



## Idaho 2014 Legislative Session - Rural Education

Idaho's Legislature passed 15 bills affecting rural education during the 2014 session.

### **Idaho House Bill 639: Operational Funding**

- 03/18 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 03/19 Reported printed; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended: read three times – PASSED House - 56-12-2  
Floor Sponsor – Thompson
- 03/20 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Finance  
Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended (2/3 Vote - Read in full as required) – PASSED Senate- 34-0-1
- 03/26 Reported signed by Governor on March 26, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 222  
Effective: July 1, 2014

#### [Bill Text](#)

This bill, one of seven budget bills passed in 2014, focuses on operational funding for Idaho's schools. It includes a one percent increase for non-certified employees' base salaries and a 12 percent increase in discretionary funding as well as a \$3 million allocation for a second round of technology pilot projects. It also maintains \$8 million in classroom technology funding from the 2013 fiscal year.

Discretionary funding for education has decreased by \$82.5 million since the 2008-09 school year— a drop of about \$5,000 in every classroom throughout the state. The 12 percent increase created by a line item appropriation from the General Fund represents an additional \$2,401 in discretionary funding, restoring slightly less than half of that lost since the recession.

Restoring discretionary funding may have a greater impact on small rural districts which must already spread their overhead costs over a smaller revenue stream. Additionally, rural superintendents often cite the need for funding flexibility. Discretionary funding can be used to purchase new textbooks, to hire classroom assistants, to support special projects or trainings; it is not limited to one area or program.

### **Idaho House Bill 641: Facilities Funding**

- 03/18 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 03/19 Reported printed; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended: read three times – PASSED House – 63-3-4  
Floor Sponsor – Youngblood
- 03/20 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Finance  
Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended (2/3 Vote - Read in full as required) – PASSED Senate – 34-0-1

Floor Sponsor – Mortime  
03/28 Reported signed by Governor on March 31, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 330  
Effective: July 1, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

This 2014-15 facilities appropriation increases funding for the Bond Levy Equalization Program, charter school facilities program, and state facilities maintenance match by \$2.6 million. The Bond Levy Equalization Program and “other facilities programs” will also receive an additional \$4.228 million from Idaho Lottery revenues. \$6.25 million in facilities funding will be transferred to the Operations Division to be used as discretionary funding. \$2.1 million of the total facilities budget will be distributed to charter schools for use in facilities maintenance projects. (The Bond Levy Equalization program provides districts with assistance in paying interest on bonds issued after September 15, 2002).

As stated previously, rural districts must spread their overhead costs over a smaller revenue stream. This funding may help to limit the amount of discretionary funding allocated toward maintenance, interest payments, and other facilities costs and could provide rural districts with some degree of additional flexibility to use that funding for program or instructional costs. This is especially important for charter schools which currently devote a significant proportion of operating funds to facilities.

**Idaho House Bill 643: Funding, Miscellaneous**

03/18 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing  
03/19 Reported printed; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended: read three times – PASSED House – 58-10-2  
Floor Sponsor – Thompson  
03/20 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Finance  
Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended (2/3 Vote - Read in full as required) – PASSED Senate – 29-5-1  
Floor Sponsor – Cameron  
03/28 Reported signed by Governor on March 31, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 332  
Effective: July 1, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

Part of the 2014-15 budget package, this bill includes additional funding for college entrance exams, end of course exams, technology education opportunities for high school students, online courses, remediation services, and the Limited English Proficient student program. It also includes a \$300,000 appropriation for administrator trainings for teacher evaluation, \$4.5 million for the maintenance of an instructional management system, and \$2.25 million for Wi-Fi services. It also demonstrates the continuing support for the Common Core in Idaho, with \$2.7 million for professional development related to the Idaho Core Standards.

Though there are many one-time appropriations in this bill, it provides additional funding for programs that may be difficult for rural districts to support on their own. For example, while a

larger district may have a working group dedicated to the Idaho Core Standards, or curriculum professionals who can lead training sessions and act as a resource, funding for professional development in rural areas may fill a gap rather than add on to an existing program. This “gap filling” may be valuable in other areas, as well, such as remediation services, technology education opportunities, and training for administrators.

### **Idaho House Bill 599: Funding Flexibility**

- 3/07 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 3/10 Reported printed and referred to Education
- 3/11 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading
- 3/12 Read second time; filed for third reading  
Rules suspended: PASSED House – 69-0-1, sent to Senate
- 3/13 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Education  
Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 3/14 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 3/17 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0
- 3/26 Reported signed by Governor on March 26, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 257  
Effective: July 1, 2014

#### [Bill Text](#)

This legislation gives districts one-time flexibility to spend 1/3 of the upcoming fiscal year (June 2014 - July 2015) maintenance match moneys normally allocated to maintenance and repair of student-occupied buildings on other one-time, non-personnel costs.

While maintenance of student-occupied facilities is an important issue, additional facilities support and discretionary funding could allow for renovation opportunities not otherwise available in small rural districts. This allocation could potentially allow for investments in Common Core-aligned materials, wireless infrastructure in K-8 schools, or other one-time investments small districts may have been unable to make in recent years because of the loss of discretionary and stimulus funding.

### **Idaho House Bill 550: E-Rate**

- 02/25 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 02/26 Reported printed; filed for second reading
- 02/27 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 02/28 Read third time in full– PASSED House – 66-1-3, sent to Senate
- 03/03 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Finance
- 03/04 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 03/05 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 03/06 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0, returned to House
- 03/13 Reported signed by Governor on March 13, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 84,  
Effective: March 13, 2014

#### [Bill Text](#)

This legislation provides a supplemental appropriation to the Department of Administration for \$6.6 million to pay for federal portion of E-Rate funds due to vendors for services rendered to Idaho Education Network through the end of this fiscal year (2014). If at any time the IEN receives payment from the E-Rate administrator, it will be required to return all Department funding “immediately.” The Department and Legislature will determine ownership of all equipment purchased or leased as part of the IEN program and to confirm the type and level of usage of services in each Idaho school district.

With broadband more difficult to access in rural areas, programs like E-Rate are critical to ensuring access for rural schools. Further, broadband can help schools implement cost-saving programs and new technologies.

### **Idaho House Bill 650: E-Rate**

03/19 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing  
03/20 Reported printed; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended: PASSED House – 67-1-2  
Floor Sponsor – Bell  
Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Finance  
Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading  
Rules suspended (2/3 Vote - Read in full as required) – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0  
Floor Sponsor – Cameron  
03/26 Reported signed by Governor on March 26, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 229  
Effective: July 1, 2014

#### [Bill Text](#)

This legislation provides an additional \$4.8 million appropriation to the Department of Administration for fiscal year 2015 from the state’s General Fund. It pays for the federal E-Rate funding due to providers in the Idaho Education Network from July 1, 2014 to February 28, 2015.

This bill essentially ensures that the support provided in HB 550 (above) does not end with the end of the fiscal year. With the fiscal year ending just before the beginning of the 2014-15 school year, a cut to broadband funding could leave districts struggling to ensure continuing services. Rural districts have smaller “rainy day funds” than their suburban or urban counterparts and could therefore see an interruption in services without the support provided by this bill.

### **Idaho House Bill 543: K-12 Study Committees**

02/21 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing  
02/27 Read third time in full – PASSED House – 67-2-1  
Floor Sponsor – Miller  
02/28 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Finance  
03/04 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading  
03/05 Read second time, filed for third reading

- 03/12 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0  
Floor Sponsor – Mortimer
- 03/19 Reported signed by Governor on March 19, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 168  
Effective: March 19, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

This bill increases the 2014 appropriation for the State Board of Education by \$20,000. The funding supports special committees, under the oversight of the State Board, which will study topics in K-12 public school structure and funding, including but not limited to compensation models, teacher licensure, accountability, autonomy, or mastery learning.

Depending on the topics chosen by the study committee, this legislation may help generate insights and policy solutions for rural education. For example, a study on alternative teacher certification pathways could lead to expanded opportunities for human capital in rural areas.

**Idaho House Bill 557: “Use it or Lose It” Phase Out**

- 02/26 Introduced; read first time; referred for printing
- 03/04 Read third time – PASSED House – 68-0-2  
Floor Sponsor – DeMordaunt
- 03/05 Received from the House, filed for first reading. Introduced, read first time, referred to Education
- 03/06 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 03/07 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 03/11 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0  
Floor Sponsor – Goedde
- 03/18 Reported signed by Governor on March 18, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 116  
Effective: July 1, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

This bill phases out the “use it or lose it” budget flexibility created during the economic downturn that allows Idaho districts to hire 9.5 percent fewer teachers. Proposed changes, beginning in 2015-16, would reduce the 9.5 percent flexibility by one percent each year for each district in which the average class size was at least one student above the state average.

Rural superintendents often cite the need for more flexibility in funding. The flexibility allowed during the downturn has allowed rural districts with smaller enrollments to adapt their staffing models and budgets. The current phase-out strategy for this bill means that for many rural schools (those with smaller class sizes) will retain the flexibility afforded through the “use it or lose it” program.

**Idaho House Bill 569: Alternative High Schools in Small Districts**

- 02/27 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 02/28 Reported printed and referred to Education
- 03/05 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading
- 03/06 Rules suspended: read three times – PASSED House – 67-1-2  
Floor Sponsor – Kloc  
Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Education

- 03/11 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 03/12 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 03/17 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0  
Floor Sponsor – Thayn
- 03/26 Reported signed by Governor on March 26, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 253  
Effective: July 1, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

This bill amends the current education support program in order to avoid double-funding for students attending alternative high schools in districts with fewer than 100 secondary students. Because districts with fewer than 100 students are guaranteed a minimum eight support units, students that elected to attend an alternative high school in these districts were funded twice. Instead, this legislation provides funding for alternative high schools *only if* those schools are regional and serve more than one district.

This bill encourages shared services between rural districts in the form of regional alternative secondary schools. Establishing these programs using the secondary support minimum could be difficult but it would be easier to create (and grow) a regional program than to find adequate resources within a single small district to support an alternative program.

**Idaho House Bill 568: Spousal Employment**

- 02/27 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 02/28 Reported printed and referred to Education
- 03/06 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading
- 03/07 Rules suspended: read three times – PASSED House – 59-5-6  
Floor Sponsor – Gibbs
- 03/10 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Education
- 03/13 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 03/14 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 03/17 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0  
Floor Sponsor – Thayn
- 03/26 Reported signed by Governor on March 26, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 252  
Effective: July 1, 2014 Sections 1, 2, and 3;  
July 1, 2018 Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

[Bill Text](#)

These bills revise the terms under which a school district or charter school may hire the spouse of a trustee. Previous legislation disallowed trustees' spouses to be hired or compensated. This bill allows districts with fewer than 1,200 students to employ a trustee's spouse, but places multiple limiting conditions that must be met. These conditions include an open application period, a lack of other applicants that met the minimum criteria, the trustee's absence during the hiring discussion occurred, and the trustee's abstention from voting on employment. Conditions are similar for the spousal employment of charter school trustees. If conditions above are met, the legislation further specifies that a spouse may only be hired on a one-year contract and cannot be rehired the following year unless the same conditions are met.

This bill provides rural districts and charter schools with some additional flexibility in their efforts to recruit teachers and other staff. However, it creates significant new barriers for these districts and charters to hire a trustee's spouse, even if the spouse is a higher quality candidate than others who meet the minimum criteria.

#### **Idaho House Bill 521: Strategic Plans**

- 02/18 Introduced, read first time, referred for printing
- 02/21 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading
- 02/24 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 02/26 Read Third Time in Full - PASSED House – 65-4-1, sent to Senate  
Floor Sponsor – Horman
- 02/27 Received from the House passed; filed for first reading  
Introduced, read first time; referred to: Education
- 03/04 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 03/11 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 35-0-0, returned to House  
Floor Sponsor – Goedde
- 03/18 Reported signed by Governor on March 18, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 112  
Effective: July 1, 2014

#### [Bill Text](#)

This bill requires districts and public charter schools to create strategic plans focused on improving student performance. Plans must be data-driven, focus on student outcomes, set clear and measurable targets based on student outcomes, and include a clearly articulated mission and vision for the district/charter school. The plans must be adopted no later than September 1st for 2014-15 school year and no later than August 1<sup>st</sup> each year thereafter. Each district or charter school strategic plan must be available to the public on the district or school website. Up to \$2,000 from educational support program may be distributed to districts/charters to fund training for superintendents, boards, school leaders.

The strategic planning process may help provide additional transparency and accountability for superintendents, but also risks increasing the compliance/paperwork burden on rural administrators. Special attention will be needed to ensure these plans are utilized to emphasize outcomes-based accountability.

#### **Idaho Senate Bill 1326: Statewide Enrollment/Employment Database**

- 02/07 Introduced; read first time; referred for printing
- 02/10 Reported printed; referred to Education
- 02/20 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading
- 02/21 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 02/24 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 34-0-1  
Floor Sponsors – Ward, Engelking
- 02/25 Received from the Senate, filed for first reading  
Read first time, referred to Education
- 03/07 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading
- 03/10 Read second time; filed for third reading
- 03/12 Read third time in full – PASSED House – 61-6-3

Floor Sponsor – Rubel  
03/19 Reported signed by Governor on March 19, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 145  
Effective: July 1, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

This legislation will create and maintain a database that contains accurate information on the student-teacher ratio in Idaho school districts. The Idaho Department of Education will be required to collect and report (by grade) the number of teachers and students in elementary classrooms and the number of teachers and students by subject in post-secondary classrooms. The state database will also include employment, enrollment, and overall class size data for Idaho's school districts. The Department of Education will also be responsible for compiling and publishing this data in an annual report, to be made available by January 1st on a public website.

This bill would provide an important resource for families in rural areas and increased transparency into Idaho's schools. The data gathered under this legislation is gathered for other programs, such as the Common Core of Data, so it will be important to minimize requirements on administrators (especially those in rural districts) to report the same information multiple times. A unified reporting process or system could help to ease this burden.

**Senate Bill 1275: Standards for Agricultural and Natural Resources Education**

02/04 Introduced; read first time; referred for printing  
02/05 Reported printed; referred to Education  
02/18 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation; filed for second reading  
Read second time; filed for third reading  
02/19 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 34-0-1, sent to House  
02/20 Received from the Senate, filed for first reading  
Read first time; referred to Education  
03/07 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading  
03/10 Read second time; filed for third reading  
03/12 Read third time in full – PASSED House – 63-0-7, returned to Senate  
03/18 Reported signed by Governor on March 18, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 124  
Effective: July 1, 2014

[Bill Text](#)

[Amendment](#)

This bill requires the Board of Professional and Technical Education to adopt and implement standards for agricultural and natural resources (Ag/NR) education for students in grades 9-12 that will be used to assess the quality of Ag/NR programs and set goals for program improvement. The Board of Professional and Technical Education will be required to create and administer a grant program (incentive) for instructors of agricultural or natural resources education. Districts will be required to apply on behalf of eligible instructors (teachers in programs that meet the new standards) for grants of up to \$10,000. This legislation also allows the Board of Professional and Technical Education to create a grant fund for district and charter

schools (grades 9-12) that wish to create or reestablish agricultural or natural resources education programs.

Agriculture and natural resources education programs are located in 81 of the 109 districts in Idaho that offer secondary education. Creating standards for these programs can help students better prepare for agriculture/natural resources education post-secondary opportunities as well as workforce opportunities in industries such as forestry and mining. Creating high-quality programs and opportunities could also help encourage students to pursue careers in rural Idaho.

### **Idaho Senate Bill 1233: Funding for Advanced Opportunities**

01/22 Introduced, read first time; referred for printing  
02/20 Read third time in full as amended – PASSED Senate – 28-6-1  
02/21 Received from the Senate, read first time, referred to Education  
03/07 Reported out of Committee with do pass recommendation, filed for second reading  
03/10 Read second time; filed for third reading  
03/13 Read third time in full – PASSED House – 66-1-3  
Floor Sponsor – Burgoyne  
03/26 Reported signed by Governor on March 26, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 262  
Effective: March 26, 2014 Section 1;  
July 1, 2014 all other sections

#### [Bill Text](#)

Senate Bill 1233 provides funding for students in grades 11 and 12 to take Advanced Placement and other dual-credit courses. Students in grade 11 can qualify for \$200 towards course and exam fees and students in grade 12 can qualify for up to \$400 towards course and exam fees. Students who participate in the Mastery Scholarship program (a scholarship program for students who complete a public district school/public charter school's 1-12 curricula at least one year early) do not qualify for this funding.

This bill provides students with funding to earn college credit during high school and could provide an additional opportunity to help rural students become college-ready and potentially increase the number of students from rural areas who take AP and other advanced courses.

### **Idaho Senate Bill 1229: Dual Credit Courses**

01/22 Introduced, read first time; referred for printing  
02/11 Read third time in full – PASSED Senate – 34-0-1  
02/26 Read third time – PASSED House – 69-0-1  
02/28 Reported signed by Governor on February 28, 2014  
Session Law Chapter 27  
Effective: July 1, 2014

#### [Bill Text](#)

Idaho Senate Bill 1229 creates a definition for dual credit courses (those included on a student's secondary and postsecondary transcripts) and expands eligibility for dual credit courses to all high school students, not just those in grades 11 and 12.

This bill provides rural schools with additional opportunities to show their students that postsecondary education is a viable option and helps put them on the path to college.

**Bills covered in previous edition that did not pass:**

- Idaho Senate Bill 1343 – Testing Consortiums**
- Idaho House Bill 543 – Spousal Employment**