

Thank you, Chairman Thayne and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

For the record, my name is Wiley Dobbs and I am the superintendent of the Twin Falls School District #411. Thank you for this opportunity to address the subject of 6th grade alternative school funding. I brought several copies of a handout that goes with my testimony this ~~morning~~ ^{afternoon}.

I believe the committee members have received this. If not, let me know and I'll be happy to pass some forward.

Back in November, the TFSD Board of Trustees and I presented a resolution at the Idaho School Boards Association Convention calling for 6th grade alternative school funding in Idaho. The full body of Idaho school board trustees voted overwhelmingly (3285 ayes – 429 nays) in favor of supporting sending this idea to the legislature...so, here we are.

The two main arguments that we have made in favor of this idea becoming a bill and hopefully ultimately a part of Idaho Code are:

- #1 - The majority of Idaho public middle schools are configured 6th grade through 8th grade. Therefore, alternative middle schools should be allowed to organize accordingly and HB 300 would allow this to occur.
- #2 - Intervention opportunities should be supported as early as possible to help students get back on track.

In Twin Falls, we have a very effective alternative middle school named Bridge Academy Middle School for 7th and 8th graders. It has a 4-star rating and an outstanding success rate.

- 97% of all Bridge Academy students matriculate on to high school.
- Over 90% of those students graduate from high school.

I would love to have the opportunity to provide an alternative education setting for our at-risk 6th graders in Twin Falls. I am confident that we will have equally great results with our 6th grade students as we have seen with our 7th and 8th graders.

I know that this bill, if passed, would allow for 6th grade alternative school funding beginning in 2017^{FY}; however, I thought it pertinent to share with you the estimated costs:

- Idaho could fund alternative 6th grade at approximately \$3,000 per student.
- Currently, Idaho funds 329 8th grade alternative middle school students and 233 7th grade students attending alternative middle schools.
- If the legislature were to fund as many 6th graders as there are 7th graders in Idaho alternative middle schools right now, the total cost would be a little over \$700,000. I believe there will be fewer 6th grade students who will be enrolled in alternative schools, but this provides a good ballpark figure.
- I have also provided some ideas on the handout for pilot programs and funding scenarios that could be considered next year.

HB 300 paves the way for funding opportunities for 6th grade at-risk students. I view this as an investment. I hope you do too. I'd be happy to answer any questions if you have them.

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