropriate materials that help support the Idaho Content Standards.
- MTSS Support Team: Members from SDE departments who help give guidance and support for MTSS plans in districts.

##### **Strategy 4.3:** Elevate and support the education profession

Improve the public perception of the education profession by providing information regarding options for certification and showcasing the benefits of teaching, especially teaching in Idaho.

Specific projects associated with this strategy include:

- Be an Educator Webpage
  - Update website so visitors get an understanding of the different options for becoming an educator in Idaho.
  - Landing page for social media campaign project
- Social Media Campaign
  - Create PSAs on why teaching is a valued, noble and rewarding profession
  - Idaho Teacher Spotlight

- SDE Support Spotlight
- Interdepartmental Collaboration
- Collaborate with other departments on the supports they provide for teachers and leaders and look at data in reference to the impacts on retention.
  - Idaho Coaches Network
  - Idaho Capacity Builders
  - Idaho Principal Network
  - Idaho Superintendent Network
  - Northwest RISE

## Strategic Plan Part 1 Appendix: Successes from Prior Plan

### Goal 1

1.1 – Fully implement the Idaho Content Standards: New standards have been rolled out with strong support

1.3 – Implement multiple pathways to graduation: Owned primarily by the State Board of Education and being implemented successfully

1.5 – Support technology in the classroom:

### Goal 2

2.2 – Build a new accountability system: Completed the new system

2.3 – Establish a Mastery Education Network: Network launched

2.4 - Engage and collaborate with diverse stakeholder groups to ensure mutual responsibility for K-12 education in Idaho: ESSA planning engaged broad group of stakeholders

### Goal 3

3.2 – Establish rural education centers: Have been established

## Strategic Plan Part 2 Appendix: Our Kids, Idaho's Future: Final Report and Recommendations (November 2019)

Link: <https://boardofed.idaho.gov/resources/our-kids-idahos-future-final-report-and-recommendations/>