



Idaho Public Charter School Commission

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION MEETING SPECIAL MEETING

January 20, 2012
650 W. State Street, Boise, Idaho
3rd Floor, Conference Room 302

Friday, January 20, 2012 – 650 W. State Street, Room 302, 3:00 p.m.

1. PCSC Discussion: Proposed Legislation Regarding Charter School Advance Funding
2. PCSC Discussion: Mission Statement
3. Staff Update: Legislative Update

OTHER / NEW BUSINESS

If auxiliary aids or services are needed for individuals with disabilities, or if you wish to speak during the Open Forum, please contact the Board office at 334-2270 or Charter Commission staff before the meeting opens. While the Commission attempts to address items in the listed order, some items may be addressed by the Commission prior to or after the order listed.

SUBJECT

PCSC Discussion: Proposed Legislation Regarding Charter School Advance Funding

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

N/A

BACKGROUND

During 2011, the PCSC recommended proposed legislation, which was subsequently approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE), intended to discourage inappropriate use of the charter school advance funding option available to existing charter schools.

DISCUSSION

As written, RS 20819 would amend section 33-5208(1), Idaho Code, to add a provision that if enrollment growth estimated by a public charter school does not actually occur for three consecutive years, advance funding will not be available to that public charter school in the following year.

This legislation was proposed because State Department of Education (SDE) personnel indicated that the existing advance payment legislation permits charter schools to predict enrollment expansion, sometimes inaccurately, in order to obtain advance funding. Because 80% of funding is sent to schools by November, overpayment made early in the fiscal year in anticipation of increased enrollment that does not actually occur can result in very small or non-existent payments late in the year; on a few occasions, charter schools have even had to repay the state as a result of overpayment. Used inappropriately, the advance funding option threatens schools' cash flow, and therefore their fiscal stability if they have failed to implement adequate planning.

However, further consideration by SDE experts has revealed that the establishment of a penalty for repeated overestimation of charter school enrollment growth is not the best means of resolving this issue. The number of schools that have inappropriately requested advance payments for three or more consecutive years is small enough that the proposed legislation, as currently written, would affect too few charter schools to merit statutory change. SDE staff has also observed that the front-loaded funding model may not be the best means of serving Idaho's public schools in general, and may merit consideration on a larger scale than simply the charter advance payment.

In order to address the problem without legislation, the SDE's school finance personnel has established a process involving frequent enrollment updates from charter schools that request advance payments, thereby facilitating any necessary adjustments to early payments. This process has dramatically reduced the risk of problems related to overpayment.

IMPACT

If the PCSC and SBOE agree not to go forward with RS 20819, the bill will not proceed to introduction by a legislative committee.

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the PCSC provide to the SBOE its recommendation that RS 20819 be held without introduction.

COMMISSION ACTION

A motion to direct staff to convey to the State Board of Education the Public Charter School Commission's recommendation that RS 20819 be held without introduction.

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____ Carried Yes _____ No _____

January 20, 2012

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS 20819

To amend section 33-5208(1), Idaho code to add a provision that if enrollment growth estimated by a public charter school does not actually occur for three consecutive years, advance funding will no longer be made available to that public charter school. The intent of this legislation is to close a loophole permitting charter schools to inaccurately predict unlikely expansion in order to obtain advance funding to bolster cash flow over the summer, essentially using the current fiscal year's funding for the last fiscal year's expenses.

FISCAL NOTE

There is no impact on the general fund. The amount of funding sent to a public charter school is based on average daily attendance; this legislation will affect the timing, but not the amount, of funds allocated to affected schools.

CONTACT

Name: Tracie Bent
Agency: Office of the State Board of Education
Phone: 332-1582

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE/FISCAL NOTE

Bill No.

RS20819

 LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF IDAHO
 Sixty-first Legislature Second Regular Session - 2012

IN THE _____

BILL NO. _____

BY _____

AN ACT

1
 2 RELATING TO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS; AMENDING SECTION 33-5208, IDAHO CODE,
 3 TO PROVIDE THAT ANY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL THAT FALLS TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN
 4 ENROLLMENT GROWTH SHALL NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE ADVANCE PAYMENT.

5 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

6 SECTION 1. That Section 33-5208, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby
 7 amended to read as follows:

8 33-5208. PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL FINANCIAL SUPPORT. Except as provided
 9 in subsection (8) of this section, from the state educational support pro-
 10 gram the state department of education shall make the following apportion-
 11 ment to each public charter school for each fiscal year based on attendance
 12 figures submitted in a manner and time as required by the department of edu-
 13 cation:

14 (1) Per student support. Computation of support units for each public
 15 charter school shall be calculated as if it were a separate school accord-
 16 ing to the schedules in section 33-1002(4), Idaho Code, except that public
 17 charter schools with fewer than one hundred (100) secondary ADA shall use a
 18 divisor of twelve (12) and the minimum units shall not apply, and no public
 19 charter school shall receive an increase in support units that exceeds the
 20 support units it received in the prior year by more than thirty (30). Funding
 21 from the state educational support program shall be equal to the total dis-
 22 tribution factor, plus the salary-based apportionment provided in chapter
 23 10, title 33, Idaho Code. Provided however, any public charter school that
 24 is formed by the conversion of an existing traditional public school shall
 25 be assigned divisors, pursuant to section 33-1002, Idaho Code, that are no
 26 lower than the divisors of the school district in which the traditional pub-
 27 lic school is located, for each category of pupils listed.

28 (2) Special education. For each student enrolled in the public charter
 29 school who is entitled to special education services, the state and federal
 30 funds from the exceptional child education program for that student that
 31 would have been apportioned for that student to the school district in which
 32 the public charter school is located.

33 (3) Alternative school support. Public charter schools may qualify un-
 34 der the provisions of sections 33-1002 and 33-1002C, Idaho Code, provided
 35 the public charter school meets the necessary statutory requirements, and
 36 students qualify for attendance at an alternative school as provided by rule
 37 of the state board of education.

38 (4) Transportation support. Support shall be paid to the public char-
 39 ter school as provided in chapter 15, title 33, Idaho Code, and section
 40 33-1006, Idaho Code. Each public charter school shall furnish the depart-
 41 ment with an enrollment count as of the first Friday in November, of public
 42 charter school students who are eligible for reimbursement of transporta-

1 tion costs under the provisions of this subsection and who reside more than
 2 one and one-half (1 1/2) miles from the school. For charter schools in the
 3 initial year of operation, the petition shall include a proposal for trans-
 4 portation services with an estimated first year cost. The state department
 5 of education is authorized to include in the annual appropriation to the
 6 charter school sixty percent (60%) of the estimated transportation cost.
 7 The final appropriation payment in July shall reflect reimbursements of ac-
 8 tual costs pursuant to section 33-1006, Idaho Code. To be eligible for state
 9 reimbursement under the provisions of section 33-1006, Idaho Code, the stu-
 10 dent to be transported must reside within the public charter school's atten-
 11 dance zone, and must meet at least one (1) of the following two (2) criteria:

- 12 (a) The student resides within the school district in which the public
- 13 charter school is physically located; or
- 14 (b) The student resides within fifteen (15) miles of the public charter
- 15 school, by road.

16 The limitations placed by this subsection on the reimbursement of
 17 transportation costs for certain students shall not apply to public virtual
 18 schools.

19 (5) Payment schedule. The state department of education is authorized
 20 to make an advance payment of twenty-five percent (25%) of a public charter
 21 school's estimated annual apportionment for its first year of operation, and
 22 each year thereafter, provided the public charter school has an increase of
 23 student population in any given year of twenty (20) students or more, to as-
 24 sist the school with initial start-up costs or payroll obligations.

25 (a) For a state public charter school to receive the advance payment,
 26 the school shall submit its anticipated fall membership for each grade
 27 level to the state department of education by June 1.

28 (b) Using the figures provided by the public charter school, the state
 29 department of education shall determine an estimated annual apportion-
 30 ment from which the amount of the advance payment shall be calculated.
 31 Advance payment shall be made to the school on or after July 1 but no
 32 later than July 31.

33 (c) All subsequent payments, taking into account the one-time advance
 34 payment made for the first year of operation, shall be made to the public
 35 charter school in the same manner as other traditional public schools in
 36 accordance with the provisions of section 33-1009, Idaho Code.

37 (d) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, any public charter
 38 school that fails to achieve estimated enrollment growth for three (3)
 39 consecutive years shall not be eligible to receive advance payment for
 40 the following year.

41 A public charter school shall comply with all applicable fiscal requirements
 42 of law, except that the following provisions shall not be applicable to
 43 public charter schools: section 33-1003B, Idaho Code, relating to guaran-
 44 teed minimum support; that portion of section 33-1004, Idaho Code, relating
 45 to reduction of the administrative and instructional staff allowance when
 46 there is a discrepancy between the number allowed and the number actually em-
 47 ployed; and section 33-1004E, Idaho Code, for calculation of district staff
 48 indices.

1 (6) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit any private
2 person or organization from providing funding or other financial assistance
3 to the establishment or operation of a public charter school.

4 (7) Nothing in this chapter shall prevent a public charter school from
5 applying for federal grant moneys.

6 (8) (a) For the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2005, all pub-
7 lic virtual schools shall be assigned divisors, pursuant to section
8 33-1002, Idaho Code, that are no higher than the median divisor shown
9 for each respective category of pupils, among the possible divisors
10 listed, for each respective category of pupils that contains more than
11 one (1) divisor. If there is an even number of possible divisors listed
12 for a particular category of pupils, then the lesser of the two (2) me-
13 dian divisors shall be used. For the period July 1, 2005, through June
14 30, 2007, all public virtual schools shall be assigned divisors, pur-
15 suant to section 33-1002, Idaho Code, that are no higher than the second
16 highest divisor shown, among the possible divisors listed, for each
17 respective category of pupils that contains more than one (1) divisor.
18 The divisor provisions contained herein shall only be applicable to
19 the number of pupils in average daily attendance in such public virtual
20 schools for the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. If the num-
21 ber of pupils in average daily attendance in any particular category
22 of pupils increases, during the period July 1, 2004, through June 30,
23 2005, to a number above that which existed in the prior fiscal year, then
24 those additional pupils in average daily attendance shall be assigned
25 the divisor, pursuant to section 33-1002, Idaho Code, that would have
26 otherwise been assigned to the school district or public charter school
27 had this section not been in force.

28 (b) Each student in attendance at a public virtual school shall be
29 funded based upon either the actual hours of attendance in the public
30 virtual school on a flexible schedule, or the percentage of coursework
31 completed, whichever is more advantageous to the school, up to the maxi-
32 mum of one (1) full-time equivalent student.

33 (c) All federal educational funds shall be administered and dis-
34 tributed to public charter schools, including public virtual schools,
35 that have been designated by the state board of education as a local edu-
36 cation agency (LEA), as provided in section 33-5203(7), Idaho Code.

37 (9) Nothing in this section prohibits separate face-to-face learning
38 activities or services.

39 (10) The provisions of section 33-1021, Idaho Code, shall apply to pub-
40 lic charter schools provided for in this chapter.

SUBJECT

PCSC Discussion: Mission Statement

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

N/A

BACKGROUND

As part of the oversight restructuring plan approved by the PCSC in 2011, the PCSC committed to the adoption of a formal mission statement.

DISCUSSION

Working in conjunction with the PCSC's chairman and vice-chair, PCSC staff has development the following proposed mission statement, which is based on the core principles of charter authorizing identified by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers:

The Public Charter School Commission's mission is to ensure PCSC-authorized public charter schools' compliance with Idaho statute, protecting student and public interests by balancing high standards of accountability with respect for the autonomy of public charter schools and implementing best practices to ensure the excellence of public charter school options available to Idaho families.

IMPACT

The PCSC's mission statement will be formalized immediately upon its adoption by the PCSC, and may thereafter be used to inform policy and decision-making.

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends adoption of the proposed mission statement.

COMMISSION ACTION

A motion to adopt the following as the PCSC's mission statement: The Public Charter School Commission's mission is to ensure PCSC-authorized public charter schools' compliance with Idaho statute, protecting student and public interests by balancing high standards of accountability with respect for the autonomy of public charter schools and implementing best practices to ensure the excellence of public charter school options available to Idaho families.

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____ Carried Yes _____ No _____

January 20, 2012

THIS PAGE IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

SUBJECT

Staff Update: Legislative Update

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

N/A

BACKGROUND

During 2011, the PCSC recommended proposed legislation to completely remove the cap on public charter school growth in Idaho. The State Board of Education (SBOE) elected to change the proposed legislation to retain the cap limiting growth to one new school per district per year while eliminating the cap limiting growth to a total of six new schools per year.

Representative Nonini, Chairman of the House Education Committee, has requested that the PCSC attend a committee meeting in February to discuss this and other issues related to public charter schools.

DISCUSSION

PCSC staff will update the PCSC on the status of policy discussions with regard to the SBOE's cap bill, which has not yet been introduced, as well as possible charter school facilities legislation under consideration by the Idaho Charter School Network.

Additionally, staff will provide assistance with preparation for the PCSC's meeting with the House Education Committee. These materials include an annual report, prepared by PCSC staff, which will be presented orally to the SBOE and relevant legislative committees in February.

IMPACT

Information item only.

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff has no comments or recommendations

COMMISSION ACTION

Any action would be at the discretion of the PCSC.

January 20, 2012

THIS PAGE IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

January 20, 2012

IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

The Idaho Public Charter School Commission (IPCSC) and its staff have spent the past year focusing on the improvement of oversight practices in order to effectively oversee a growing number of public charter schools in the face of a challenging economic climate. This annual report focuses on best practices identified by national leaders in the charter school movement, addressing the application of such practices to Idaho's independent authorizer.

Growth in the number of public charter schools in Idaho continued at its average, historical rate in Fall 2011, with the opening of 4, new, IPCSC-authorized schools. One IPCSC-authorized school is approved to open in Fall 2012, bringing Idaho's total number of public charter schools to 44; 30 of these are overseen by the IPCSC. It is anticipated that Fall 2013 will see a return to typical, annual growth levels of 3-5 new public charter schools, the majority of which will be IPCSC-authorized.

Enrollment in Idaho's public charter schools increased by approximately 900 students from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012. This number reflects enrollment at the four new schools, expansion or contraction of existing schools, and the closure of one, district-authorized school. Idaho's public charter school enrollment now totals nearly 17,000, or 6% of Idaho's K-12 public school population. 68% (11,645) of these students are enrolled in IPCSC-authorized schools, and 31% (5,223) are virtual school students.

Idaho's public charter schools continue to perform well academically, on average. In Spring 2011, 66% of charter Local Education Agencies (LEAs) made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind. 100% of charter LEAs currently reflect a more positive AYP status than that of the districts in which they are located, though it should be acknowledged that a few (5/18) non-virtual charter LEAs moved in the same, negative direction as did their home districts. Many more (13/18) non-virtual charter LEAs achieved AYP while the districts in which they are located moved further into school improvement. Public virtual charter school results have improved since Spring 2010, with 3 out of 7 making AYP in Spring 2011 compared to 2 out of 7 in Spring 2010. Other measures of success, including stakeholder surveys and standardized tests results, indicate that the majority of IPCSC-authorized public charter schools are performing well, and several are achieving among the best results in the state.

Funding for Idaho's public charter schools, as with all public schools, decreased from FY 2010 to FY 2011, from \$78,800,105.08 to \$77,626,137.78. The IPCSC has observed an increase in the number of schools facing significant fiscal concerns. This appears to be due in part to decreased funding; another common factor among fiscally unstable schools is excessive facility costs. New and proposed schools face additional challenges due to Idaho's failure to receive the federal Charter Start! grant during its last cycle.

The IPCSC's budget increased from FY 2011 to FY 2012 due to the approval of a second, full-time staff position. The PCSC's personnel budget currently stands at \$198,770, while its operating budget remains similar to the previous year's, at \$39,784. It is anticipated that some of these operating

funds will be utilized for the improvement of fiscal oversight tools, development of online data submission tools, and professional development of Commissioners and staff.

Authorizing activity by the IPCSC included the Spring 2011 approval of an extensive restructuring plan intended to update the IPCSC's oversight structure, including the petition approval process and charter school performance evaluation system, with an overarching goal of improved efficiency and effectiveness. The plan, which is currently in its first phase of implementation, attempts to apply best practices identified by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), while targeting additional issues identified through the experience of the IPCSC and its staff.

National research continues to inform IPCSC practices. In October 2011, NACSA released an Index of Essential Practices citing 12, essential authorizing practices and rating states by awarding 1 point per essential practice currently in effect. Idaho received 5 out of 12 points, placing our state in the bottom quartile of the 123 authorizers that participated in the nationwide survey. These results correspond with Idaho's score of 25 out of a possible 55 points on the Center for Education Reform's 2011 Charter School Law Ranking and Scorecard. Similarly, NAPCS's January 2012 Ranking of State Charter School Laws placed Idaho 32nd out of 41 states, with a score of 91/208 based on the comparison of Idaho's charter school law to the 20 Essential Components of a Strong Public Charter School Law identified by NAPCS.

NACSA, NAPCS, and the Center for Educational Reform all identify similar criteria for evaluating charter school laws, including those that address authorizing practices. The components relevant to strong authorizing all contribute to the three core principles identified by NACSA's 2010 Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing: maintain high expectations, protect school autonomy, and protect the public and student interests.

NACSA's Index of Essential Practices provides a concise list of critical authorizing practices that are recommended by national groups representing authorizers, charter school advocates, and education reformers. This report will address the 12 essential practices as they are, or are not, currently implemented in Idaho.

Essential Practice 1: Authorizer Publishes Applications Timelines and Materials

Idaho received a point for this practice. Application timelines and materials are made available on the IPCSC's website, as well as in Idaho statute and administrative rule, and through the petitioners workshops offered twice annually by the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE).

Essential Practice 2: Authorizer has Established, Documented Criteria for Evaluating Charter Applications

Idaho received a point for this practice. Throughout the application process, petitioners are provided with extensive SDE and IPCSC staff reviews based on the statutory lists of required petition elements, in addition to additional elements identified as critical by the IPCSC. The IPCSC's restructuring plan includes the development of a petition evaluation rubric, which will further define authorizer expectations.

Essential Practice 3: Authorizer Uses Expert Panels that Include External Members to Review Charter Applications

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. Upon the suggestion of this report, and with the recognition that IPCSC petitioners could benefit from the input of experts in such areas as academic program development, school finance, federal programs, and school governance, IPCSC staff is currently considering means by which this practice could be implemented. Due to budgetary constraints, it is likely that expert panels would need to be comprised of volunteer reviewers.

Essential Practice 4: Authorizer Interviews all Charter Applicants

Idaho received a point for this practice. As described in the restructuring plan, IPCSC staff now interviews all proposed charter school founding groups as a means of assessing their capacity to open and operate a public charter school. It should be noted, however, that the findings of these interviews are of limited benefit because Idaho statute does not permit an authorizer to deny a charter petition on the basis of doubt in the abilities its founding members.

Essential Practice 5: Sign a Contract with Each School

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. In Idaho, the charter document itself serves in place of a formal contract, and the IPCSC has consistently used enforcement of charters as a means of holding schools accountable. NACSA and other national leaders agree, however, on the importance of a separate document that outlines specific performance expectations and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of both schools and their authorizers. Contracts should protect school autonomy by deflecting hostile authorizers while enhancing authorizers' ability to hold schools accountable for their performance. Contracts alone cannot fulfill these goals; they must be implemented in concert with other essential practices identified in this report.

Essential Practice 6: Authorizer Grants Charters with Five-Year Terms Only

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. In 2004, the five-year renewal provision in Idaho's charter school statute was removed due to concerns about hostile authorizers and difficulty obtaining facility financing without the guarantee of long-term operation. However, 39 out of the 41 states with charter laws have managed to solve the facilities problem while retaining a renewal requirement. The threat of hostile authorizers could be mitigated by careful implementation of other essential practices, such as contracts and annual authorizer reports.

NACSA notes the possibility of using "other high-stakes reviews" in place of five-year renewals, and the IPCSC's restructure plan attempts to establish a system of periodic, high-stakes reviews. Unfortunately, the limitations of Idaho statute leave authorizers in our state unable to offer significant rewards for strong performance or sanctions for poor performance. In other words, neither the "carrot" nor the "stick" is truly high-stakes.

Idaho statute provides several, specific defects on which grounds an authorizer must issue a notice of defect to a public charter school. While the IPCSC has done an exemplary job of evaluating schools' performance in relationship to these potential defects, and has utilized the statutory process to effect dramatic turnarounds at numerous schools, it is also true that the disciplinary process described in statute and administrative rule lacks any means by which an authorizer may address issues at a school that are inappropriate or ineffective, but insufficiently egregious to justify revocation. The end result is that mediocre, or even consistently low-performing, schools have little motivation to improve.

Data from NACSA's 2010 State of Charter School Authorizing report illustrates that authorizers tend to revoke charters only under extreme circumstances, while they non-renew based on long-term evaluation of school performance (including student academic proficiency and growth, achievement gaps, attendance, recurrent enrollment, postsecondary readiness, financial performance, and board stewardship). Schools are closed up to 10 times as often at renewal than by revocation, indicating again that the absence of a renewal process will allow to remain in operation schools that would otherwise be closed for underperformance.

Essential Practice 7: Authorizer has Established Revocation Criteria

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. Although Idaho statute contains a statutory process for revocation, including specific defects on which grounds authorizers may revoke, these defects represent broad categories such as violation of any condition, standard, or procedure set forth in the approved charter. The result is a statutory obligation for authorizers to focus on the means by which a school attempts to educate students, rather than the desired ends: higher achievement by a greater number of students.

The use of contracts, in conjunction with annual authorizer reports notifying schools of their progress in relationship to the terms of such contracts, would ensure a set of pre-established standards of performance and conduct based not on methods, but on results.

Essential Practice 8: Authorizer has Established Renewal Criteria

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. Because Idaho statute does not require renewals, the IPCSC does not have a set of established renewal criteria. It is important to note, however, that IPCSC-authorized schools are subject to rigorous oversight including annual verbal and written reports (including student academic proficiency and growth, attendance, enrollment retention, stakeholder satisfaction, financial performance, and legal compliance). As a result, the IPCSC has access to an extraordinary amount of information about the schools it authorizes. Unfortunately, Idaho authorizers' ability to address matters of consistent, low-level non-compliance or underperformance short of charter or legal violation is very limited.

Essential Practice 9: Authorizer Provides an Annual Report to Each School on its Performance

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. NACSA observes that, in an environment requiring public charter schools to apply for renewal every five years, it is critically important that schools receive annual reports from their authorizers addressing whether or not the schools are meeting

the terms of their contracts. In the absence of renewals, however, the IPCSC has not generated such reports.

IPCSC-authorized schools do currently receive feedback from the IPCSC and its staff annually, at minimum, and often with much greater frequency. This feedback occurs during site visits and verbal reports to the IPCSC. As part of the IPCSC's restructuring plan, annual reports including school dashboards and ISAT comparisons will soon be made available to schools and the public on the IPCSC's website.

[***Oral presentation note: The PowerPoint will include examples of our ISAT comparison chart and AYP bar chart. I also plan to cover percentages of our schools making AYP in Spring 2011 and tell the story of Vision, which enrolled 150 new students last year and brought them all up to proficient/advanced and achieved among the highest ISAT results in the state, leading to numerous calls from districts asking for information about Vision's methods.***]

It should be noted that the production of more thorough, annual performance reports to a growing portfolio of schools would present a significant challenge to the IPCSC's limited staff, and implementation of such would likely demand additional personnel.

Essential Practice 10: Authorizer Requires and/or Examines Annual, Independent, External Financial Audits of its Charter Schools

Idaho received a point for this practice. In addition to annual, independent fiscal audits, the IPCSC requires submission of IFARMS budgets and a completed template enabling the IPCSC to evaluate school budgets in a format including not only proposed budgets, but actuals and year-end projections.

Essential Practice 11: Authorizer has Staff Assigned to Authorizing within the Organization or by Contract.

Idaho received a point for this practice. In 2011, the Idaho Legislature approved a second, full-time staff position for the IPCSC, increasing the total staff to 2.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) and bringing it closer to the nationwide average of 1 FTE per 5.3 schools. This has been extremely helpful in enabling IPCSC staff to oversee schools and broaden research regarding best practices for charter school authorizing.

Satisfactory implementation of the best practices discussed in this report, as well as adequate oversight of the growing number of Idaho charter schools, will likely require additional staffing such as most large authorizers employ. Leading, pro-charter and authorizer support agencies nationwide concur that a funding structure based on fees from authorized schools, possibly combined with appropriated funds, represents the most stable and effective funding mechanism for charter school authorizers.

Essential Practice 12: Authorizer Has a Published and Available Mission for Quality Authorizing

January 20, 2012

Idaho did not receive a point for this practice. However, the IPCSC's restructuring plan identifies the need for development of a formal mission statement. The draft mission statement, crafted to incorporate the 3 core principles of charter authorizing identified by NACSA, is as follows:

The Idaho Public Charter School Commission's mission is to enforce IPCSC-authorized public charter schools' compliance with Idaho statute, protecting student and public interests by balancing high standards of accountability with respect for the autonomy of public charter schools and implementing best practices to ensure the excellence of public charter school options available to Idaho families.

In conclusion, the IPCSC values the Essential Practices identified by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, which agree with the authorizing recommendations and model charter school laws provided by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and the Center for Education Reform. These national leaders have distilled decades of data from hundreds of authorizers into a constellation of practices that, though subject to misuse if implemented in isolation, should be considered as a comprehensive whole to represent a means by which to strengthen public charter school offerings for Idaho's students through exemplary authorizing.

January 20, 2012

January 2012 • Tamara Baysinger, IPCSC Director • (208) 332-1583 • tamara.baysinger@osbe.idaho.gov