



# BLAINE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*Superintendent GwenCarol Holmes, Ed. D.*

Public Comment to the Joint Senate and House Education Committees

March 18, 2019

From: GwenCarol Holmes, Ed.D., Superintendent of the Blaine County School District.

Chairman Mortimer and Members of the Senate Education Committee, I am GwenCarol Holmes, Superintendent of the Blaine County School District.

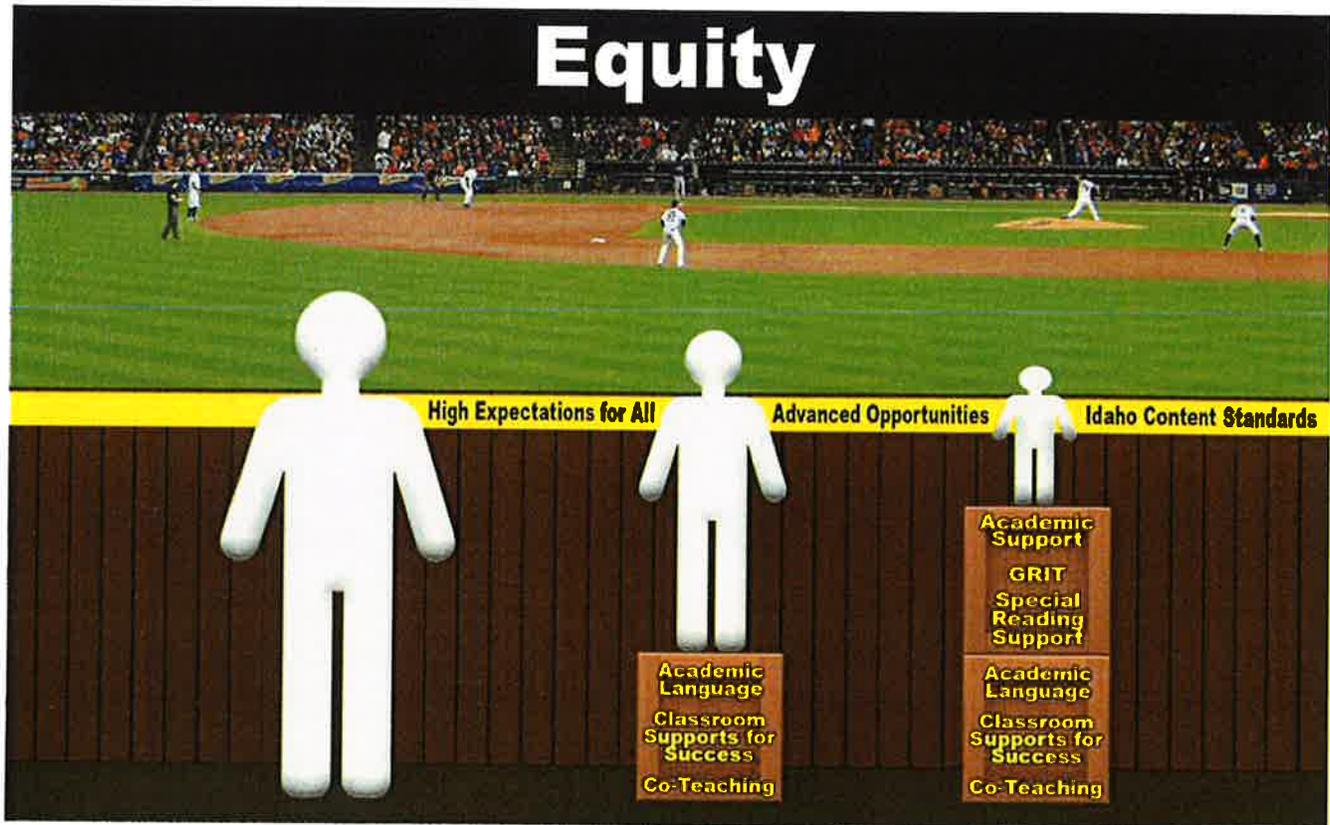
Thank you for this opportunity to express my views on the proposed Public School Funding Formula.

As I know you are aware, the Idaho Constitution recognizes the importance of education for maintaining a vibrant state and therefore calls for the legislature "to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public free common schools." (Article IX, Section 1) Thank you for your relentless dedication year after year to make this happen for our children.

We work to ensure that every child has the same opportunities by having Idaho Content Standards that guide us in ensuring that children educated in Idaho, whether from the panhandle or the southeast or the southwest or even the central mountains where I live, graduate from our schools having received a uniform and excellent education.

Our children come to school, each one unique and precious, with the expectation, as given to them by our constitution, that each of them will be educated to the same high level regardless of their circumstances. As educators our obligation, and the expectation of Idahoans, is to make it happen for every child. There are no exceptions due to circumstances. This means our education system has to be based on equity, not equality. This is the fundamental priority that needs to be recognized if we expect to create an education system that assures that all students master the standards.

The proposed Public School Funding Formula is a recognition of the need for equity in fulfilling our constitutional obligation of a 'uniform and thorough system of free public schools.' The formula recognizes that all children must master the Idaho Content Standards and to do so will require that some children receive additional supports. It provides a base for all students and then additional funds for those children that need more support in achieving the standards.



The three children in this picture all want to watch the ball game. Being able to see over the fence is the minimum standard required. One child can do it on her own. Another child needs some support or a box to stand on. And the third child needs even more supports or two boxes to stand on. However, the end result is that all children get to watch the game.

This proposed funding formula directs our conversation to students. The questions that you must address are, 1) What is a sufficient base amount to provide the education to a “typical” student so that they can reach the standards? The Idaho Content Standards are rigorous and require students to be able to think critically while analyzing and synthesizing information from multiple sources. 2) What is the dollar amount needed to provide those additional supports needed by students who are learning English as a second language? For students with disabilities? For students from poverty or at-risk? For students that have a specific area of giftedness? For students attending small and remote schools? And so on. This conversation is about our children, our children. I welcome that and I applaud and support your efforts.