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JFAC APPROVES 2.2% INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR IDAHO SCHOOLS NEXT YEAR

BOISE – The Legislature’s budget-setting committee today approved a 2.2 percent increase in general funds for Idaho’s public schools next school year.

The increase approved by the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) includes funding to improve compensation for Idaho teachers through the salary grid as well as differential pay, dual credit for Idaho high school students taking college or professional-technical courses, technology for all Idaho classrooms, and more professional development opportunities for educators.

“I am pleased with the public schools budget approved today for the upcoming school year. This is just the first step in the approval process, but it is an important step,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said after JFAC approved the budget.

He continued, “Today, the committee not only increased the amount of money going to Idaho’s public schools next year, but they also approved funding for critical programs that will help raise academic achievement by providing equal access and opportunity for all teachers and students, such as dual credit for high school students, advanced classroom technology, meaningful professional development, and funding to compensate Idaho’s teachers more through the state salary grid as well as differential pay plans that will be developed at the local level. This is a responsible budget that works to meet the needs of our students across the state.”

If approved, the budget will go into effect July 1, 2013 for the 2013-2014 school year.

Here is an overview of the FY2014 Public Schools Budget approved in JFAC today:

- 2.2% increase in General Funds.
- Increases in compensation:
 - Increase in the minimum teacher salary, from \$30,500 to \$31,000.
 - Restore 1.67% in salary-based apportionment
 - Buy back both years of experience that were frozen on the grid in 2009 and 2010 during the economic recession
 - \$21 million in block grants that will be distributed to school districts and public charter schools for compensation. The goal is for districts to spend up to 40% on professional development and 60% on differential pay plans, which focus on increasing student achievement and will be developed at the local district level. The intent language for this funding is still being finalized.

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- \$13.4 million for classroom technology. The goal is for the majority of this funding to be distributed to school districts and public charter schools through a student-based formula. Approximately \$2.3 million would be used to create wireless learning environments in every public high school, and \$3 million would be awarded through competitive technology grants for schools to pilot innovative ideas for integrating technology in the classroom. The intent language for this funding is still being finalized.
- \$10.5 million for the Idaho Reading Initiative, Idaho Math Initiative and Remediation Funding. This is a \$1.1 million increase in funding to assist non-Title I One-Star and Two-Star Schools.
- \$4.85 million to fund math and science teachers and instruction to help Idaho school districts and public charter schools meet new high school graduation requirements.
- \$4.6 million in funding for Schoolnet operations and professional development. JFAC also gave the Department flexibility to use any remaining funding from FY2013 to help meet commitments to the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation in FY2014.
- \$3.75 million to fund professional development opportunities as Idaho schools begin implementing the new Idaho Core content standards in mathematics and English language arts.
- \$6.5 million in maintenance funding for local school districts with the goal to phase in the remainder of the \$20 million in maintenance funding within three years.
- \$740,000 in additional funding for schools to voluntarily administer the PSAT to sophomores and to administer end-of-course assessments in science.
- \$250,000 for the Dual Credit for Early Completers Program
- \$100,000 in funding for the School Safety Task Force.
- \$111,000 to award teachers who have earned National Board Certification.
- 1.5% increase in discretionary funding for school districts and public charter schools.

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Editor's Note: Superintendent Luna hosted a reporter roundtable after JFAC today. The audio from that meeting is posted online at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/communication.htm>. A transcript will be posted later today.