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Media Contact

Kristin Rodine

Public information officer

208-332-6807

krodine@sde.idaho.gov

Feds approve Idaho's plan for helping disadvantaged students succeed

(BOISE) – Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra got the news that [Idaho's consolidated plan](#) has officially been approved via a personal phone call Thursday from U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

"She said great plan, and she is excited to learn more about our mastery-based education program," Superintendent Ybarra said of her conversation with Secretary DeVos.

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, each state is required to submit a plan detailing how that state will achieve the act's objectives. In addition to Idaho, the U.S. Department of Education approved plans from Mississippi and Rhode Island Thursday.

"I'm excited to move from planning this new approach to implementing it," Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. "I'm grateful to the stakeholders across the state who helped craft a new accountability system geared to the needs of Idaho students."

"With this consolidated plan, we will celebrate success, measure growth and uplift our lowest-performing schools."

State Department of Education staff, in conjunction with the State Board of Education, have been working to develop and refine the accountability plan since ESSA was approved in December 2015. After extensive stakeholder and federal feedback, a revised version of Idaho's plan was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education last month.

"Thanks to the cooperative, sustained efforts of SDE and SBOE staff and our education stakeholders, we have a solid plan that fits Idaho's character and needs while meeting federal requirements," State Board of Education President Linda Clark said. "Our goals are both ambitious and attainable, and they bode well for the future of public education in Idaho."

Idaho's Consolidated Plan details how the state will use federal funds to support districts and schools serving disadvantaged children, including how the State Department of Education will

help improve Idaho's lowest-performing schools. The SDE receives more than \$87 million in federal support tied to ESSA, compared with about \$1.7 billion from the state's general fund.

Idaho's lowest- and highest-performing schools will be identified after spring ISAT results are in. The State Department of Education's Technical Assistance Team will mobilize to help schools improve student achievement.

ESSA replaced the federal No Child Left Behind law and allows states more flexibility in how they deliver education to students.

Idaho's plan sets goals for the next five years including: reducing the number of students who don't graduate from high school by 75 percent; cutting by one third the number of students not proficient in reading/ language arts and math; and reducing the number of students not making progress toward English language proficiency by one third.

Under the plan, growth will be measured by the number of K-8 students on track to become proficient within three years, and a college and career readiness indicator will reflect high school students who are earning college credits and industry-recognized certifications, as well as participating in apprenticeship programs.

An online student engagement survey will be conducted this spring for students in grades 3 through 8. High school students, parents and educators will be surveyed in the 2018-19 school year.

Superintendent Ybarra said she's particularly happy that the U.S. Department of Education agreed to allow Idaho to forego assigning a single grade or rating to schools, which would feel too similar to the controversial five-star accountability system that Idaho used in the past. Instead, the new system will provide Idahoans a more complete dashboard of information about school performance and will complement the state's move toward a mastery-based education system.

During their Thursday conversation, Superintendent Ybarra invited Secretary DeVos to come to Idaho and visit schools that are piloting mastery-based education. "She said she would talk to her team and see if they could make that happen," Superintendent Ybarra said.

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Editors and reporters: For more information on Idaho's consolidated plan, check out the SDE website, <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/topics/consolidated-plan/>