

NEWS RELEASE

Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho Legislature
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 8, 2013

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Meeting Location: State Capitol, Capitol Auditorium
Meeting Time: 4:00 p.m.

(BOISE) Today, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee released a comprehensive evaluation report on a variety of issues affecting teachers employed in Idaho’s K–12 public schools. The report’s unique features—public education data in combination with interviews of school district administrators and a detailed survey for *all* superintendents, principals, and teachers—will make it an asset to policymakers and education stakeholders in moving forward with education reforms.

Evaluators conducting the study examined existing data to learn what it says and what it can tell policymakers. They also surveyed district and school personnel for perspectives on critical education issues and what educators felt was important to communicate to policymakers.

Evaluators received more than 2,800 survey responses—2,486 teachers, 256 principals, and 84 superintendents—representing 72 percent of districts and charters, and analyzed more than 1,500 comments from the respondents. These comments revealed a strong undercurrent of despair among teachers who perceive a climate that disparages their efforts and belittles their contributions. The vast majority of comments from superintendents, principals, and teachers express concern or dissatisfaction with aspects of their work as public school district employees or, more broadly, with conditions surrounding public education in Idaho.

The expressed concerns raise questions about the long-term availability of dedicated, quality teachers to serve the state’s public school system. The general tone of dissatisfaction and sense of being underappreciated may present challenges to policymakers and directly affect the state’s ability to ensure a steady supply of dedicated, highly effective teachers in all of Idaho’s public schools.

The survey results indicate that superintendents and principals across the state largely attribute their recruitment and retention struggles to teacher compensation packages. Evaluators analyzed Department of Education data and found that the teacher turnover rate has seen a moderate increase over the past three academic years, increasing from about 937 certified staff leaving their current

position in the 2009–2010 academic year to about 1,112 in the 2011–2012 academic year. This change in certified staff turnover is not nearly as dramatic as was reported last year.

Using information from their survey, evaluators found that the average class size in Idaho is about 24 students per class. This average is significantly higher than the statewide ratio of 17 students per teacher, which is determined by simply dividing the total number of students by the total number of instructional staff. Evaluators reported that class size varies substantially among schools and districts, and evaluators caution against relying on statistics of state-level class size because it can create a false sense that class sizes are acceptable when many districts struggle with large class sizes.

The Office of Performance Evaluations, a nonpartisan office of the Legislature, presented its findings to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee, a bipartisan committee of 8 legislators equally divided between the two major political parties and the two houses of the Legislature. The report *Workforce Issues Affecting Public School Teachers* is available on the evaluation office's website at <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/opec/>.