

Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 1, 2023

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Idaho State Board of Education, Main Conference Room
650 W. State Street, Suite 307, Boise, ID 83702

PANEL MEMBERS

Superintendent Debbie Critchfield, Chairman | Amy Henry, Panel Member | Barbara Schriber, Panel Member | Courtney Abenroth, Panel Member | Holly Cook, Panel Member | Jason Sevy, Panel Member | Joni Shepherd, Panel Member | Laura Milton, Panel Member

Thursday, June 1, 2023 – 9:00 am (MT)

Board Action

9:00 am – Meeting called to order – Superintendent Critchfield, Chair

Board Action

M/S (Sevy/Cook) I move to approve the agenda posted.

- Motion carried 7-0

Superintendent Critchfield welcomed members to the Office of the State Board of Education and the first Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel meeting. The panel moved through introductions of each member with their relevant experience and reason for applying to the panel.

Superintendent Critchfield introduced the Guiding Principles of the panel and moved through each principle previously sent to the panelists.

Board Action

M/S (Sevy/Henry) I move to accept the Guiding Principles document.

- Motion carried 7-0

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) I move to amend the agenda to bring Danielle Woods in early to review travel and reimbursement guidelines.

- Motion carried 7-0

Board Action

M/S (Milton/Schriber) 9:20 am – I move to recess until next presenter arrives.

- Motion carried 7-0

Board Action

M/S (Milton/Cook) 9:21 am – I move to resume meeting with Danielle Wood.

- Motion carried 7-0

Danielle Woods, a Financial Specialist at the State Department of Education, reviewed State Department of Education policy on reimbursing travel for the advisory panel, including Travel Reimbursement Forms and W-9 policy.

Superintendent Critchfield asked the panel their opinions on public comment policy for future meetings, including length of time, and the most efficient way to accommodate multiple public commentators. The working plan is to allow an hour for public comments with a three (3) to five (5) minute maximum per speaker. The panel also expressed interest in a specific Empowering Parents email address in which to receive public comment

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Shepherd) 9:33 am – I move to recess until next presenter arrives.

- Motion carried 7-0

Board Action

M/S (Milton/Shepherd) 9:34 am – I move to resume meeting with Kristine Moriarty.

- Motion carried 7-0

Kristine Moriarty, Deputy Attorney General, reviewed Open Meeting Law with the Panel. She went over state and public policy for such meetings and rule of statutory construction. She then defined terms according to Open Meeting Law, including: decision, deliberation, public agency, governing body, and meetings (special and regular). Ms. Moriarty reviewed meeting and agenda notices of regular and special meetings and executive sessions, before going over meeting conduct and the specifics of public records, minutes, and enforcement of Open Meeting Law. Questions related to Special Meetings and Executive Sessions and the difference between the two were asked and answered.

Board Action

M/S (Schriber/Milton) 10:09 am – I move to recess for fifteen (15) minutes.

- Motion carried 7-0

Board Action

10:25 am – Meeting reconvened – Superintendent Critchfield

Superintendent Critchfield introduced Heather Zeitlin, Empowering Parents Grant Program Coordinator from the Office of the State Board of Education. She reviewed the basic history of the Empowering Parents Program and the legislative action surrounding the statute. Ms. Zeitlin

then went over the grant program review document the panel received previously. She reviewed the specific Board duties regarding Empowering Parents and the work she has done to date.

The panel had a number of questions for Heather to discuss and decide in later meetings, including:

- How funds can be used for households with three or more students if the maximum amount of funds have already been allocated
- Can the \$3,000 be used for more students per family if the student(s) was eligible (with eligible expenses) – in the case of three+ students?
- Should students identified with special education needs receive priority?
- Are students able to apply year after year?
- Who were the legislative sponsors?
- Is there data for percentages of receiving students/families per capita by region?
- Is there data for percentages of students that applied and were awarded per region?
- Can there be a breakdown of the data by type of schooling – homeschool, public, private, charter, etc.?
- Is there data for non-English speaking families who applied and were awarded?
- Is there data for who was awarded per wave per region?
- What was the initial communication and outreach of the program in general?
- What is the protocol for rollover dollars? Do they accrue? Who keeps track of the rollover dollars?
- What is the difference between the statutory categories?
- What is the policy for fiscal accountability for awarded families?

The next guest speaker was an Odyssey representative, Joe Connor, who reviewed a basic overview of how Odyssey manages the marketplace website and vendors. The panel asked clarifying questions related to vendors on the marketplace and their categories, how local businesses can become vendors for the marketplace, the process to review vendors, and how awarded parents can request vendors.

Superintendent Critchfield then previewed the dates for future Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel meetings, including July 10 at College of Southern Idaho, August 17 in the Idaho Falls area, and September 21 in Lewiston. The panel then reviewed the specific data points they would like to request from the State Board of Education before the next meeting on July 10.

M/S (Cook/Sevy) I move to formally request four (4) information breakdowns from the State Board of Education, including: terms and conditions of the Empowering Parents Grant, data breakdown by school type and region, data breakdown of accounts that have not been spent and accounts that have a balance of less than \$100, and a breakdown of all services that have been approved in the Empowering Parents marketplace by statutory category “A”.

- Motion carried 7-0

M/S (Abernath/Sevy) I move to amend the prior information request to include a further data breakdown of Native American tribes and their usage of the Empowering Parents grant funds, more demographic data of the funds, and the details of the personnel support the Office of the Board of Education can provide for the program.

- Motion carried 7-0

With no further questions or data requests, the panel moved to adjourn the meeting.

Board Action

M/S (Critchfield/Henry) I move to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 am (MT)

- Motion carried 7-0

DRAFT

Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 10, 2023
8:30 am – 12:00 pm
College of Southern Idaho, Taylor 276
315 Falls Ave, Twin Falls, ID 83301

PANEL MEMBERS

Superintendent Debbie Critchfield, Chairman | Amy Henry, Panel Member | Barbara Schriber, Panel Member | Courtney Abenroth, Panel Member | Holly Cook, Panel Member | Jason Sevy, Panel Member | Joni Shepherd, Panel Member | Laura Milton, Panel Member

Monday, July 10, 2023 – 8:30 am (MT)

Board Action

8:30 am – Meeting called to order – Superintendent Critchfield, Chair

Superintendent Critchfield welcomed members to College of Southern Idaho and the second Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel meeting. The panel reviewed the materials provided and opened the period of public comment.

Board Action

8:30 am – Period of public comment opened.

There were no public comments in this meeting.

Board Action

9:00 am – Period of public comment closed.

Board Action

M/S (Sevy/Henry) I move to approve the agenda posted.

- Motion carried 7-0

Board Action

M (Cook) I move to approve the meeting minutes from the June 1 meeting.

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Sevy) I move to amend the meeting minutes from the June 1 meeting to include the question asked to the Board of Education to provide details on the available personnel supporting the program.

- Motion carried 7-0

In accordance with the approved agenda, the Panel continued to Agenda Item 4 – a program update from the Office of the State Board of Education. Board personnel, Jenn Thompson, Heather Zeitlin, and Matt Freeman, introduced themselves and gave an update on the transaction review the Board had conducted previously. The review was completed the week before, totaling 42,000 transactions. Of those, 36,000 transactions were approved. The panel asked for clarity on the transactions that were not approved and/or considered ineligible, to which the Board responded that they were working with Odyssey to get more documentation from those ineligible purchases. The Board was asked to investigate how many families accessed the program and how many total grants were awarded. Panelist Laura Milton asked for clarification on differentiating between the items that could be incidentally eligible but could also be ineligible for other applicants.

Amended as of 9/11/2023 per the request of Panelist Holly Cook: Panelist Holly Cook asked about how ineligible purchases were made and whose fault it is that the purchases were made. Jenn Thompson responded that technically the vendor should have ensured all of the items in the marketplace are eligible items. Vendors now have a clearer guideline that will hopefully help solve the problem. Technically, the parents did make an ineligible purchase and the statute outlines how parents will be held accountable for that. Parents did sign a document that they will only purchase ineligible purchases. But that if it was available to parents in the platform, that it is perhaps unfair. The OSBE staff is still navigating how they will deal with the ineligible purchases.

Clarification as of 9/15/23: Panelist Cook intended to state that “parents did sign a document that they will only purchase *eligible* purchases.”

It was discussed that, for the moment, those transactions would likely need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The Board then said that reviewing the transactions will be more efficient now that they are completely caught up on the review – they estimated that they have the ability to review every transaction within 72 hours and can pause the transaction if there is any question of eligibility.

The panel asked the Board for more information regarding the timeline of the grant application to receiving the approved funds. The Board stated that they would aim to open the grant to new applications in the fall. They would like to wait until they have clarity on the categories from the panel. Chair Critchfield suggested that they consider adjusting the timeline of the grant to coincide with when families would be purchasing items with these funds (i.e. start of school year). When asked what the approval timeline was, the Board stated that there are two (2) to four (4) weeks between the first and second wave, and that they aim to have the third wave distributed by December. It was suggested that the panel consider recommending the

application timeline be changed for future years, as well as possibly reorienting the timeline of the Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel meetings to coincide with those waves. There was discussion on possibly shortening the time between application submission and notification to accommodate those timeline suggestions, if it would be reasonable to expect a shorter timeframe would work logistically for Board personnel. Heather Zeitlin confirmed that it could be doable now that a year of the program has been completed.

Amendment as of 9/11/23 per the request of Panelist Amy Henry: Panelist Henry stated her concern for homeschool families. She questioned the need to require verification of a students' need for special education (i.e., doctor's note, other verification, etc.), and the need to prove curriculum. She questioned the need for such data from homeschool families opposed to public school students as their information is already in the public-school system via IEP or 504 Plans and correlated documentation. Panelist Henry asked for further clarification on the verification of special education students in the homeschool system and asked what the State Board is requiring from the families of those students. Panelist Henry wants it noted that the State Board informed the panel that they estimated about twenty (20) more grant spots were going to be released for the next cycle.

The panel then turned to discussing the categories of eligible purchases. The Board was asked for clarification surrounding purchases made by families with students in Special Education programs in and out of non-public schools. Ms. Zeitlin stated that parents can upload additional documentation for purchases to determine that eligibility. The Board gave an overview of the vendor/marketplace process. The panel stated concerns for the more rural areas that would not have the same access to marketplace items that urban areas would, limiting eligible purchases. There was discussion on a reimbursement process instead of approved vendor process. Chair Critchfield asked if there was a way to reconcile that there may be good educational opportunities that aren't on the marketplace but that would generally be considered eligible. It was suggested that the panel invite Odyssey personnel into the next meeting to answer questions about the marketplace. Chair Critchfield then asked if it would be appropriate to have a guiding document on suitable marketplace consumer habits for applicants moving forward.

At 10:10 am, the panel agreed to a quick break and returned at 10:25 am.

After returning to the meeting at 10:25 am, the panel discussed how they would like to move forward in discussing and suggesting recommendations for the categories. They discussed the specifics of eligible and ineligible categories including: camps/classes, costumes/athletic gear/uniforms, and what the specific definition of educational equipment would entail.

The panel decided they wanted to have the following completed or researched before the next meeting in August:

- Definition of "educational"
- Hear the legislative intent behind the Empowering Parents Grant bill from the original sponsors of the bill (Senator Lori Den Hartog and Representative Wendy Horman) and decide if that will have an impact on how they priority the categories based on the

legislation

- Definition of “at risk”
- What recommendations the panel can make per Idaho statute

At 11:35 am, the panel moved on to Agenda Item 5 – Panel Discussion of the program. During this informational item, they discussed the logistical steps of the meetings moving forward, and how to organize requests for review. It was suggested that, in order to maximize time, the panel would meet again before the August meeting for a work session. They would conduct personal research at home to discuss at the work session. It was decided that the meeting date and time would be decided and posted at a later date to accommodate everyone’s schedule.

Board Action

M/S (Milton/Schriber) I move to adjourn the meeting at 11:53 am (MT)

- Motion carried 7-0

DRAFT

Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 8, 2023

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

State Department of Education, Lewis & Clark Conference Room
650 W. State St., 2nd Floor, Len B. Jordan Building
Boise, ID 83702

PANEL MEMBERS

Superintendent Debbie Critchfield, Chairman | Amy Henry, Panel Member | Barbara Schriber, Panel Member | Courtney Abenroth, Panel Member | Holly Cook, Panel Member | Jason Sevy, Panel Member | Joni Shepherd, Panel Member | Laura Milton, Panel Member

Tuesday, August 8, 2023 – 12:00 pm (MT)

Superintendent Critchfield called the work session to order and invited Senator Lori Den Hartog, District 22 to address the Panel. Senator Den Hartog, an original sponsor of the Empowering Parents legislation, joined the work session to give the Empowering Parents Parent Advisory (EPPA) Panel an overview of the original intent behind Empowering Parents, to support families during the COVID-19 pandemic with accessing the technology and tools needed by students to learn and adapt to the unprecedented changes in education.

The program has since shifted towards addressing student learning loss because of the pandemic and empowering parents to access educational opportunities for their children outside of those offered during the typical school year.

Senator Den Hartog went on to address questions about eligible expenses and the intent of the law from panel members. Questions asked of the Senator included extra opportunities for teachers to provide tutoring services through their district to students outside of the school day, using Empowering Parents funds to cover the cost of school fees, uniforms and pay-to-play fees, fees associated with non-public school educational services, educational camps and classes offered for a fee by independent vendors, public and private school tuition and fees, establishing local education agencies (LEA's) and Idaho colleges and universities as vendors in the marketplace, and allowing direct reimbursements for eligible items purchased outside of the marketplace.

Senator Den Hartog also shared with the EPPA Panel it was not the expectation for the Panel to vet issues with the vendor or to have to review previous purchases. Parents should feel confident to purchase items listed on the marketplace platform, and the EPAP Panel should serve as a support to parents and filter any concerns or issues to the State Board of Education.

After the Senator’s overview, the EPPA Panel discussed the current categories of expenditures and eligible and ineligible expenses and the need to enhance vendors offering more direct learning options, especially in small and rural communities.

Amended as of 9/11/23 per the request of Panelist Amy Henry: The current categories of expenditures the panel discussed included: tutoring, co-op fees, 501(c)(3) separate sports, class, and fees. The vendors discussed included: homeschool co-ops, private schools, and teachers. The panel discussed the option of reimbursements. Chair Critchfield asked if there was interest from the panel in furthering that discussion at a later time – the panel voted to continue the conversation. This was a general tally, not an official vote.

Finally, the panel then heard from Matt Freeman, Executive Director for the State Board of Education on the appeals process as it is currently established in statute. The panel will continue discussing the appeals process at the August 17 meeting in Rexburg.

The work session concluded at 1:30pm MST.

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Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 11, 2023

1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

State Department of Education

650 W State St, Boise, ID 83702

Panel Members

Superintendent Debbie Critchfield, Chairman | Amy Henry, Panel Member | Barbara Schriber, Panel Member | Holly Cook, Panel Member | Jason Sevy, Panel Member | Joni Shepherd, Panel Member | Laura Milton, Panel Member

Panel member absent: Cortney Abenroth

Note: Panelist Laura Milton was unable to join the meeting until 3:10 pm when the panel reconvened from break. All motions before that time were only attended by Panelists Henry, Schriber, Sevy, Shepherd, and Cook.

Monday, September 11, 2023 – 1:30 pm (MT)

Board Action

1:31 pm – Meeting called to order – Superintendent Critchfield, Chair

Superintendent Critchfield welcomed members to the second work session and the fifth meeting of Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel. Chair Critchfield first introduced Deputy Attorney General Adam Warr to the panel. Mr. Warr reminded the panel members of the rules surrounding open meeting law and advised them to cure the open meeting law violation by Panelist Amy Henry and Panelist Holly Cook earlier in the day on September 11. Chair Critchfield read the emails from both panel members aloud to cure the violation. The emails and respective attachments are available as part of public record.

Chair Critchfield invited the panel to address Item 1 – to review the posted agenda and approve or amend it.

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) - I move to approve the agenda as posted.

- Motion carried 6-0

The panel continued to address the concerns that were stated in the emails from Panelist Cook and Henry earlier in the day regarding additions or amendments to the minutes from the June 1, July 10, August 8, and August 17 Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel. The requested edited minutes from June 1 were dismissed as Panelist Henry's concerns had already been addressed in the July 10



meeting and edited accordingly. The changes are stated below. The only edits to the following text are spelling and grammatical edits:

- Change requested by Panelist Cook regarding the July 10 minutes: Panelist Holly Cook asked about how ineligible purchases were made and whose fault it is that the purchases were made. [State Board employee] Jenn Thompson responded that technically the vendor should have ensured all the items in the marketplace are eligible items. Vendors now have clearer guidelines that will hopefully help solve the problem. Technically, the parents did make an ineligible purchase and the statute outlines how parents will be held accountable for that. Parents did sign a document that they will only purchase ineligible purchases. But that if it was available to parents in the platform, that it is perhaps unfair. The OSBE [Office of the State Board] staff is still navigating how they will deal with the ineligible purchases.
- Change request by Panelist Henry regarding the July 10 minutes: Twenty (20) open grant spots that were going to be released. Homeschool concern with parents being required to show a doctor note and/or curriculum. Are we asking for too much data from homeschool families? I asked for follow up on the process with Homeschool Special Education verification. I wanted to know what the State was requiring from these parents.
- Change request by Panelist Henry regarding the August 8 minutes: Panel discussed recommendation of expanding program to offer tutoring, co-op fees, 501(C3) separate sports, classes, and fees. Adding vendors: Homeschool co-ops, private schools, teachers. The panel voted 4-3 in favor of reimbursements.
- Change request by Panelist Henry regarding the August 17 minutes: August 17th: I move to amend the agenda posted to include between 3 and 4, a panel led discussion on parent feedback, vendor feedback, and contractor feedback. I move to table the minutes until our next meeting due to us receiving the minutes that morning. Allison added that the minutes had been sent to the EP email instead of our individual emails. (see email from 7:46 am Aug 17, 2023). Mr. Hill was told to send his feedback for the Panel to Allison and she would send that feedback to the Panel. Homeschool Special Education Parent Concern was addressed. Parents are concerned that they are being asked to share doctor notes and curriculum. The panel voted to have the Strengths, Weaknesses, and Improvements piece of the Facebook survey added to the minutes. Point of Clarification: We do not have the authority to make decisions to change to program in real time. I want it noted that I question amending the motion from subsection G to F. If we are making recommendations, this is not necessary. Jenn asked for the amendment to make changes now. The Panel was told that no changes would be made now, only recommendations for future changes that could be made to the legislation. Panel members made it clear that they did not want to be asked to vote on something that would supersede current legislation. They were assured that was not the case and they were only voting on recommendations for the Board and sponsors to look at in the future.

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) - I move to approve minutes as read and written.

- Approval of minutes will include changes as presented verbally and written
- Motion carried 5-0



At 1:48 pm, Chair Critchfield opened the period of public comment. The panel had one person signed up to speak but was not on the call at the time of movement. The panel decided they would return to public comment if the speaker attended the call.

Per Item 4 on the posted agenda, representatives from the Office of the State Board of Education, Heather Zeitlin and Jenn Thompson, requested that the Panel consider whether to recommend the following categories as eligible expenses pursuant to Idaho Code 33-1030(3)(f):

- Camps and classes
- Education equipment (non-technological education equipment – I.e., tools for science lab)
- Physical education equipment
- Costumes and uniforms – clothing necessary to facilitate participation in educational camp, class or event

Ms. Zeitlin stated that both State Board personnel and Odyssey are reviewing purchases daily in an effort to allow purchases to be placed in a timely manner. The panel discussed each category listed above.

- Camps and Classes
 - Discussion: The panel questioned the level of accountability for these classes. They wanted to know how the State board knows what classes are being taken and the content of the class? Ms. Zeitlin responded that the State Board is able to see the content of the class in question, but not attendance records. A concern was voiced that since there are so many types of classes, it would be difficult to give blanket approval for all of them. Ms. Zeitlin assured the panel that under the current guidelines, the State Board ensured that all classes and camps were verified as a safe environment, age-range appropriate, a drug free environment, and as an official LLC. Chair Critchfield reminded the panel that they had the latitude to recommend parameters and guidance for each recommendation to the State Board. Panelist Henry asked Ms. Zeitlin what the panel could do to make the current process easier for State Board personnel. Ms. Zeitlin responded that it would be very helpful for the panel to decide on the categories listed above so they could move forward with those transactions. Panelist Henry pointed out that in her experience as an educator, students gain knowledge from all types of camps and sports, so she would be in favor of recommending camps and classes. The panel agreed that some type of guidelines for what kinds of camps and classes are allowed would be welcome, but that they would leave that to State Board discretion.

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry): I move that we recommend that the State Board allow educational camps and classes offered for a fee but reserve the right to deny any classes they deem inappropriate.

- Discussion: it was decided that just in case something comes up, the State Board would maintain its right to reject a class they deem inappropriate. Panelists asked if this recommendation would include religious camps, stating that recommending using state funds for religious content may not be prudent at this time. Panelist Henry stated that the panel should not discriminate between what classes and/or camps grantees are attending, and that state funds already fund

religious universities. Chair Critchfield reminded the panel that it is possible for the panel to recommend approving camps and classes without specifying content at this point to allow the State Board to get through the ineligible purchases that are currently in the system, while also allowing the State Board to add specifics at a later date depending on trends of spent funds. Panelists expressed the need to make a clear delineation between classes and private tuition until the panel addresses the question of private tuition.

- Motion withdrawn

In further discussion of the classes and camps allowed, Ms. Zeitlin was asked if she could provide a summary of what kinds of classes/camps are being offered at this time.

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Shepherd) - I move that the panel recommend that educational camps and educational classes offered for a fee by independent vendors be approved.

- Discussion: Chair Critchfield reminded the panel again that it is possible for the panel to decide on their recommendation for the current program that is separate from future years of the program.
- Motion withdrawn

Board Action

M (Cook) - For a substitute motion, I move that the panel not discuss any motions that might tread on the topic of religious use of state dollars.

- Discussion: Panelist Henry expressed the desire to have a meeting with or ask the State Attorney General's office to weigh in on the topic of religious use of these grant funds. She worried that other parts of the program would need to be put on hold until further legal clarification was discussed. Other panelists reminded the panel that their purpose was to recommend items and clarifications to the State Board, and also that those recommendations do not mean they will be put in place. It was recommended that the panel and the State Board make a more informed recommendation on this topic at a later meeting. Panelist Henry pointed out that if the Attorney General was concerned with what has been paid out to participants so far, he would have opposed it already. State Board President Matt Freeman reminded the panel that they could make recommendations on these four (4) items at this point, and if it is later decided that the recommendations are not viable by the State Board or Attorney General's office, the State Board will follow the law and act accordingly. Panelist Henry reiterated that she does not believe it is the panel's place to tell parents how to parent, and that it should be at the hands of the lawmakers. It was decided that the panel would reword the recommendation to fit in line with their intentions.
- No action taken given lack of a second to the motion.

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Sevy) - I move to recommend changing the current wording of Recommendation 4.1a to educational camps and educational classes and to approve the recommendation as edited and written.

- Motion carried 5-0

The panel continued the discussion of the proposed categories from the State Board of Education.

- Educational Equipment
 - Discussion: The panel agreed that allowing educational equipment made sense within the parameters of the grant and that they would move forward with recommending it to the State Board.
- Physical education equipment AND costumes and uniforms
 - Discussion: The panel expressed their concern that allowing items required for physical education activities may be a misuse of grant funds. Chair Critchfield reminded the panel that the program has built in guards by limiting the amount of funds each grantee is awarded. The panel then agreed that the more open the grant fund items allowed were, the more families would be able to participate and use all the funds allotted to them. Panelist Henry reminded the other panelists that she believes the majority of families participating in the program are trying to be fiscally conservative.

Board Action

M/S (Schriber/Cook) - I move that the panel recommend allowing Items two (2) through four (4) on the questionable items list be approved/recommended to the State Board.

- Motion carried 5-0

The panel moved to Item 5 on the posted agenda: Panel Recommendations. They started with Recommendation 4.1c on the recommendation rubric: Fees associated with non-public school educational services.

Board Action

M (Henry) - I make a motion to allow the homeschool co-op [students] to use grant dollars to pay for associated fees.

- Discussion: Panelist Henry reiterated the expenses associated with homeschool co-ops and advocated for the grant monies to be used towards those fees. Other panelists questioned how those fees were different from tuition, also reminding the panelist that the original intent of the Empowering Parents bill was not meant to cover tuition. State Board personnel suggested that the distinction between fees and tuition might be related to whether the student would get credit for the purchase in question, and that at the moment, there are no items on the marketplace that offers credits for its' use. Opponents of the motion stated that this issue had been debated by the state legislature and wondered about the appropriateness of discussing and recommending a legislatively debated topic. Panelist Henry expressed concern with taxpayer dollars being taken away from students because they were attending a non-public school, citing other programs using funds provided by state government being taken away from



students if they leave the public-school system. A change in wording was suggested to replace the word “non-public school” with “homeschool”, including a co-op situation if needed.

- Motion withdrawn

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) - I move to recommend Recommendation 4.1c with the edited verbiage.

- Motion carried 3-2

At 2:57 pm, Chair Critchfield paused the meeting for a quick break, stating that everyone must return at 3:10 pm.

At 3:10 pm, the panel reassembled to continue the discussion. Panelist Milton joined the meeting via Zoom at this time, bringing the total number of panelists present to six (6). Following the recommendation rubric, the next topic of recommendation was 4.1d: Private school tuition and fees. Panelist Henry referenced the use of all taxpayer dollars and suggested that she believed the panel should recommend giving parents the option to use their funds as they see fit – including the option of paying for private school tuition. Other proponents of the recommendation stated that either way, the grant amount would not pay for private tuition in its entirety anyway and also questioned the issue of discrimination if the recommendation is not passed. Opponents of this recommendation stated that they did not want the Empowering Parents program to become a voucher program, citing the purpose of the original bill was to enrich and enhance a student’s education and to help bridge any learning gaps via classes and camp opportunities, not pay for private school tuition.

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Shepherd) - I move to approve Recommendation 4.1d: Private school tuition and fees.

- Discussion: Panelist Henry started the discussion by stating she believed that it would be discriminatory to not approve this motion. Panelist Sevy responded by urging the panel to keep the Blaine Amendments in mind and encouraged his fellow panelists to vote no on this measure. Panelist Henry acknowledged the Blaine Amendment precedent, but also reiterated that by voting no, the panel would be encroaching on discrimination, in her opinion, and that she would encourage the Attorney General to look into this motion should it fail. Opponents of the recommendation stated that the intent of the grant program was to close the gap for students in various categories, but typically unrepeated, not tuition. They urged the panel to consider that taxpayer dollars going to private tuition is a current hot topic. It was also noted that given the current climate surrounding voucher programs, it should not be the role of seven (7) parents in a panel to decide something that is up to the legislature and that the purpose of the grant was for enrichment, not primary education. Proponents of the recommendation stated that the role of the panel is to give every parent in Idaho the option to use the money how they felt their child needed, even if it would go towards private tuition. Panelist Henry echoed those feelings by stating she does not endorse a voucher program, but she does want to give parents the option to choose.
- Motion failed 2-4



The panel questioned Ms. Zeitlin and Ms. Thompson on the topic of transportation reimbursement or transportation as a product in the marketplace. The panel agreed that they would not want transportation to be the cause of a student not being able to attend the various services from the marketplace. It was pointed out that transportation reimbursement could be a possible hardship for the program administrators given the number of students in the program. Ms. Zeitlin responded that to date, there have been very few instances of transportation causing problems for marketplace participants and that some programs may have transportation embedded into the cost of the overall program. Ms. Thompson pointed out that most transportation companies typically contract with the vendor, not individual families. It was concluded that this was not seen as a pressing issue. No motion was taken.

The panel moved to the possible recommendation of direct reimbursements outside the marketplace. It was acknowledged that there could be clerical issues associated with reimbursements from the entire state. Despite that, the panel agreed that they would like to see a recommendation to do some type of reimbursement for specific items, contingent on the State Board's approval and collaboration, citing the importance of allowing parents from various parts of the state to purchase what is wanted outside the marketplace to spend all their dollars.

Board Action

M/S (Schriber/Cook) - I move that the panel make a recommendation to the Board of Education to establish a process for reimbursement under what the Board finds feasible within their abilities.

- Discussion: Panelist Henry suggested creating a list of items eligible for reimbursement to provide to the State Board for the purpose of assisting State Board personnel with this undertaking. Ms. Thompson told the panel that the final recommendation to the State Board would be reviewed with the context of the panel's intent, expressing that the more boundaries surrounding a reimbursement allowance would make it easier to administer. Chair Critchfield reminded the panel that as a member of the State Board, she would bring the intent of the panel's conversation to the State Board if this recommendation was implemented. She reminded the panel that it would be difficult to foresee what every need a grantee would face, so setting those parameters at this time would be difficult. Panelist Cook stated that having a reimbursement program would solve a lot of the one-off situations that participants of the program are communicating with them [panel members]. Ms. Thompson confirmed that having Chair Critchfield representing the intent of the panel would be helpful and adequate in later implementation should the motion pass.
- Motion carried 6-0

Panelists Cook and Henry expressed a desire to note a change in the language of Recommendation 1.1 to change to "Grantees that were approved and purchased items that were found to be ineligible shall be allowed back into the program", but agreed that there was no need to bring it to a vote. Ms. Thompson reiterated that as the current program stands, no families have been removed nor will be charged for ineligible purchases, and that this policy will not change. She stated that to change this, it would require a legislative language change, but that the State Board has been working with the



contractor and participants of the program to ensure that parents don't find themselves in a position where they are not allowed back into the program.

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) - I move that the panel recommend that the State Board work with the contractor to implement a vendor review process for parents or patrons of the program to review vendors in the marketplace.

- Discussion: Panelists agreed that this recommendation, upon putting into effect, would help keep vendors accountable.
- Motion carried 6-0

The panel moved through the rest of the recommendations categorized in the recommendation rubric under 2.0 - Contractor. Panelist Henry objected to the language used in Recommendation 2.2 regarding prioritizing vendors addressing learning loss because of the COVID-19 pandemic. She questioned why that language had to be specifically pointed out and why the grant would prioritize that over other items needed by students and teachers. It was clarified that the intent of Recommendation 2.2 was not to prioritize certain vendors, instead prioritizing services most useful to address learning loss. Panelist Henry asked to change the language to not include the specification of the COVID-19 learning loss. Panelist Sevy objected to the language in Recommendation 2.5, citing that in recommending this, it would circumvent local control. The panel agreed to edit the language of the recommendation to say, "encourage Local Education Agencies to become vendors", instead of automatically adding all of them to the marketplace.

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Cook) - I move that the panel recommend Recommendations 2.1, 2.2 with the amendments, 2.3, 2.4, AND recommend to improve communication between contractor and vendors

- Recommendation 2.1: Streamline the vendor approval process and allow parents to suggest vendors or apply for vendors on their behalf.
- Recommendation 2.2: Prioritize offering services specific to addressing student learning loss.
- Recommendation 2.3: Expand vendor services available to rural and remote communities beyond physical education classes and enhanced broadband service.
- Recommendation 2.4: (A) Allow parents to select out of state vendors offering in-person educational enrichment opportunities AND (B) allow parents to select out of state vendors offering educational enrichment opportunities through a virtual platform.
- Motion carried 6-0

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Schriber) - I move that the panel amend Recommendation 2.5 to say that the panel recommends State Board of Education staff and the Idaho School Boards Association work together to encourage all Idaho Local Education Agencies to become vendors in the marketplace.

- Discussion: Panelist Sevy pointed out that he supported the motion, but ultimately unnecessary as Idaho School Boards Association is currently ready to work with the platform and districts when the panel and State Board finalizes and implements all recommendations.

- Motion carried: 6-0

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Cook) - I move that we recommend the Board move faster through the awards process and shorten the duration between the waves.

- Motion carried 6-0

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) - I move that we increase the eligible student allocation and cap the awards at up to six students per household.

- Discussion: Panelist Schriber stated that in order to maximize the number of families that get to benefit from this grant, the panel should not recommend a change in the amount awarded, nor how many students can get the award per family. She said that by keeping the number of students awarded per family at three (3), more families would be able to participate, and recommended the panel stick with the program amount as written.
- Motion failed 2-4

Board Action

M/S (Shepherd/Sevy) - I move that the panel recommend allowing all eligible K-12 students within a household to use the grant funds awarded to the household.

- Motion carried 6-0

Board Action

M/S (Sevy/Schriber) - I move that the panel recommend adding at least one FTE to this program.

- Motion carried 6-0

Panelist Henry asked Ms. Zeitlin and Ms. Thompson to clarify how homeschool students are expected to hold their spots in the line while they gather the required information, when public school students don't have to submit the information in the same format (as their information is verified through the public-school record system). Ms. Thompson stated that applications can be paused and restarted, to give the applicants time to gather whatever documentation needed, but that there is no "spot" saved or held by starting an application. She also reminded the panel that no one, not homeschool nor public-school students, would be awarded until deemed wholly verified by the parameters in the system. Ms. Zeitlin also stated that the Board and contractor built in the option to add all documentation at the beginning of the application and process, so they don't have to wait to submit that information. Panelist Henry emphasized the unfairness of public-school students not having to add in their verification information (birth certificate, ID, passport, etc.), while the homeschool students must take the extra step of uploading the document of their choice into the system. When asked if the homeschool students could hold their spot once they start the application for up to thirty (30) days, Ms. Thompson reminded the panel that they could upload that information any time in the process, but that in order to change process, there would need to be a verbiage change in Idaho Code.



The panel, when asked, chose to move through the rest of the recommendation document in order to have everything prepared for the September 21 meeting.

Board Action

M/S (Cook/Henry) - I move that we recommend the State Board create a parent-initiated vendor set-up route by the contractor.

- Discussion: Ms. Zeitlin stated that this feature already exists in the current program. Panelist Cook clarified that the goal of this recommendation would be to take the responsibility of this feature would be placed on the contractor. Panelist Henry applauded this motion, stating that this would be good for remote communities that are struggling to find vendors for the students.
- Motion carried 6-0

Board Action

M/S (Schriber/Cook) - I move that the panel recommend the Board and the contractor develop a process to allow unspent grant funds to be returned to the State should a participant elect not to use the entirety of the grant.

- Discussion: Panelists emphasized the need to create a feature that would double-check with each grantee before returning the funds.
- Motion carried 6-0

Board Action

M/S (Schriber/Milton) - I move that the panel recommend amending Section 33-1031(2)(b)(iii) to include a maximum adjusted gross income not to exceed an amount determined by the State Board of Education at a later date.

- Discussion: Panelist Schriber acknowledged that she did not have a specific number to recommend at this time. It was determined that the recommendation would be for the Board to decide at a later date. Panelist Henry wanted to make it clear that it is important for the Panel to not judge families based on their AGI. She stated that she knew many families that would be in the second or third waves that still struggle financially and wanted to be sensitive to those families and kids. Panelist Schriber brought up the change in dollar amount of the program – from \$50 million to \$30 million – and her concern that the difference would impact the number of families granted the award.
- Motion failed 3-3

Board Action

M/S (Henry/Sevy) - I move to adjourn this meeting.

- Motion carried 6-0



DEBBIE CRITCHFIELD
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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September 13, 2023

Matt Freeman, Executive Director
Idaho State Board of Education
650 W. State St., #307
Boise, ID 83702

Re: Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel Recommendations

Dear Matt,

The Parent Advisory Panel for the Empowering Parents program advises the State Board of Education on ways to implement, administer, and improve the Empowering Parents grant program.

The panel convened their first meeting on June 1, 2023, and conducted a series of meetings in regions across the state in July, August, and September.

Parent Advisory Panel members include:

- Laura Milton of Idaho Falls,
- Barbara Schriber of Sandpoint
- Jason Sevy of Marsing
- Holly Cook of Boise
- Courtney Abenroth of Rupert
- Joni Shepherd of Riggins
- Amy Henry of Nampa

As your designee, I have served as the nonvoting chair of the parent advisory panel and am pleased to present to you the final recommendations of the panel for the State Board of Education to consider during the October SBOE meeting.

Sincerely,

Debbie Critchfield

Empowering Parents Parent Advisory Panel

Recommendations to the State Board of Education

September 11, 2023

1.0	APPEALS PROCESS
1.1	Idaho Code § 33-1031(3) – Barred Household Appeal to the Board Grantees that purchased an item from the marketplace that is later deemed ineligible should be allowed back into the program.
2.0	CONTRACTOR
2.1	Vendor Approval Process a. Streamline the vendor approval process and allow parents to suggest vendors or apply for vendors on their behalf.
2.2	Enhance Vendor Offerings to Address Learning Loss a. Prioritize offering services specific to addressing student learning loss.
2.3	Expand Vendor Services Available to Rural and Remote Communities a. Expand vendor services available to rural and remote communities beyond physical education classes and enhanced broadband service.
2.4	Expand Vendor Services to Out of State Vendors Providing Educational Services a. Allow parents to select out of state vendors offering in-person educational enrichment opportunities. b. Allow parents to select out of state vendors offering educational enrichment opportunities through a virtual platform.
2.5	Local Education Agencies a. State Board of Education staff and Idaho School Boards Association work together to encourage all Idaho Local Education Agencies to become vendors in the marketplace.
2.6	Vendor Review Process a. Work with the contractor to implement a vendor review process for parents or patrons of the program to review vendors in the marketplace.
2.7	Vendor Relations a. Enhance communication between the contractor and vendors.

3.0	PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION
3.1	Residency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students must reside in Idaho to access Empowering Parents grant funds.
3.2	Annual Timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adjust the program timeline to align with the start of the school year to allow parents to access funds earlier in the school year, with no negative impact to current participants.
3.3	Awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Move faster through the awards process. b. Shorten the duration between waves.
3.4	Program Caps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allow all eligible students (K-12) within a household to use the grant funds awarded to the household. b. Maintain the annual household award at three (3) per household. c. Maintain the annual Empowering Parents grant award at \$1,000 per eligible student.
3.5	Program Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase the number of FTE supporting the Empowering Parents Program by at least one FTE.
3.6	Expenditure of Funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Current grant recipients shall have one (1) additional year to spend grant awards. b. Develop a process to allow unspent grant funds to be returned to the State should a participant elect not to use the entirety of the grant.
3.7	Two-Household Families³³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a policy for two-household families which includes verification that the Empowering Parents award is granted to the parent with authority to make educational decisions for the respective child.

4.0	ELIGIBLE EXPENSES
4.1	<p>Idaho Code § 33-1030(f) – Other education expenses and services as approved by the Board, upon recommendation of the Parent Advisory Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Educational camps and classes offered for a fee, but reserve the right for the State Board of Education to deny any classes they deem inappropriate. b. Non-technological education equipment that may be necessary to facilitate a student’s participation in educational activities (i.e. backpacks, computer cases, and tools for science labs). c. Fees associated with homeschool educational services tuition, including co-ops or whatever setting the family chooses. d. Physical education equipment, gear, uniforms, or pay-to-play fees required for participation in physical education activities. e. Educational programs or extracurricular activities offered for a fee or pursuant to contract by a school district, public charter school, or career technical education program to any students, provided that such students may not be counted for purposes of calculating public school enrollment. f. Musical instruments and tutoring services. g. Costumes and uniforms – clothing necessary to facilitate participation in an educational camp, class, or event (i.e. dance uniforms, karate uniforms, or camp t-shirts).
4.2	<p>Reimbursements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allow direct reimbursement for internet services. b. Establish a process for reimbursement under what the Board finds feasible within their abilities.