



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

November 16, 2007

Zollie Stevenson, Jr., Ph.D.
Acting Director
Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-6132

Dear Dr. Stevenson:

Enclosed is the application for the School Improvement Fund, Section 1003 (g) Fiscal Year 2007 for the State of Idaho. We are very grateful for this opportunity to receive additional funds to support our districts/schools in their efforts to meet the needs of their students in reaching proficiency.

Please free to contact me if you have questions, and we look forward to hearing if our application is successful.

Sincerely,

Marcia Beckman

Marcia Beckman
Title I Director
Idaho Department of Education
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0027

By: *Tom Luna*
Title: Superintendent
Date: Nov. 16, 2007

By: *Marcia Beckman*
Title: Title I Director
Date: Nov. 15, 2007

School Improvement Fund State Application
Submitted by: The State of Idaho
Idaho Building Capacity (IBC) Project

Part A—Funds Retained by the SEA

1. The SEA will retain 5% (\$82,654) of the 4% School Improvement set aside from section 1003 (a) and 5% (\$21,542) of the School Improvement Fund 1003 (g) for State-level activities.
2. Idaho's current statewide system of support up to this point has focused on providing allocated school improvement funds directly to districts. Allocations have been based on need (combined percentage of economically disadvantaged, migratory, English language learners, and students with disabilities as well as current levels of proficiency) and quality (extent of needs assessment, utilization of data, optimization of other available resources, use of evidence based strategies, inclusion of stakeholders, etc.) of school improvement plans. Technical support in developing school improvement plans has been consistently provided to schools and districts in regional sessions for the past two years. Technical support has been differentiated based on individual needs for support. In the process of providing technical support it became clear to Idaho State Department of Education personnel that building local capacity is a critical issue within the state.

As a result, a pilot project – the Idaho Principal Academy of Leadership (PALS) was created in 2005. The goal of the project was to increase the knowledge base of building administrators to provide instructional leadership in schools struggling to make adequate yearly progress. Through this project, a number of schools in improvement have received substantial support in the following areas:

- a. Building effective school leadership (through the creation of Learning Communities)
 - b. Analyzing instruction (using Surveys of Enacted Curriculum and observation protocols)
 - c. Using student achievement data to prioritize needs
 - d. Establishing policies and procedures for using student achievement data to improve student outcomes
 - e. Consultation services from recently retired educators with expertise in effective schools
- Both the current system of allocating school improvement funds directly to LEAs and the PALS project have been successful in that they have provided much needed capital resources and professional development to schools and administrators of schools and districts that have been identified as needing improvement. However, our evaluation of these programs indicates that neither effort has resulted in significant increases in student achievement for Idaho's at-risk students.

3. The additional school improvement funds available to Idaho through this grant will allow us to create a statewide system of support through which we can more effectively meet the

needs of Idaho schools and districts. We have been researching how other states have organized their statewide systems of support and plan to learn from the experience of others who have gone before us in this work. A key factor in looking at how other systems operate is the complexities of providing support to rural LEAs. Many states have rural areas but Idaho's neediest schools are often located in *remote* sections of the state. While Idaho may be the 13th largest state in terms of land mass, our population is only 1.3 million. 65% of Idaho is considered federal land, a significant amount of which has been designated "wilderness," and providing technical support to schools in isolated locations remains a challenge for the State Department of Education. The lessons learned from our prior system of statewide support have allowed us to see the need to build local capacity in order to effectively service our rural schools and districts.

The SEA would like to use available funds under section 1003 (g) and 1003 (a) to build capacity at the LEA and school levels to improve student achievement through increasing effectiveness in the technical aspects of school improvement; such as:

- Creation of a Comprehensive Assessment Plan that includes benchmarking, progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments
- Use of progress monitoring and diagnostic assessment data to immediately identify students at risk of academic failure in reading, math, and language arts
- Professional development for teachers in providing standards-based instruction
- Implement tiered levels of student support that differentiate instruction based on student needs
- Implement schedules that allow for flexible "needs based" instructional focus groups
- Create collaborative systems that allow LEAs to identify staff needs in terms of professional development (i.e., sheltered instruction for English language learners, intensifying instruction for students struggling to meet grade level benchmarks, using progress monitoring data to inform instruction)
- Selecting evidenced based curricular materials that meet the needs of all students
- Building leadership capacity in schools and districts to effectively implement and sustain change that results in increased student achievement for all students, and eliminates the achievement gap between student groups

Creating a statewide system of support that will build Idaho LEAs ability to increase and sustain improvement is an ambitious goal. But through the support of partners we believe the Idaho SDE can create that system. The SDE has worked to establish supportive partnerships with the Idaho State Board of Education, Idaho Association of School Administrators, Idaho Association of School Boards, Idaho Educators Association, Idaho Business Coalition for Excellence in Education, and Boise State University's Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies.

Due to the geography of Idaho, it is essential that technical assistance be both focused and ongoing. The state's previous attempts to improve outcomes for students have allowed us to determine that our efforts must not be targeted at individual schools, or administrators. The average tenure of an administrator in a rural school is three years. However teacher tenure in rural Idaho is much longer (17 years on average) and school board members often serve many consecutive terms. If we are to significantly raise and sustain student achievement, we need to build leadership capacity and technical knowledge of school improvement at all levels. Our goal is empower local leaders to build their own internal capacity to sustain and continually evaluate, adjust, and implement school improvement efforts.

The proposed launch of a new statewide system in Idaho will utilize majority of the school improvement strategies suggested in the Grant State Application workbook. For example:

1. One of the major components of the proposed statewide system is to provide customized technical assistance and professional development designed to assist LEAs and their schools in building their own internal capacity to increase and sustain student achievement for all learners. Districts that have schools that are in Year 1 Improvement Status and beyond will be eligible to apply for participation in Idaho's Building Capacity (IBC) Project. LEAs that are awarded participation will enter into a three year agreement with leveled support in each year. Over three years both district and school level leaders will receive scaffolded support from a "Capacity Builder." The Capacity Builder (CB) will be an outside consultant trained by the State to provide on site and ongoing professional development in the technical aspects of school improvement. These activities may include such things as establishing a comprehensive assessment plan, developing standards based/school wide progress monitoring instruments, flexible grouping based on student needs, scheduling tiered level of intervention for students, establishing grade level/content level teams, data utilization, collaboration systems for service providers, developing instructional coaches, etc. While CBs will be provided training in a variety of areas, the expertise needed to work with each assigned LEA will be evaluated on an individual basis. Great care will be given to the matching process of CBs and LEAs to best utilize the expertise, experience, and training of each CB in order to maximize their effectiveness in meeting the needs of individual schools and districts.
2. Depending upon approval of our application, customized technical assistance will begin in January of 2008 with two pilot districts, with plans to bring the program to full scale the following year. Rather than support following an academic year our plan is to follow the calendar year. Based on the established timeline for making AYP results public, working through the appeals process, and then the school improvement planning process, schools and districts in Idaho are prepared to submit school improvement plans each year mid-December. Rather than wait to implement those plans the following school year, we

would like to set a precedent of immediate implementation upon the start of the second semester in January. We believe that by starting in January, when school is already well under way in any given year, CBs will have an opportunity to establish relationship, conduct informal needs assessments, work with the district and their schools to establish progress monitoring instruments, create a schedule (based on student achievement data) that provides tiered levels of support and help plan for further implementation in the fall of the subsequent academic year. Splitting support over two academic years will allow the CBs more time to get a sense of current practice and provide the professional development necessary to adopt research based strategies and practices.

In order to prevent schools and districts from becoming overly dependent on the CBs, we plan to utilize scaffolded levels of CB services. For example, in Year 1 both school and district personnel (including board members) will be provided with 8-10 hours a week of intensive consultation time and services with a CB for 30 weeks. In Year 2 the support decreases to 15-20 hours a month, and in Year 3 the support wanes to 5-7 hours a month. It is critical that all participants understand the CBs role is to not take a leadership position within the LEA or school but to facilitate their ability to implement ongoing improvement efforts. There will be a set of specific commitments and expectations that must be agreed to by the school, the district, the state, and the CBs. This Performance Agreement (modeled after the Washington State Performance Contracting System) will serve as a guide to dialogue between stakeholders and as accountability for required action. Tools and resources needed to implement the Performance Agreement will vary depending on individual school and district needs.

3. We recognize that establishing a cadre of trained Capacity Builders will be a challenge. However we have begun to develop and utilize our existing partnerships with other entities concerned with education in Idaho. The Idaho State Department of Education, Boise State University's Center for School Improvement, District Superintendents, Idaho Association of School Administrators, and the Idaho Association of School Boards are in the process of identifying and recruiting possible Capacity Builders now. Our goal will be to attract retired Idaho Educators, or other strong educators who are not currently active in a full time educational role, with experience at the district and school level to the project. Current candidates include a previous State Chief Deputy Superintendent, recently retired superintendents and other district personnel of LEAs with significant at-risk populations, both elementary and secondary principals, and exemplary teachers.

While we want our pool of candidates to already have expertise in certain aspects of school improvement (fiscal management, scheduling, curriculum and instruction, etc.) we will also train CBs in additional skills necessary to support schools to immediately improve outcomes for students and to develop administrative and teacher leaders who are prepared

to continue improvement efforts when the services of the Capacity Builders are no longer available. They will operate with a goal of working themselves out of a job.

The SDE plans to conduct ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the strategies being used by districts/schools. (see p. 9 #3 for details of our monitoring plan)

4. We are in the process of developing the training for CBs. We will use many of our existing state resources and materials such as:

- School wide system for Response-to-Intervention developed by our Special Education Division
- Leadership and Coach Training adapted from the National Reading First Technical Assistance Center
- Training and systems developed for Idaho's Principal Academy of Leadership (PALs)
- Resources from the Light House Project (Training for School Board Members offered by the Idaho Association of School Boards)

We are also fortunate to have the assistance of the Washington State Department of Education. They have been very gracious about sharing both the materials and process developed by their state, now in their seventh year of implementation. In both November and December of 2007 our School Improvement Coordinator will be attending their trainings for School Improvement Facilitators, and further exploring the details of implementing a statewide system of support.

We have also requested a bid from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) modeled after their recent work in Montana. While we are not certain at this time all of the content of the training our goal will be to take the "Best Practices" of our current projects, incorporate the materials developed by Washington State, and utilizing NWREL and other partners with the objective of providing tools to both district leaders and Capacity Builders that include explicit instructions and prioritized steps in planning so that local leaders can continue the process of improvement on their own accord. Our association with the Comprehensive Center housed at NWREL also allows us to learn of the advancements made by other northwestern states as they track other statewide efforts to effectively provide technical assistance to schools in needs improvement status.

5. Idaho is fortunate to have committed partners within the private sector. The Idaho Business Coalition for Excellence in Education (IBCEE) is an organization comprised of the CEOs or their designated representatives of the 70 largest companies in Idaho. One of IBCEE's goals is to share their skills in quality improvement and leadership. Members of the IBCEE have agreed to share their training materials with the Idaho SDE and to act as mentors as we create and bring to scale the Idaho Building Capacity Project.

The Idaho Building Capacity Project is a new system of support for schools and districts in Idaho. We are cognizant that at this time our state has limited resources both in terms of capital and numbers of staff to support the work of a statewide program. The goal will be to build a replicable model that can be supported by regional service centers. However, phase one of the project will only include two rural school districts within one hour of the SDE so that we can adequately train and support both the participating LEAs and the first cadre of CBs. A final decision has yet to be made on the LEAs for phase one. But the goal is to select rural districts with schools in year three of school improvement that serve a high percentage of at-risk students (combined percentage of economically disadvantaged, migratory, English language learners, and students with disabilities higher than 60 %) and limited local resources.

Pending formal agreement the superintendents of both the Caldwell and Mountain Home School Districts have expressed their interest in being included in phase one of the Idaho Building Capacity Project. During the spring and summer of 2008 the Idaho SDE will provide training to district staff and board members on Strategic Improvement. Included in the training will be the first cadre of CBs. Additional training will be provided to the CBs on a variety of school improvement strategies and processes, including:

- i. Executive Coaching (*Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*, Bloom, Castagna, Moir, Warren, 2005)
- ii. Effective Coaching: (National Reading First Technical Assistance Center 2005, University of Kansas, www.instructionalcoach.org)
- iii. Effective Classroom Instruction: Armstrong (2006), Martin-Kniep (2000), Marzano, Pickering, Pollock (2001), Pollock (2007), Strong, Silver, Perini (2001), Stronge, Tucker, Hindman (2004)
- iv. Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP): Echevarria, Vogt, Short (2004)
- v. Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design: Tomlinson & McTighe (2006)
- vi. Effective Progress Monitoring: (National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, www.studentprogress.org.)

CBs will receive both the initial training and ongoing opportunities for professional development and collaboration. CBs will then be charged with the task of sharing information learned in their trainings, and facilitating schools and districts through the implementation process of improvement efforts. Our goal in the recruitment process for CBs is to attract individuals with a range of experience and content knowledge so that they can become a support network for each other as they collectively brainstorm and problem solve issues and obstacles to increased outcomes for all students.

The coordination for Idaho's Building Capacity Project will initially be located at Boise State University's Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies (CSI & PS). The Idaho SDE has already entered into a contractual agreement for school improvement coordination due to the fact that the CSI & PS is dedicated to creating partnerships between higher education and local communities. BSU serves southwestern Idaho. As previously discussed, it is the intent of this project to create a model that could then be replicated at other Idaho Universities, establishing themselves as regional technical support centers prepared to facilitate and further school improvement efforts regionally. All public universities (Boise State University, Idaho State University, and University of Idaho) will be invited to part of the initial training offered to district leaders and the ongoing professional development provided to CBs. The goal is to create Regional Technical Support Centers that will coordinate the efforts of regionally based CBs. Because of the state's limited capacity to provide high quality professional development in remote areas of the state, the Idaho SDE will insure that CBs from all parts of the state participate in the same ongoing professional development and have the opportunity to collaborate on a state wide level several times a year.

At the August 2008 State Superintendent's Meeting the Idaho Building Capacity Project will be announced to all district superintendents. Participation in the Idaho Building Capacity Project will be voluntary, but strongly encouraged. The state will continue to offer technical assistance to districts not in the project through regional professional development opportunities and access to SDE personnel as needed.

Part B—Funds Awarded to LEAs

1. The SEA will allocate at least 95 percent of its section 1003 (g) and 1003 (a) funds, either separately or combined to Idaho LEAs.

The Idaho SDE will use the following criteria to give priority to LEAs with the lowest achieving schools that demonstrate the greatest needs for these funds and the strongest commitment that the funds will be used to provide needed resources for the lowest achieving schools to meet the goals for improvement under section 1116:

Need will be based on the following criteria:

- Percentage of proficient students on the Idaho State Achievement Test
- The number of years the school/district has been identified for improvement
- Discrepancy of achievement between state averages and school proficiency
- Number of subgroups (and discrepancy of achievement) identified for improvement
- Combined percentage of at-risk students (economically disadvantaged, migratory, English Language learners, students with disabilities)
- Local resources available (LEAs average per pupil expenditure)

Commitment will be based on the following criteria:

- LEAs prior efforts (professional development expenditures, implementation of instructional coaches at identified building, purchase of research based curricular materials) to improve student achievement
- LEAs willingness to provide matching funds for School Improvement activities. While the Capacity Building Project will provide assistance in the technical details of school improvement it also desires to support the LEA's responsibility to identify and provide leadership training (support attendance at national conferences, in district presentation by established educational leaders, provide stipends to teachers participating in professional development outside of contracted responsibilities, develop a system of recruiting and mentoring teacher leaders to fill future administrative positions, reimburse for in-service credits, support summer school, etc.) We recognize that effective leadership is critical in school improvement work. While the Idaho Building Capacity Project will be well tied into these efforts, participating schools and districts will need to jump in and actively assess leadership needs, organize training, and implement effective leadership at all levels.

We know that many of our district have great needs but we also realize that school and district personnel must be at a certain place of readiness for Capacity Builders to have an impact on student achievement. While the criteria for selection will be clear, each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Schools and districts applying for participation in the project will be visited by Idaho SDE personnel for an onsite meeting with district administrators, school board members, teachers, and parent representatives, to insure that all stakeholders are willing to entertain change in existing policies and instructional approaches in order to provide students with a more rigorous and effective schooling experience.

2. Grant award amounts will be no less than \$74,000. Our pay scale for CB services will be modeled after Washington and Oregon's State Wide Systems of Support. While there will be a set standard of compensation for CB services, specific payment schedules need to be developed based on the scaffolded level of support being given to schools and districts during their three year Performance Agreement. The availability, geography, and expertise of each CB will also be accounted for.

One of the goals of the Idaho Building Capacity Project is to work with LEAs on resource allocation. The funds from the Capacity Builders project will go directly to improving the districts internal ability to problem solve challenges. Through this process districts will have support in prioritizing their resources. Over time and with the support of their CB, the Idaho SDE will require that participating LEAs match funds using their professional development set asides, Title II funds, and district funds so that in addition to the funds provided by the IBC Project there will be sufficient capital resources available to support sustained school improvement. We are also committed to continuing our work in creating partnerships and seeking additional grant monies that could bring more resources to Idaho schools with great need.

The body of research surrounding school improvement (Greenberg & Fullan, 2004) and our own efforts to improve outcomes for students has led us to conclude that even when student

achievement data demonstrates that improvement efforts have been successful – it is often still fragile. Assuming that section 1003(g) funds are appropriated in subsequent years we will continue our support to districts included in the project for a minimum of three years as long as we have sufficient evidence that the district and school remain committed to sustained improvement. If funds are not available in future years, it will provide us with one more funding challenge to creatively overcome.

3. The SEA will monitor the effectiveness of the strategies selected and implemented with 1003 (g) and 1003 (a) funds through:

- a. Outcome data, including the number and percentage of students scoring proficient on the Idaho statewide assessment for NCLB and the number of schools and LEAs moving out of improvement status. (The SDE will analyze ISAT data for all schools/districts involved in the Capacity Builder Project)
- b. Evidence of an established Comprehensive Assessment Plan that includes the use of screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic assessments for reading and math
- c. Creation or selection of a progress monitoring instrument
- d. Establishment of Grade/Content Teams
- e. Regular communication with CBs and school/district leaders (CBs and school/district leaders will be required to write monthly summaries of their activities at both the district and school level and report on the specific activities and strategies studied and/or implemented by the school)
- f. Review of School Board minutes (Reflecting discussion of LEA identified priorities)
- g. District and School Expenditures (Itemized list of Professional Development Activities, Research Based Curricular Materials, Consultant/Service Providers)

4. The Idaho SDE will take the following steps if the school improvement strategies supported with these funds are not contributing to increased student achievement:

- Advise District Superintendent of the identified concerns
 - a. Provide criteria for the areas of concern along with steps the LEA must take to rectify the situation.
 - b. Provide a timeline for implementation of corrective action
 - c. Identify a system of communication (email summaries, weekly conference calls, on site monitoring visits, or a combination of these activities) that will support the district in their efforts to meet expectations
 - d. Provide an opportunity for district personnel to express any concerns they may have about continuation of the program or obstacles to success
- Identify an External Evaluator for the LEA's Implementation of the Idaho Building Capacity Project

- If the District chooses to remove themselves from the project the SDE will suspend all activities
- If the District chooses to continue but fails to meet the criteria set forth by the Idaho SDE and the external evaluator feels the program is not likely to result in increased student outcomes, the SDE will suspend funding and work towards finding a mutually beneficial method of providing support outside of the scope of the Idaho Building Capacity Project

Part C—Monitoring

Districts involved in the Idaho Building Capacity Project will continue to be part of the state's federal programs and special education monitoring schedule. In addition the state will use the following measures to monitor progress:

- a. Outcome data, including the number and percentage of students scoring proficient on the Idaho statewide assessment for NCLB and the number of schools and LEAs moving out of improvement status. (The SDE will analyze ISAT data for all schools/districts involved in the Capacity Builder Project)
- b. Evidence of an established Comprehensive Assessment Plan that includes the use of screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic assessments for reading and math)
- c. Creation or selection of a progress monitoring instrument
- d. Establishment of Grade/Content Teams
- e. Regular communication with CBs and school/district leaders (CBs and school/district leaders will be required to write monthly summaries of their activities at both the district and school level and report on the specific activities and strategies studied and/or implemented by the school)
- f. Review of School Board minutes (Reflecting discussion of LEA identified priorities)
- g. District and School Expenditures (Itemized list of Professional Development Activities, Research Based Curricular Materials, Consultant/Service Providers)

We will also be monitoring the effectiveness of our Capacity Builders by collecting survey data from district and school personnel on the services provided and by conducting semi-annual interviews with each of the schools. Because we plan to replicate this initial project to build our own state capacity to offer support that will result in improved student achievement, we intend to contract with an external evaluator who will conduct an ongoing program evaluation of the Idaho Capacity Building Project. We have not yet selected an external evaluator but are considering several, including Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), the BERC Group, the Center for Educational Effectiveness, Inc., and Dr. Frank X. Gallant. Dr. Gallant has provided program evaluations on the state's Limited English Proficient program as well as the effectiveness of the State Reading Initiative.