

The following are Superintendent Luna's prepared remarks for the Joint House and Senate Education Committees on January 15, 2014. Please note: these remarks may differ from Superintendent Luna's delivered remarks.

With the support of this Legislature, the Governor and the hard work of Idaho's teachers, parents and students we have accomplished many things to move student achievement forward in the State of Idaho,

I could describe each and every one in great detail...

- The Idaho Math Initiative
- The Middle School Credit System
- Idaho's Statewide Framework for Teacher Performance Evaluations
- For the past two years, a portion of teacher compensation has been based on student achievement and performance.
- Teacher evaluations are now tied in part to student achievement as well as job performance in the classroom.

Together, we have created an atmosphere and infrastructure where the use of technology has become organic in Idaho's schools, but I know most of you are familiar with these already.

So, lest anyone think that education in Idaho is stagnant and not improving, the opposite is clear.

These programs and initiatives prove that.

So, the question before us is not whether our schools are improving, we know they are. You can see it in classrooms all across the state.

The question is: Are schools improving fast enough to compete with the fast-paced change of the world around us?

I think we all know the answer to that question, and the answer is no.

That is why the Task Force for Improving Education worked for 8 months and put forward 20 recommendations – a clear path to change and improve Idaho's education system for all students by the year 2020.

The changes we have made in the past several years laid the groundwork for these Task Force recommendations. They have prepared us for where we are today and will propel us onto the path we hope to take in the future.

So what's happening in Idaho's schools today?

As State Superintendent, I get this question everywhere I go... And I go a lot of places across our great state in a given year.

So let me just give you a quick overview of just some of the great things happening Idaho's schools today.

First, our schools are performing well.

In December, just before Christmas, I drove from Coeur d'Alene to Clark Fork.

Clark Fork Junior Senior High School is a Five-Star School, and they couldn't be prouder!

When you pull into the parking lot, the first thing you see is a huge banner with five golden stars announcing their success.

When you step into the school and talk with students and staff, it's clear why Clark Fork is a Five-Star School.

Their energy is contagious.

It's not easy to be a Five-Star School. We have fewer than 100 in the entire state.

This year, though, we have more Five-Star Schools and fewer One-Star Schools. We are moving in the right direction.

If you'll remember, we moved to the Five-Star Rating System two years ago, after getting out from under many of the onerous provisions of No Child Left Behind.

Under NCLB there was no recognition of academic growth or other measures of student success. The only measure was "how many students could pass a test?"

We have changed that now.

Under Idaho's Five-Star Rating System, elementary schools are measured based on proficiency as well as academic student growth.

High schools are measured based on multiple measures: such as proficiency, academic growth, how many dual credits did students earn? How many students are taking AP courses? How did your students do on the SAT? And we're also looking at the graduation rate.

Clark Fork High and 90 other schools across the state excelled in these areas, many schools in your areas, like

- McCall-Donnelly High School,
- St. Maries Middle School
- Eagle Elementary School of the Arts,
- Vallivue Academy and
- Acequia Elementary School ...

These schools now serve as models for all schools across the state, and we are celebrating sharing their success stories.

Across the state, more and more students now have access to advanced learning opportunities – and they are taking advantage of it.

As I travel the state, I can tell you that our strategic investments we have put into more dual credit, Advanced Placement, Tech Prep and others are paying off.

Several years ago, you could see only pockets of success in districts like West Side School District that were pioneers because they tapped into the Utah Education Network.

Now, you can see it in practically any Idaho high school.

In October, I was visiting schools in Kimberly when I met Jericho Schroeder. Even though she is just a high school student, Jericho earned her associate's degree from the College of Southern Idaho last fall.

After she graduates from high school, Jericho hopes to go on to college and become a doctor. And she is well on her way.

Last fall, I heard from 26 other students in North Idaho who proudly earned their associate's degree before graduating from high school.

These students are taking advantage of the Dual Credit for Early Completers Program and other opportunities.

It is clear the interest and the demand is growing.

Students want to go on and pursue education after high school, and they know one of the best ways to get a jumpstart is while they are still in high school.

The numbers prove it.

Two years ago, 17,000 high school students across Idaho were taking dual credit courses. In just one year, that number grew to 27,000.

And in just the first semester of this year, 24,000 students have already enrolled in the advanced courses.

The main reason we have finally been able to offer these types of opportunities to students in Kimberly or St. Maries or any school in Idaho is because in 2009, we embarked on a years-long process to connect every one of our public high schools to each other and to our colleges and universities through a secure, high speed, broadband intranet system called the Idaho Education Network or the IEN.

Just two years later, the first phase of the IEN was completed, making it possible for students in every high school across the state – no matter how rural or remote – to take classes not only from the best teachers in their high school but also from the best teachers anywhere in the state – finally closing the digital divide.

Sugar-Salem is just one school district that has taken full advantage of the opportunities of the IEN.

Last year, 130 students in Sugar Salem earned about 400 credits.

This year, they already have 200 students taking dual credit courses.

With that broadband connectivity in place as the foundation, school districts are now able to see the value of wireless connectivity.

Rural Sugar-Salem School was one of the first to sign up for wireless provided by the state.

Wireless connectivity gives Sugar Salem and other schools the ability to put more advanced technology in the classroom where teachers and students can utilize it to the best of their ability.

No longer do students and teachers have to wait for their turn in the computer lab, because now every classroom is a computer lab where teachers and students have instant access to technology— when they need it, when it works into their lesson plan.

More than 80% of Idaho's school districts and public charter schools signed up to participate in wireless this first year.

We are on track to connect all of these schools by the end of March, as expected.

In the world we live in today, we know we cannot just limit these opportunities to our high school students. The Task Force for Improving Education recognized this.

That is why you will see a recommendation to continue to expand broadband and wireless infrastructure to all schools in the state.

This year, with your support we can take important steps in that direction.

First, the Department of Administration has requested additional funding to move forward with phase 2 of the IEN which expands the Idaho Education Network into middle schools and elementary schools.

Second, I was pleased to see the Governor's budget request provides ongoing support for wireless infrastructure and maintenance in Idaho's high schools now and in the future.

This is critical.

Now, I understand when the wireless contract was signed earlier this summer, some legislators had questions about the intent language.

If there is anything I have learned, it is that I will make sure we all have a clear understanding of intent language, what it means and exactly how it will be carried out in the future.

One question this Legislature has wrestled with is what type of technology to invest in for Idaho's schools and districts.

Last year, the Legislature appropriated \$3 million to set up technology pilots across the state.

The goal is for these schools to pilot innovative technologies that, if successful, might be duplicated in every Idaho school to give Idaho teachers the tools they need to help raise academic achievement.

We received applications from 81 schools across Idaho, totaling \$20 million in requests.

You can tell by the number of applications we received that the demand is there. The demand for technology has becoming organic in Idaho's classrooms.

We worked with a committee of experts in education technology to design the application process and then appointed a committee of educational stakeholders to conduct a blind review process and select the award schools.

To be eligible, a pilot project had to be a full integration model and designed to improve student academic growth and financial efficiencies throughout an entire school.

The project had to be scalable to other schools in Idaho and demonstrate sustainability after the technology pilot period ends.

Each application also included a research component so the State Department of Education can evaluate the pilot projects and identify best practices.

In the end, 11 schools were selected. Each represented a cross-section of schools – made up of all different grade levels, demographics and from different regions.

These pilots were intended to last for two years, so they are still in their initial stages. But we are already seeing positive results.

At Beutler Middle School in Dayton, for example, students and teachers have fully embraced the new iPad technology in their classrooms.

Students strongly prefer the eBooks on their iPads over their printed textbooks.

Why?

When you go to Beutler, you will see these eBooks are not stagnant like the textbook you and I know. Students are interacting with the book.

In science class, for example, students can watch mitosis as it happens.

Or as shown in this video, a student can look at DNA and manipulate it and see exactly how it works.

If they don't fully understand it the first time, they can go back and watch it again and again.

These digital textbooks aren't limited to math or English or science... schools are also utilizing technology in other classes as well like in music.

At Beutler, they told me a student can take his trumpet home and practice playing. An educational application will play back and tell the student if he is on key or needs to make improvements.

This is just one example of a technology pilot.

And let me reiterate something you have heard me say before.

Pilots must be just the beginning, not the end. These 11 pilots represent just 2% of our schools.

We can't have a situation where a parent is left to hope that their child is lucky enough to attend a school that was fortunate enough to receive a grant. These opportunities must become common in all schools.

After we get the full results and research back from these pilots, I look forward to discussions with this Legislature about how to move forward to invest in technology in every Idaho school.

No matter where I travel or the reason, I now get to see the new Idaho Core Standards in action in Idaho's classrooms. And it is nothing short of amazing.

From the Compass Academy in Idaho Falls to Cottonwood to Coeur d'Alene, teachers are hard at work implementing these new, higher standards in mathematics and English language arts at all grade levels.

As you all know, Idaho voluntarily adopted the Common Core State Standards as Idaho's Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts in 2011 with the support of the State Board of Education and the Idaho Legislature.

Since then, we have provided professional development to Idaho's schools and districts to help prepare for the transition to these new standards. And we continue to do so today.

This school year was the first time Idaho fully transitioned to the new standards. Now, every student in Idaho's K-12 public schools is being taught to these higher standards.

This is important because these standards emphasize critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. They make sure students see relevance in what they are learning and are better prepared when they graduate from high school.

Why is this important?

I'll tell you why. At the end of last school year, 90 percent of our students met our previous standards in reading and over 80 percent of our students met our math standards.

Yet, of those who chose to go on after high school, nearly half had to take remedial courses once they got there.

While we recognize the accomplishments our children or grandchildren have made "IN" the K-12 schools, we have to ask ourselves— if they did so well in school – why are so many of them struggling now after they graduate?

Parents are asking, why is my child who just walked across that stage and earned a diploma three months ago now taking remedial math in college?

One reason is because our standards in K-12 education quite simply were not high enough.

So we raised them.

High academic standards are the foundation of a high-quality education system. Period.

It's our responsibility to make sure that our students are not just doing well while they are IN school, but they are successful OUTSIDE of school where they will live and work. That is the real measure of how well our schools are doing.

We now have a solid foundation in place from which to build going forward.

What do these new standards look like in a classroom? If you have not already, I encourage you to visit one of your local classrooms and see it first-hand.

The curriculum, the lesson plans, the textbooks are different from district to district, and even sometimes from classroom to classroom, yet the commonality is that students are engaged.

They are all working on critical-thinking, problem-solving and applying the lessons learned in the classroom to the real world.

I like to use an example that Bill Brulotte, a principal in Twin Falls, has shared.

This is how you take reading and writing standards and apply them to the real-world and make students think critically about them.

[SHOW VIDEO CLIP]

As you can see, these standards are different than our previous standards. We are asking students to think and work at a higher level.

We are still more than a year away from the first time we measure students against these higher standards.

As I have said in the past, because these standards are so much higher, we know not as many students will score on grade level the first time we measure them against these standards.

It's not because our students woke up one day and they were less smart than they were the day before.

It's because we have raised the bar. And that's a good thing. Our students will be better prepared for success as a result.

We are phasing this test in over three years. Last spring, we piloted this assessment in more than 120 Idaho schools.

This spring, all schools and students will have the chance to take a trial run of the test before it becomes fully operational next year.

This is an opportunity for every student, teacher, and parent to become more familiar with this new test.

Just as the standards are different, Idaho's assessments will also look different. We are finally moving away from a stagnant, multiple-choice-only test to a test that is able to better measure our students and what they truly know and are able to do.

This test will include multiple choice as well as open-ended questions where students have to show their work, write essays and more.

I for one am excited about this. Some have questioned the length of this new test.

Yes, this test will be longer than the previous ISAT, but there is a good reason for that.

The ISAT was only a multiple choice test. Consequently, we were trying to test a student's writing skills by asking them to pick a, b, c or d.

It wasn't the best possible measure.

Now, we have a better measure. We will measure a student's writing skills by having them write. This new test combines forms of testing we have used in the past like the ISAT, the Direct Writing Assessment and the Direct Math Assessment.

Therefore, it will take longer because we are combining these different types of tests.

It will take about 6 hours in grades 3-8 and 7 hours in high school.

These are not averages, these are maximum estimates.

One flexibility that we have now that we didn't have before with the ISAT is that schools can now break up these testing times over several days, so students do not have to sit for 6 straight hours.

Even with these estimates, we know this is still far less than 1% of the time a student spends in school each year.

And we are getting so much more in return.

In addition, we cannot forget that this is not just an end-of-year assessment.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment also provides assessment tools that teachers can use throughout the school year to monitor students' progress and provide instant feedback for teachers in the classroom.

One concern I heard and we all heard over and over again about the ISAT is that it did not provide immediate feedback. Now, teachers will have the tools to do this.

These tools will be voluntary for schools and teachers to use, but they will be readily available.

In the end, we must remember we know these standards will be beneficial to Idaho students, and we have the evidence.

Kentucky became the first state to implement the Common Core State Standards in 2010. That state has now tested students against these higher standards for two years in a row.

Before implementing these higher standards, only 34 percent of students in Kentucky graduated from high school prepared to go on to college or into the workforce. After just one year of implementing the new standards, that number increased to 47 percent.

Now, after two years of implementation, 54 percent of students graduating from Kentucky high schools are prepared for college or career.

These are students who no longer have to take remedial courses when they go on to a university, college, or professional-technical school.

Their employers no longer have to spend money to train them on critical math or communication skills they should have learned in high school.

These higher standards are working!

As I have traveled across the state, I have also heard legitimate concerns about data collection, accuracy and security.

Some have tried to make the connection between our transition to these new, higher standards and data collection. We all know this is not the case – the two are not related in any way.

Yet, many individuals have raised concerns about data, and I believe their concerns should be taken seriously.

That's why in August, I sent a letter to the Governor and Chairmen Goedde and DeMordaunt regarding this issue.

I believe we must always remain vigilant in how we protect and maintain the data we collect in our public education system.

Data is a necessary part of any organization or industry to ensure we can track progress and make the best decisions at the state and local levels.

The fact is, without quality data, we can never truly have transparency and accountability.

At the state time, we must make sure that any and all data collected on students and their families serves an educational purpose and remains safe and secure.

Today, we have the laws in place in Idaho that are working to protect every student, but I strongly believe it's our goal to make sure data is not only safe and secure today, but that it is secure every year going forward.

I want to thank both Chairmen for their leadership on this critical issue, and I look forward to working with them this session on a bill to address the concerns we have heard.

Another challenge I want to address is regarding data is the implementation of Schoolnet, the state's instructional management system.

I have visited several school districts that are piloting Schoolnet. They have seen the benefits; at the same time, they have identified areas that need improvement.

In May, we worked closely with the Albertson Foundation, Schoolnet, and our pilot districts to identify these areas of improvement and create a 3-Year Work Plan that would address these challenges.

We have already implemented several parts of this work plan and seen improvements.

Schoolnet has already provided more resources on the ground since this fall, and many of the pilot districts have experienced a great benefit and improvement in the platform.

For example, Meridian School District is working to implement lesson plans in 10 schools with nearly 350 teachers. Teachers now see their correct courses, and accurate student information, something that was not always in case last school year.

Because of the improvements, many districts, including Meridian, have a renewed commitment to Schoolnet, and the instructional resources that it provides.

I could go into more detail about our Schoolnet efforts, but I know we are working to schedule time to talk with you about this in more detail, and I look forward to that update.

I have given you an overview of some of just some of the progress we have made in education in recent years, and where we are today, but as you all know, we still have a lot of work to do.

Now let me just say that, I reject the notion that somehow it's inconsistent or hypocritical to praise the good things happening in our schools and at the same time identify areas that must be improved.

I call that continuous improvement. I believe continuous improvement is essential to the success of every great school or any organization.

I have already highlighted many of our successes and addressed some of our challenges.

Going forward, we now have a roadmap to ensure every school has the tools and resources they need to make every child successful.

What I'm talking about are the recommendations from the Task Force for Improving Education. This task force met for over 8 months to create this road map for the State of Idaho.

I encourage you to read the Task Force's final report, all 49 pages. Each recommendation has more detail than you might expect. As a Task Force, we created a framework for implementation. I believe the work is impressive.

I will not go into greater detail on each of the recommendations because I know Richard is here to do that.

But I do want to discuss my full support for these recommendations, and the steps I believe this Legislature can take this year.

The Task Force embraced the State Board's goal for 60% of Idahoans between the ages of 25 and 34 to attain a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2020. Our recommendations provide a clear path on how to accomplish this.

We estimate the recommendations will cost \$350 million to \$400 million over the course of 5 to 6 years.

But implementation must begin today.

We cannot let this Task Force suffer the same fate of the blue ribbon committees and task forces that came before it.

All of these task forces have gone through this same process and reached this same point: They have set clear goals and agreed upon solid recommendations.

Yet, they struggled at the point we are at today: the point of implementation.

We have to break this cycle we have had for far too long in our state where we identify problems, develop solutions, yet we resist the change necessary to address the challenges we face.

If we delay these discussions for another day, we are only making these decisions tougher. As with anything, the longer you wait to deal with a challenge, the bigger the challenge becomes and the fewer options you have available to deal with it.

If we do not make significant investments today, those investments will only grow larger and 2020 will only become closer.

Instead, if we take a phased-in approach, as the Task Force suggested, and begin implementation today, we can accomplish these recommendations in an effective, efficient and fiscally sound way.

Today, I believe we have something working to our advantage that those before us never had: a clear path forward, funding to accomplish a phased-in approach, and bipartisan support.

Having said that, I believe there are 3 clear steps that the Legislature can take this session to begin to implement the Task Force recommendations:

- First, I believe this Legislature can and must fund the \$35 million in discretionary funding for Idaho's public schools.
 - Second, I believe this Legislature can take the first step in implementing a career ladder for Idaho's teachers.
- and
- Third, I believe this Legislature can support expanded education opportunities for Idaho's high school students.

Let me explain each briefly, and how I believe it can be accomplished.

First, I believe this Legislature can fund the \$35 million in discretionary funding.

I understand the Great Recession had an impact on our schools. Many of our districts dug deep into their reserve funds when they received less funding for those two years.

To give districts fiscal stability, the Task Force recommended restoring discretionary or operational funding to local school districts.

Some districts have requested receiving this amount more expeditiously than initially suggested by the Task Force, and I agree. That's why I support the Governor's recommendation.

Second, I believe this Legislature can take the first step in implementing a career ladder for Idaho's teachers.

Fiscal Stability is not limited to restoring discretionary funding. And the Task Force recognized this.

When the Task Force looked at the issue of fiscal stability, all educational stakeholders agreed that the current state salary grid did not create fiscal stability.

Idaho's schools and districts cannot have fiscal stability – or any kind of stability – if the best and the brightest are leaving the classroom to take jobs in school administration or the private sector because those positions pay more.

Instead, the Task Force unanimously recommended changing the way teachers are compensated to improve the way districts are able to hire and retain teachers.

The Task Force created a framework for a Career Ladder. The rungs of the Career Ladder would be tied to tiered licensure. In addition to the Career Ladder, the state would provide funding for Leadership Awards.

Once fully implemented, starting salary will increase to \$40,000. The two other tiers in the Career Ladder would start at \$50,000 and \$60,000, respectively.

The State Department of Education has been working with all stakeholders on tiered licensure for well over a year, and the Task Force decided to adopt this work.

The work on tiered licensure – and therefore the transition to the full Career Ladder – is still several months away from being completed.

However, we can take an initial step toward the Career Ladder this year by funding the Leadership Awards as outlined in the Task Force Recommendations.

The Task Force recommended about \$16 million a year in Leadership Awards to go to local school districts to be awarded at the local level to Idaho's teachers.

I believe this Legislature can and should take this initial step in funding the Leadership Awards portion of the Career Ladder by using \$21 million we have available for differential pay.

In fact, the Task Force even suggested this in its final report to the Governor.

The report noted that the Legislature could repurpose \$21 million in differential pay to begin the implementation of the Career Ladder in the first year.

Third, I believe this Legislature can support the bipartisan legislation proposed by Senator Thayn and Representative Burgoyne to expand advanced opportunities for Idaho's high school students.

As I mentioned earlier, the number of students taking dual credit and Advanced Placement courses continues to grow. Now that students have access to these opportunities, they are demanding them!

One of the Task Force recommendations focused on expanding these types of opportunities for students.

Under this bipartisan bill, high school juniors could receive up to \$200 a year and high school seniors could receive up to \$400 a year to take advantage of dual credit, AP or professional-technical opportunities.

I fully support this legislation, and I hope you will too.

Let me wrap this up by talking to you about the budget. I will give a full budget presentation next week in JFAC, but let me just say this...

As a fiscal conservative, I realize as much as anyone that the budget is a real consideration, not just this year, but every year in the future.

My budget request this year is a 5.4% increase, or \$70 million. It will require this kind of funding increases going forward to fund the Task Force recommendations.

Moving forward, how we fund these recommendations now and in the future must be a part of any serious conversation about education reform in Idaho.

I believe we have the funding this year to fund each of the three actions I have put forward. However, I understand many of you are already thinking to the future.

As we move to create a 21st Century education system, we must have a 21st Century tax code.

I have been saying this since 2006, and even earlier, and I will continue to say it: Any tax code that does not take into account consideration of online sales tax and the migration of commerce toward online sales is shortsighted.

Just look at what happened two months ago. The day after Thanksgiving – Black Friday – retail sales in brick-and-mortar stores dropped more than 13%.

But just three days later on Cyber Monday, sales jumped 16% from the year before.

More people are choosing to shop online, and the trend is only going to continue. That's just the world we live in today.

Recent reports have shown, last year, Idaho would have collected about \$65 million in additional revenue if it had collected sales tax for online purchases.

The fact is, we are creating a whole new class of tax exemption if we continue to allow people to shop online without collecting the sales tax that is due.

I encourage the Legislature to consider this at the same time you consider these Task Force recommendations and the amount of revenue our state needs to fund this path forward to improve education.

I believe the answer is simple: We need to collect every penny of sales tax that is due.

Some of you may be thinking, why would the State Superintendent of Public Instruction be talking about tax policy?

It's because I believe this is just one solution that will help us implement the Task Force recommendations.

We are not going to be able to address the fiscal note of these Task Force recommendations with the current tax structure we have in place.

This is the 21st century. We want a 21st century education then we must have a 21st century tax code.

Whether we are talking about the first steps of implementing these recommendations or the funding to address every recommendation in the long term, I know none of these conversations or decisions will be easy. In fact they will be hard.

But I believe that those who elected us elected us to make difficult decisions they expect us to find solutions to complex problems, and these decisions are critical decisions that we cannot shy away from.

Every educational stakeholder group, every parent, every student has a sense of urgency to see these implemented.

We can take a first step this year that then allows us to take a second step toward our goal of a better education system for every child, and ultimately, a better economy for our state.

To do this, we must come to the realization that this is not about us, the adults. It is about the kids.

Idaho's children deserve the best: the best teachers, the best standards, the best opportunities, the best access to the best technology, the best education.

Idaho's children deserve the opportunity to live the American dream like you and I are living it today. A world-class education is more essential today than ever to make that dream a reality.

Together, we can make this a reality. It will take true leadership, short-term investments, and a long-term commitment to change.

I hope you will join me this year as we begin the work of implementation so we can make a world-class education system in Idaho a reality.

That is what I am asking for in the proposals I have put forward today. This will not be easy. But it will be worth it.