



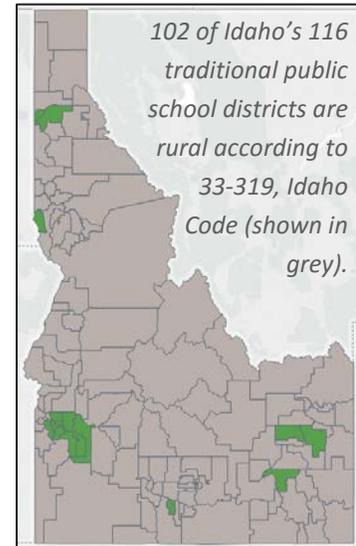
Rural Education Support Networks

Overview and Essential Facts

District Classification

WHAT IS A RURAL EDUCATION SUPPORT NETWORK?

- Of Idaho's 116 public school districts, 102 are rural.
- A Rural Education Support Network is an "opt-in" collaborative body of school districts and charter schools.
- The Network allows its members to identify shared needs, to voluntarily pool resources, and to implement shared solutions to better serve their students.
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction will provide start-up funds with the expectation that the Network will become self-sustaining within three years.
- The members will hire a small full- or part-time staff to serve them and to coordinate the Network activities.
- Services will not be consolidated in one location.



WHY DOES IDAHO NEED THESE NETWORKS?

- School districts and charter schools serving rural communities must often find creative ways to ensure that they provide their students with the same educational opportunities as those in more urban areas of Idaho.
- Networks will enable rural districts to provide more for their students by dedicating time to finding opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing.

Needs highlighted by rural districts in Idaho

Rural Education Support Networks will help to alleviate these and other common needs among our rural school districts and charter schools.

Student achievement: In 2017, there was an 8-percentage point gap in ISAT English language arts achievement between students in rural and non-rural school districts, and a 7-percentage point gap in mathematics.

Staffing: In 2016 and 2017, nearly half of school districts who responded to a State Department of Education survey indicated that they had at least one unfilled teaching position on the first day of school. In addition, the number of alternative authorizations approved annually more than doubled from 2012 to 2016 to 757 approvals.

Program administration: With their lean staffs, rural districts often struggle to recuperate the costs associated with administering federal programs such as Medicaid and E-rate.

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is this a form of district consolidation?

No. Networks will help districts share resources (e.g., services and/or personnel) only when requested by the district, and the sharing of resources will not continue if a district no longer needs it. While districts may select to pool resources in order to procure administrative services such as E-rate or Medicaid reimbursement, Networks will not replace district or school leaders or administrators. All participation in a Network is voluntary.

Who controls each Network and is this another layer of bureaucracy?

Each Network will be governed by its members in a manner determined by its members. Each Network's members will hire or designate an individual to oversee the administrative activities of the Network, and that individual will report directly to the members. While the Superintendent of Public Instruction will be interested in the progress of the Network and will offer support from the State Department of Education where desired by the Network's members, the state will not compel the Network toward any specific action or service.

Can districts already collaborate without legislation?

Feedback from the field indicates that while district and school leaders are excited about the possibility of collaborating more deeply with one another, most rural districts lack the time and resources to dedicate to the coordination of such an effort. However, there are examples of success that some districts have had already, and Networks will be able to learn from those successes as they develop their own models for collaboration and resource sharing.

Are we taking money away from the public schools budget?

No. Funding to assist Networks in their first years of operation will be held in the Superintendent of Public Instruction's administrative budget, which is separate from the public school support program. Funding for the Networks will not result in a decrease to the state funds distributed to school districts and charter schools.

Where will the Networks be located?

Depending on the goals of a Network, that Network may be focused on a geographical region of Idaho or focus on services that can be provided electronically to districts across the entire state. However, no Network may establish a central location to which children must travel in order to receive educational services. While a Network may require an office space for administrative purposes, that location is not to be the primary location for service delivery. Educational services will be delivered in schools.