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Feds approve Idaho's amendments to education accountability plan

(BOISE) – State Department of Education (SDE) efforts to help Idaho's at-risk students and recognize student and school success got a boost this week with U.S. Department of Education approval of amendments to the state's year-old [consolidated plan](#) under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

"This is great news and validation of our efforts to maximize the effectiveness of our accountability system, which is now going into its second year," Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. "As the plan transitioned into practice last academic year, schools and districts throughout the state were a great help in identifying ways to fine-tune our plan and add elements to strengthen it. We also greatly appreciate the public input we gathered along the way. "

"We've received positive feedback on our work to identify schools' needs, work collaboratively on improvement plans, and effectively use federal funds to help Idaho students and schools succeed," Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. "These amendments will enhance that progress."

Amendments were developed with input from the Accountability Oversight Committee of the State Board of Education (SBOE), Idaho school district officials and the public. The U.S. Department of Education notified SDE and the SBOE Monday that the amendments have been accepted as submitted.

Here's a summary of the amendments to Idaho's consolidated plan:

- Update the process for identifying schools for comprehensive support and improvement to reflect a three-year weighted average of student performance on key metrics for all schools
- Add a detailed description of the methodology in which schools are included in the accountability system
- Update English learner proficiency and exit criteria, and establish new expectations of progress toward English language proficiency based on the new criteria.
- Add exit criteria for English learners with disabilities and those taking the ACCESS alternate assessment.

- Update long-term and interim progress goals for students making progress toward English language proficiency based on the new criteria.
- Establish a baseline and set long-term and interim progress goals for a five-year cohort graduation rate for high schools. This amendment is already in effect.
- Change the measure for identifying alternative high schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement when their graduation rate is less than 67 percent. The new measure, to begin in 2021, will use a three-year average of the five-year cohort graduation rate.
- Exclude schools from identification for Targeted Support and Improvement when the subgroup meets or exceeds interim progress goals for a particular measure.

Under ESSA, every U.S. state was required to submit a consolidated plan. Through Idaho’s new accountability system, the State Department of Education provides coaching, professional development and other supports to help elevate student performance in schools identified as underperforming or with low graduation rates. The new system also celebrates schools for top performance and for reaching goals to improve performance, with information readily available on a redesigned [state report card](#). The report card will be updated with the latest test results and other information in mid-August.

“Our work to improve accountability, performance and responsiveness is far from over,” Director of Assessment and Accountability Karlynn Laraway said. “As our new accountability processes are implemented, we will continue to monitor their effectiveness in improving outcomes for Idaho students.”

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Attached: Letter from the U.S. Department of Education approving Idaho’s amended ESSA plan.