

## **Office of Performance Evaluations**

### **News Release: Public Education Technology Initiatives**

**January 20, 2005**

(BOISE) Idaho school districts have spent \$442 million of public and private funds over the past decade to improve information technology in public schools and integrate that technology into student learning. More than \$100 million has come from state technology grants as part of the Idaho Educational Technology Initiative of 1994.

While Idaho compares favorably to neighboring states and the nation in the ratio of students per computer, individual school districts vary greatly when compared to each other on their readiness or ability to use technology, according to a report released by the bipartisan Joint Legislative Oversight Committee.

The report, prepared by non-partisan evaluators of the legislative Office of Performance Evaluations, offers recommendations to ensure compliance with statutory requirements, improve statewide planning and data management, reduce district reporting requirements, direct management focus to results, and clarify requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

As the number and complexity of computers and related technology have grown, the state and districts face the challenge of how to provide adequate technical support to properly maintain and fully use their investment in technology. Idaho schools have an average of one computer for three students, but only one support technician for every 553 computers. The report encourages the Idaho Council for Technology in Learning to review how it distributes grants to school districts to better ensure that limited public dollars are distributed where most needed.

Evaluators recommend the State Board of Education become more involved in technology planning, ensuring that improvements are made to the statewide plan-which provides a framework for the use of technology funding.

The report also finds, contrary to common misconception, the No Child Left Behind Act does not require states to develop a statewide student information management system like ISIMS; nor does it require assessment of students on the Idaho Eight-Grade Information Technology Standards-adopted last spring by the State Board of Education.

The report recommends that because ISIMS has proved costly, complex, and prone to cost overruns, any future plans by the State Department of Education to pursue such a system should be subject to periodic review by legislative financial auditors. The Office of the Governor, the State Board of Education, and the Idaho Council for Technology in Learning expressed their support for the report's recommendations.