

## **Office of Performance Evaluations**

### **News Release: Use of Average Daily Attendance in Public Education Funding**

**February 26, 2007**

(BOISE) The formula used to determine funding for Idaho's public schools has not been revised in more than a decade and certain aspects of the formula should be reviewed, recommends a legislative report. The report, issued today by the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee, concludes that the design of the state's formula may occasionally create unexpected and inequitable results in funding for smaller schools. The non-partisan staff of the Office of Performance Evaluations, an independent agency of the Idaho Legislature, conducted the study.

The staff also found that schools are either inaccurately reporting or having difficulty with reporting half-day and part-time attendance, as well as attendance for students enrolled in multiple schools, virtual schools, and distance learning programs. Accurate collection and reporting of attendance is essential because attendance is used as the basis for determining school funding. About ¾ of \$1.5 billion spent on public education in Idaho is distributed based on attendance.

The report concludes that the greater part of attendance was collected and reported correctly for the majority of students. The evaluators reached their findings after reviewing attendance information and interviewing officials at 33 schools in different parts of the state, representing about 36 percent of Idaho's nearly 262,000 students receiving public education.

Four factors responsible for the inaccuracies and difficulties in collecting and reporting attendance were identified: (1) software used by schools to collect and report attendance vary widely in its capabilities, (2) requirements for virtual schools and distance learning programs are vague, (3) the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education have provided limited guidance for accurately collecting and reporting attendance, and (4) the state has limited oversight of the attendance collection and reporting process.

The 8-member Joint Legislative Oversight Committee is equally divided between the two political parties and the two chambers of the legislature. The committee is co-chaired by Senator Shawn Keough (R) of Sandpoint and Representative Margaret Henbest (D) of Boise.