



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

March 26, 2009

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Business Managers, Charter School Administrators, Title I Directors, Special Education Directors, Testing Coordinators, Technology Coordinators and Public Information Officers

FROM: Tom Luna, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Weekly E-Newsletter

IN THIS REPORT:

- **Superintendent Luna urges support to minimize cuts in education**
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SUPERINTENDENT LUNA URGES SUPPORT TO MINIMIZE CUTS IN EDUCATION (GO TO TOP)

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna sent the following letter to superintendents, principals, school board members and other school personnel today prior to the vote on the public schools budget:

On Friday, the Legislature's budget committee will make the most important vote it has ever made for public education in Idaho. For the first time, the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) will have to vote to reduce the public schools budget due to the economic crisis our state now faces. The question is: How much will they cut?

The members of JFAC are now considering at least two scenarios for the education budget: One would trim the budget by roughly \$62 million, and the other would cut it by more than \$100 million. As State Superintendent, I believe any cuts deeper than \$62 million are unacceptable. From the beginning, I have made my priorities clear. We must preserve student-teacher contact hours and programs that get directly into the classroom and have the greatest, most immediate impact on student achievement. With the \$62 million in cuts, we can still preserve these priorities. Any deeper cuts to education will be detrimental to Idaho students.

Let me be clear: I do not want to cut education funding at all. I didn't run for this office to cut education spending, and the budgets I have put forward in the past prove that. But right now, we are facing unprecedented times as a state and as a nation. Idaho families are suffering, and education can no longer be held harmless from any budgetary holdbacks. The funding is simply not there.

Here is the situation we now face: Analysts estimate that the public schools budget will face \$200 million or more in budget shortfalls over three fiscal years: 2009, 2010 and 2011. The federal stimulus package will provide Idaho with \$165 million to cover shortfalls in K-12 education over all three years. This is clearly not enough. In the middle of the



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current year 2009, public schools already faced a shortfall of \$85 million -- that will soak up more than half the stimulus dollars -- and we will likely have to tap this fund again before the year is over. The economic outlook remains bleak for 2010 and 2011.

Based on these estimates, I propose the state use the remaining \$80 million (\$165 million minus \$85 million) in stimulus funding over both 2010 and 2011 to offset serious cuts to student-teacher contact time. Some do not want to use any stimulus funding in 2010 and save the \$80 million for 2011. This would force the Legislature to cut more than \$100 million from the public schools budget next school year, including a 5 percent pay cut for teachers. This scenario is unacceptable to me because it will jeopardize student-teacher contact hours and negatively affect student achievement.

We as a state can avoid these significant cuts to teacher pay by using some of the stimulus funding now and keeping a portion in savings for future years. Under my proposal, the state will spend half of the \$80 million in stimulus funding in 2010 and the other half in 2011. The state will still need to cut \$62 million from the public schools budget, but these cuts will be spread across a number of areas: maintenance, transportation, textbooks, supplies and salaries. This proposal would reduce salaries for teachers and classified staff by 1.5 percent, not 5 percent, and it will give local school districts the flexibility to decide how to handle these cuts. Districts can choose to make up the reductions in salary through attrition, furloughing school personnel for three in-service days, reducing all employee pay by 1.5 percent, or as a last resort, layoffs. Administrators would receive a 6 percent reduction in pay through this plan.

Many people have asked why we don't tap into the Public Education Stabilization Fund (PESF), Idaho's rainy day account for public education, to cover the \$62 million in cuts. That is a great question, and let me explain why. The \$114 million in PESF will not remain untouched in 2010. PESF is not only there for the state to tap during a tough economic time; the fund was also set up to help the state balance the public schools budget if certain programs cost more than expected. Therefore, we already know over the next three years we will have to tap PESF for an estimated \$40 million to fund growth and programs such as Bond Levy Equalization. In addition, the Governor, state legislators and government analysts have made it clear that they expect we will have to tap PESF again in the current fiscal year 2009 based on economic forecasts. This will leave us with even less of a rainy day fund to fall back on if the economy worsens and forces mid-year budget cuts.

I am convinced that we must keep a cushion of funding in PESF to avoid mid-year budget cuts to public schools. While budget cuts at the beginning of the school year are difficult, mid-year cuts would be disastrous. Local school districts have to sign numerous contracts with employees and vendors to keep schools running throughout the year. I will not put any school or district in the position where they cannot meet their contractual obligations in the middle of the year. Therefore, it would be unwise and irresponsible to set a 2010 budget with funding from PESF. In this rainy season, we need a rainy day account.

I understand none of this information is pleasant. No one wants to talk about cutting education funding or reducing teacher pay when it is already low. But this is the reality: public schools in Idaho will receive less money next year. My goal is to lessen the blow as much as possible so this tough economic time has no impact on student achievement. I am confident that the talented educators, responsible administrators and dedicated families we have across this great state will work with me to ensure Idaho students continue to receive the best possible education despite funding cuts.



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We all know how important education is to our children and the future of our state. Please contact JFAC members to support my plan to minimize cuts to public education. You can listen live to the JFAC vote online at 8 a.m. MT Friday, March 27 at <http://www.idahoptv.org/leglive/>.

APPLY NOW FOR THE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM (GO TO TOP)

The State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs is opening another round of competitive applications for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). This is a great opportunity for Idaho schools and districts to offer a wider variety of fresh produce to students throughout the school day than they would normally have access to through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

If your school or district is interested in applying, please visit <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/> and click on the "2010 FFVP Applications" link on the left side of the page. Please read the details of the program before applying.

The deadline to apply is no later than **5 p.m. on April 17, 2009**. If you have any questions, please contact Ed Herrera at (208) 332-6820 or EHerrera@sde.idaho.gov.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (GO TO TOP)

- **House Bill 252 -- School District Financial Emergencies:** This bill relating to teacher contracts and district financial emergencies unanimously passed the House this week. It now heads to the Senate Education Committee. This consensus bill is the result of negotiations between bipartisan stakeholders for the last 30 days and has broad support among all education interests.
 - Read the bill: <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0252.htm>.
- **House Bill 256 -- Student Transportation Support Program:** This bill passed the House on a 60-20 vote this week. It now heads to the Senate.
 - Read the bill: <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0256.htm>.
- **House Bill 262 -- Teacher Early Retirement Repeal, Freeze of Experience Grid:** This bill passed the House on a 49-20 vote this week. It now heads to the Senate.
 - Read the bill: <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0262.htm>.
- **Public Schools Budget:** We expect the Public Schools Budget to be set by the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) on Friday, March 27. You can listen live online to the budget hearing at <http://www.idahoptv.org/leglive/>.

SUPERINTENDENT'S SCHEDULE (GO TO TOP)

- Superintendent Luna has no public appointments scheduled next week.



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WHAT'S NEW (GO TO TOP)

- **Join Superintendent Luna on Facebook** -- Superintendent Luna now has a Facebook page at www.facebook.com. If you have a Facebook account, please make Superintendent Luna your friend and get updates on meetings and events, press releases, photos, etc. You can also submit comments and questions for the Superintendent.
- **IDLA improves ISAT Prep materials** -- Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) introduced new online ISAT Preparatory Review materials. Since 2005, IDLA has offered the ISAT Preparatory Review free of charge to Idaho school districts. IDLA has made significant improvements to these materials, including new interactive review content, numerous online practice quizzes and exercises, updated feedback on sample questions, and a fresh visual design. Beginning this year, we have established a simplified process for school administrators to retrieve their ISAT Preparatory login accounts. Please point your browser to <http://login.idahodigitallearning.org> and follow the simple directions to retrieve your logins. IDLA is hosting a webinar on IdahoLive to discuss the improved ISAT Prep Resources from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. MST on Tuesday, March 31, 2009. Visit www.idahodigitallearning.org and click on the "IdahoLive" tab to learn more.
- **Spring IRI** -- This is just a reminder that the Spring Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) starts April 15, 2009. For more information, please visit http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/reading_indicator/. If you have any questions, please contact Jenny Fisk or Stephanie Martin at (208) 332-6903.
- **Teacher workshops in Yellowstone** -- Yellowstone's National Park Service and the Yellowstone Association Institute are hosting teacher workshops in Yellowstone National Park. University credits and teacher in-service credits are available. The "Take it Outside" workshop is scheduled for July 27-30 at the historic Lamar Buffalo Ranch. For more information on this workshop and others, please visit www.yellowstoneassociation.org or call (406) 848-2400.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS? (GO TO TOP)

The highlight this week is **Lakeland School District**

The Lakeland School District is home to the Super Seven, a group of fifth-grade students who are headed to Denmark to participate in the Children's Climate Call global competition. The group is one of only six teams worldwide chosen to compete!

The Super Seven earned the trip to Denmark after winning first place for Research and Presentation in the First Lego League's science and technology tournament at the state and regional levels. The students will get to work with world experts on plan to implement their research project involving sequestering CO2 from idling school buses and converting it into new fuel types. In Denmark, they will compete against teams from Germany, Australia, Mexico, California and Illinois. If they win, they have the chance to turn their research project into a real-life prototype.

Congratulations! We know you will represent Idaho well abroad. Keep up the great work!



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"What's Happening in Our Schools?" is a feature that appears occasionally in the Weekly E-Newsletter. It is an opportunity for us to share the great things that are happening in Idaho's public schools on a statewide level. If you have something great happening in your school, please e-mail it to Melissa McGrath at MRMcGrath@sde.idaho.gov with "What's Happening in Our Schools" in the subject line.

REMINDERS (GO TO TOP)

- **New Alternative School Summer Program Applications Available Online** -- In an effort to eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements placed on Idaho school districts and public charter schools, the Department is introducing a more user-friendly and streamlined Alternative School Application that will be used for both Regular Session Alternative Schools and Alternative Summer School Programs. It is our hope that this application will ease your burden in filing the application by eliminating some of the unnecessary reporting required in the old application process. The revised application is available online at http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/alternative_schools/ and is due by **April 30, 2009**. If you have any questions regarding your Alternative School Summer Program, please contact Nick Smith at (208) 332-6959 or at NWSmith@sde.idaho.gov.
- **Webinars on the Math Initiative** -- The State Department of Education is hosting Webinars to discuss the Idaho Math Initiative and upcoming Mathematical Thinking for Instruction (MTI) course. The Webinars will be held Monday, April 20 at 4 p.m. MT and Thursday, April 23 at 4:30 p.m. MT. Please visit the IdahoLive web site at <http://idla.blackboard.com/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>.
- **Register for Idaho School Safety Summit** -- The Idaho School Safety Summit will be hosted by the State Department of Education on April 23, 2009. The focus of the summit is to highlight crisis prevention and response best practices from a national expert in the field, provide an increased understanding of online SDE tools to develop emergency operations plans and raise awareness of safety/security equipment available through vendors offering product at a reduced rate through a vendor showcase. For more information please visit http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/safe_secure/docs/School%20Safety%20Summit%20Flyer.pdf.
- **AP Test Fee Grant** -- The State Department of Education will be assisting districts by paying for AP/IB exams for low-income students. The College Board will provide information on AP Central, the AP program's online resource found at www.apcentral.collegeboard.com. Once again, registration will be online. The state will pay \$56 per AP/IB Exam for public and private school students qualifying for the College Board fee reduction. The final AP fee for qualifying students is \$0. Therefore, AP exams are provided at no cost to students. Please go to the SDE Gifted Talented website http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/gifted_talented/announcements.htm for further information or call Dr. Val Schorzman at (208) 332-6920.
- **New Census in Schools Web Site Coming Soon** -- Beginning the end of March 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau will be launching a new Census in Schools Web site. The website will incorporate information for teachers and students on using the 2010 Census in classrooms through teaching tools, resource materials, and professional development opportunities. To view the Census in Schools Web site, visit www.census.gov and click on "For Teachers & Students."
- **School Improvement Webinars** -- Here is the schedule for upcoming School Improvement Webinars:

Office Location
650 West State Street

Telephone
208-332-6800

Speech/Hearing Impaired
1-800-377-3529

Fax
208-334-2228



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- April 28, 2009: Action Planning Webinar
- May 14, 2009: Parental Involvement Webinar

The estimated time frame for all webinar sessions is 1 hour. You can register at <http://idla.blackboard.com>. Select the Idaho Live tab, and then click on "Webinar Registration." Please contact Lisa Kinnaman or Katherine Weatherspoon at (208) 426-4852 with any questions.

- **Mathematics of Personal Finance Professional Development** -- Mathematics teachers wishing to use the new Mathematics of Personal Finance content standards can attend a free professional development opportunity in Boise on April 21, 2009 sponsored by the Idaho Financial Literacy Coalition in partnership with the State Department of Education. These math content standards can be used as the basis for a district developed math course that will satisfy the new high school graduation requirement in mathematics for ninth graders entering school in the fall of 2009. There are five major strands to the content standards: Money Management; Savings and Investment; Education, Employment and Income; Taxation; and Data Analysis and Statistics. Free materials will be provided. For more information and online registration, please visit <http://www.sde.state.id.us/site/math/> or contact Amanda Salazar at adsalazar@sde.idaho.gov or (208) 332-6974.
- **IEA Teacher Awards** -- Every month, September through June, the Idaho Education Association offers eight (8) \$50 awards to teacher members who are new to the profession (5 years or less). Applying is easy. Just e-mail your name and a statement of how you plan to use your Cold Hard Cash for your Classroom to ecurrie@idahoea.org. If your name is not selected this month, your entry is rolled over to the next month. Visit www.idahoea.org for more information.
- **ASVAB** -- The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) program is one way to help students identify a future career path. The ASVAB program is a comprehensive career exploration and planning program that includes a multiple-aptitude test battery, interest inventory and various career planning tools designed to help the student explore the world of work. The program is free of charge. Please consider using ASVAB in your school or school district. For more information, you can contact: David Hodson, at (208) 334-1450 ext. 213 or david.a.hodson@mepcom.army.mil or Colleen Owen at (208) 334-1450 ext.214 or colleen.owen@mepcom.army.mil. Schools in Northern Idaho, north of New Meadows should call Fred Bernize at (509) 353 3105 ext. 242 or fred.bernize@mepcom.army.mil.

UPCOMING DEADLINES (GO TO TOP)

- **March 31, 2009** -- The deadline to apply for Northwest Professional Educators' awards for continuing education scholarships and classroom support for materials, technology, projects, etc. Additionally, teachers new to the profession, their grade level, or their school district may apply for \$250 New Classroom Start-Up Grants to assist with classroom expenses. To apply for any of these awards, visit www.nwpe.org for applications.
- **March 31, 2009** -- The deadline to register for the Title I Conference, "Education & Service: Gifts without Boundaries." The conference will be held April 15-17, 2009 in Boise. For more information or to register, please visit http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/title_one/conference09/.



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- **April 1, 2009** -- The deadline to apply for the Early Retirement Incentive Program. Applications are online at http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/finance_tech/early_retirement.htm. *Please bear in mind:* Submission of the application does not guarantee that the early incentive program will be funded. Actions by the 2009 Legislature could affect this section of Idaho Code. Interested parties are encouraged to watch the daily activities of the Idaho Legislature for any changes that might affect this law, including but not limited to the Department web site at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/schoolsbudget/>.
- **April 10, 2009** -- The deadline to postmark nomination packages for the sixth annual *Preserve America* Idaho History Teacher of the Year Award, sponsored by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and Idaho Council for History Education. The Idaho Council honors each state winner with an award of \$1,000. All elementary (K-6) teachers who have responsibility for teaching American history are eligible this year. Please visit http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/social_studies/ for more information.
- **April 15, 2009** -- The deadline for Idaho school districts and public charter schools to submit requests for proposals for Learn and Serve grant funding. Please review application information available online at http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/learn_serve. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Tina Naillon, Learn and Serve Coordinator, at (208) 332-6904 or TMNaillon@sde.idaho.gov.