

Office of Performance Evaluations

News Release: Public Education Funding in Idaho

January 14, 2009

(BOISE)—A report released today to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee concludes that Idaho's system of public education should be held to the same kinds of standards and the same degree of accountability as any other government program or service. "We believe that Idaho can meet its obligations and move forward without emulating other states that have conducted a formal adequacy study," said Rakesh Mohan, director of the Office of Performance Evaluations. "Instead, Idaho can follow a measured approach of *goal setting, investment, implementation, and evaluation* that can be tailored to the state's particular needs."

The report advises the Legislature about how to improve the state's approach to funding public education. It does not quantify how much the Legislature should spend on public education, but instead recommends that the Legislature work to identify educational goals and move towards those goals in a deliberate manner.

To its credit, Idaho has made both large-scale and incremental changes to its funding formula. However, nearly 15 years have passed since Idaho has made major revisions or revisited the rationale for its funding approach. In many areas, the needs of the educational system have changed with the passage of time and the formula is in need of attention once again. To assist Idaho's policymakers in facing the challenges of the coming decade, the report provides an approach that is informed by learning from the experience of other states, identifying specific weaknesses in the current funding approach, and listening to input from stakeholders.

The eight-member Joint Legislative Oversight Committee is equally divided between the two political parties and the two chambers of the Legislature. The committee asked the non-partisan Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE) to conduct this study to examine adequacy issues in K-12 public education funding in Idaho. Senator Elliot Werk and Representative Clifford Bayer co-chair the committee.