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## **Critchfield: Opening the Door to School Finance**

*From Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield*

(BOISE) – When it comes to inspiring trust and understanding, nothing is more effective than being honest and straightforward. Transparency in all that we do is a powerful way to connect individuals and build bridges between organizations.

For Idaho’s schools, inspiring trust in local communities ensures goals are met and students and families thrive. Every dollar that comes into our schools makes a difference for our students. And strong, healthy schools fuel the success of our communities and our state.

With that in mind, my department has created a tool to help local schools and charters share their financial story in terms everyone can understand. Our new streamlined [financial transparency document](#) provides a snapshot of school fiscal health. It strips away the complexity and jargon that often surround financial conversations and gives members of the public an easy way to view a topic that can be both difficult to understand and critically important to student success.

The form breaks school finance into three areas: funding sources, audited prior year expenses, and staff and student data. This allows the public to quickly see where schools get their money and how it’s spent. Districts and charters are required to post this information on their websites and make it available upon request.

While much of this information is already public, this template compiles it into one easy-to-use resource that doesn’t require an accounting background to understand. This simplification benefits everyone. For parents and taxpayers, it demystifies school budgets and empowers them to engage more effectively with their local schools. For educators and school leaders, it helps communicate their needs and accomplishments and ensure resources are aligned with student outcomes – particularly for students who may have higher-cost needs, such as those in special education. A simpler, clearer system builds a stronger sense of shared purpose between our schools and their communities, fostering the stable, consistent support our students deserve.

Transparency is a way to tell our story. While public school finance may not be the most exciting chapter, it is one of the most important. Our students depend on us to provide safe facilities, the

right tools for learning, and dedicated instructors committed to their success. I encourage our districts and charters to use this new resource to help their communities understand how state resources are being invested to achieve those goals.

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