



## DEVELOPMENTS IN RURAL EDUCATION POLICY & RESEARCH January 2015

### Legislative Action in Idaho Affecting Rural Education

#### **Governor Butch Otter's 2015 State of the State and Budget Address**

1/12 Presented before a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate

[Address - Text](#)

Governor Butch Otter, delivering the first State of the State address of his third term as Idaho's governor, dedicated a great deal of his speech to the state's public education system. Calling public schools "essential to the health of our families, our communities, and our economy," as well as "the key to our prosperity and Idaho's competitiveness in the global marketplace," Otter proposed a 7.4 percent increase in K-12 spending for the 2015 fiscal year. This would translate to a \$101.2 million increase in the K-12 general fund and is designed to bring the education budget back to pre-recession levels. In order to successfully increase education funding to this level, the rest of Idaho's budget would need to be held to a three percent increase.

The additional spending Otter proposed in his address would be used to jump start several new initiatives as well as reinforce Idaho's college- and career-ready goals:

- \$31.9 million to implement career ladder pilot programs
- \$8.9 million to keep the Idaho Education Network up and running through June 2016
- \$20 million for an increase in operational funding
- \$17.6 million for professional development
- \$2.5 million for college and career counseling
- \$752 thousand for leadership training
- \$400 thousand for mastery-based system pilot program

In 2014, the legislature approved a budget increase of 5.1 percent. Otter's proposed 2015 budget increase is higher than both the proposal from his former education chief Tom Luna and from Luna's successor, Superintendent Sherri Ybarra, who [has proposed](#) a 6.4 percent increase for 2015. (She will not present her official budget request until January 29).

#### **Governor Otter's Task Force for Improving Education – Recommendations**

The Task Force for Improving Education issued 22 recommendations earlier this year, several of which are expected to be addressed during the 2015 legislative session. In particular:

##### *Career Ladder:*

This alternative form of teacher pay would replace the state's existing steps and lanes salary grid with increased pay for teachers who take on additional responsibilities, who receive satisfactory evaluations, and who help students meet performance targets. Governor Otter has set aside nearly \$32 million in his proposed K-12 budget for career ladder pilot programs. In December, the State Board of Education unanimously recommended that the state move forward with the career ladder program.

### *Student Funding Formula:*

The Task Force recommended moving from an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) to Average Daily Enrollment funding model. A committee tasked with implementing the Governor's Task Force recommendations has decided to put a hold on the recommendation to overhaul the state's K-12 funding formula. This transition would have helped remove barriers to personalized/mastery-based learning models as well as unpredictable year-to-year variations in district budgets.

### **Idaho's K-12 Education Budget**

The Joint Appropriations and Finance Committee's "Education Week" takes place from January 26-30. A full analysis of K-12 budget recommendations will be provided in the next ROCI policy update.

### **Bills in the US House and Senate**

#### **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization**

Efforts to pass a revised version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have been moving forward in both houses of the U.S. Congress. We are following these developments and will release a full analysis of the bill's impact on rural schools and districts in a future update.

#### **H.R. 386 American Indian Teacher Loan Forgiveness Act of 2015**

01/14/2015 Introduced and referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce

Sponsor: Representative Raul Ruiz, D – CA

Co-Sponsors: Representative Tony Cardenas, D – CA; Representative Ann Kirkpatrick, D – AZ;

Representative Alcee L. Hastings, D – FL; Representative Alan S. Lowenthal, D – CA;

Representative Matt Cartwright, D – PA; Representative Jared Huffman, D – CA;

Representative Raul M. Grijalva, D – AZ; Representative Mark Pocan, D – WI

[Bill Summary](#)

[Bill Text](#)

This bill would create a program to repay up to \$17,500 in loans for teachers who work for at least five consecutive years in LEAs with a high percentage of Native American students or schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education. The program would also be available to teachers who are members of an Indian tribe.

#### **Funding Opportunities for Rural Education**

##### **U.S. Department of Justice: Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation Fiscal Year 2015**

The U.S. Department of Justice has opened applications for its Fiscal Year 2015 competitive grantmaking process for tribal assistance. This program is focused on improving public safety and victim services. Funding from these grants may be used to support education/GED assistance or for educational and vocational programs intended to reduce recidivism among offenders.

All applications must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Justice's online [Grants Management System](#)

Applications are due by 9:00 pm E.T. on Tuesday, February 24, 2015. More information on the program can be found [here](#).

### **America's Farmers Grow Rural Education**

Nomination forms are now being accepted for the fourth annual America's Farmers Grow Rural Education grant program. The program, organized by Monsanto, allows farmers to nominate their local public school district for grants of \$10,000 - \$25,000 to improve math and science education programs. Information on the grant program, which has invested more than \$7 million in rural schools since 2011, is available [here](#).

Farmer applications are being accepted between January 1 and April 1, 2015. The nomination form is available online [here](#).

### **Research, Commentary, or Other Developments in Rural Education**

#### **Participation and Pass Rates for College Preparatory Courses in Kentucky**

Christina Mokher

REL Appalachia, March 2014

[Article](#)

[Stated Briefly \(2015\)](#)

This report looks at the implementation of a program the Kentucky Department of Education has put in place in recent years to improve college and career readiness among its high school students, focusing on implementation in a network of rural schools that share a common curriculum. The program, free college preparatory transition courses in math and reading, is open to all students but is primarily directed at those students who score below state benchmarks on the ACT in their junior year. (All Kentucky students have been required to take the ACT in the 11th grade since 2008.)

The Kentucky Department of Education offers a standard curriculum for the courses but schools are also allowed to develop their own courses. Schools may also choose whether to offer both math and reading options. While the Department recommends that all students in the "approaching benchmarks" category (ACT scores of 16-18 math, 17-19 reading) enroll in the transition courses, they are not required for graduation and only the math course counts toward high school graduation requirements. The percentage of students in the "approaching benchmarks" category is higher in rural than in urban areas.

The researchers looked at enrollment and pass rates for these courses in a network of Kentucky districts, the Southeast South-Central Educational Cooperative; a matched group of comparison districts; and the state as a whole.<sup>i</sup> It was hoped that this strategy could help the districts set measurable goals for increasing college readiness and to improve the identification of gaps across student subgroups. Statewide, less than half of students recommended for enrollment in the transition courses had enrolled (28.1 percent in math and eight percent in reading). The researchers posited that there might have been several explanations for the higher math participation: it counts toward high school graduation requirements and nearly twice the

percentage of students are in the “approaching benchmarks” category for math than for reading. However, while participation in the courses is low, pass rates are high, with over 90 percent of students successfully completing the courses statewide (94.7 percent math, 96.1 percent reading).

The researchers found that the largest gaps across student subgroups were in math. Here, the percentage of students in the approaching state benchmarks category was higher for female students (+ 5.1 percentage points), for students from low-income households (+ 7.9 percentage points), for students in special education (+ 8.4 percentage points), and for students in rural areas (+ 5.6 percentage points). In reading, the percentage of students in the approaching state benchmarks category was similar for all school subgroups, with gaps of less than three percentage points in both school locale and size. The researchers found that pass rates are similar for all student subgroups in math, with larger variation occurring in reading pass rates with lower performance among limited English proficient students and for students in rural areas.

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<sup>i</sup> The Southeast South-Central Educational Cooperative includes 14 rural districts and 14 districts in towns. The SE/SC Ed Co-Op worked with REL-Appalachia and a local college to develop a curriculum for their schools.