New committees to address fall school reopening and the digital divide

Wednesday June 17, 2020

Boise, Idaho – Governor Brad Little announced today the formation of two new committees to create a plan for reopening public schools this fall and a plan to address the "digital divide," a term that describes the inequity between students' access to remote learning across Idaho.

The committees will support the Governor's Office and the State Board of Education, which have been working with school districts for weeks on reopening options and making access to remote learning more consistent within and between school districts.

"Despite these extraordinary circumstances, it is my intent to have schools safely reopen across Idaho in the fall, although it may look different than it has in the past," Governor Little said. "Both of the committees, led by State Board of Education members, can support and remove barriers to the fall reopening, provide clear expectations, and identify the tools to meet those expectations."

The Public Schools Reopening Committee is chaired by Idaho State Board of Education President Debbie Critchfield and includes participation from legislators, the State Department of Education, school district and charter school administrators, operations staff, business and industry representatives and local health officials.

"Our goal is to successfully reopen schools in the fall and provide clear expectations for student learning and guidance to school districts as they make their decisions locally," Critchfield said. "Districts are discussing approaches to reopening and how to navigate the learning environment. Many decisions are contingent upon developing and changing conditions."

The committee will make guidance and resources available to school districts and charter schools in the coming weeks.

State Board of Education member Kurt Liebich leads the Digital Divide Committee, which includes school technology directors, administrators, business leaders, and legislators.

"When the pandemic forced the soft closure of schools and a transition to distance learning options, it became painfully clear just how wide the digital divide is," Liebich said. "We will discuss access to devices for students and ways to improve connectivity throughout the state. Additionally, we will support school districts and charter schools as they develop strategies to implement a blended learning model. Robust learning management systems and professional development are also part of our overall vision for each and every public school in our state."

Both committees are extensions of the Governor's K-12 Emergency Council, formed in March to respond to the pandemic and advise the Governor on K-12 issues during these unprecedented times.

More information about the two committees, including meeting dates and membership, is posted on the State Board of Education website at **https://boardofed.idaho.gov/covid-19/k-12-emergency-council-subcommittees/** (https://boardofed.idaho.gov/covid-19/k-12-emergency-council-subcommittees/).

Members of the Public Schools Reopening Committee include:

Debbie Critchfield, Chair, State Board of Education

Linda Clark, State Board of Education

Sherri Ybarra, State Superintendent

Senator Carl Crabtree

Representative Judy Boyle

Representative John McCrostie

Greg Wilson, Governor's Office

Brian Armes, Office of School Safety and Security

Spencer Barzee, Westside School District

Ryan Bowman, Twin Falls School District

Steve Cook, Coeur d'Alene School District

Bob Donaldson, Lewiston School District

Julie Douty, Vallivue School District

Jonathan Gillen, West Ada School District

Ty Jones, Idaho High School Sports Association

Karen Pyron, Butte School District Trustee

Donell McNeal, West Ada School District

Stephanie Myers, Boise School District

Angela Rodriguez, Cassia School District

Anne Ritter, Meridian Medical Arts Charter School Board

Rob Sauer, Homedale School District

Lisa Sherrick, State Department of Education

Gina Pannell, Central District Health

Members of the Digital Divide Committee include:

Kurt Liebich, Chair, State Board of Education

Greg Wilson, Vice Chair, Governor's Office

Senator Jim Woodward

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Senator Janie Ward-Engelking

Laurie Anderson, Micron Foundation

Toni Broyles, University of Idaho

Chris Campbell, State Department of Education

Marc Carignan, Bluum

Theresa Carter, Idaho Digital Learning Academy

Matt Compton, Idaho Education Association

Spencer Cook, Sugar Salem School District

Steve Cook, Coeur d'Alene School District

Seth Deniston, Coeur d'Alene School District

Keven Denton, West Ada School District

Karen Echeverria, Idaho School Boards Association

Eric Forsch, Department of Commerce

Marc Gee, Preston School District

Will Goodman, Idaho Digital Learning Academy

Rod Gramer, Idaho Business for Education

Andy Grover, Idaho Association of School Administrators

Cassidy Hall, University of Idaho, Doceo Center

Peter Jurhs, Nampa School District

Paula Kellerer, Nampa School District

Russell Miles, Orofino School District

Simon Miller, Kellogg School District

Andrew Moore, Glenns Ferry School District

Kelley Packer, Association of Idaho Cities

David Roberts, Boise School District

Terry Ryan, Bluum

Robert Sanchez, Idaho Business for Education

Steve Schellenburg, Snake River School District

Michelle VanBeek, Nampa School District

Doug Park, Small Business Owner

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