



**Empowering
Parents**

PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-24



Governor Brad Little

State Capitol :: Boise, Idaho 83720
(208) 334-2100 :: gov.idaho.gov

Dear Idaho Parents,

As your Governor, my goal has been to make Idaho the place where our children and grandchildren choose to learn, work, and stay. Continuing to improve Idaho's education system is central to that work. The Empowering Parents grants put parents in the driver's seat of their child's education and gives them ability to help fund the individual education needs of their children. Input from parents is essential to shaping Idaho's education system, and this program allows for exactly that.

The Empowering Parents grants increase access to education resources such as computers, tutoring, internet connectivity, and other items and services to provide our students with the best chance of success. Since the Empowering Parents grants went live, tens of thousands of students have benefited from the grant, and we look forward to that number increasing. Empowering Parents grants are effective, popular, and worthy of our continued investment.

Both my office and the State Board of Education are committed to ensuring the Empowering Parents grant program operates successfully so parents can use the funds for what their children need.

Sincerely,

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho

Parent Handbook

The purpose of the handbook is to provide information concerning the policies, procedures, and implementation of the Empowering Parents Grant Program.

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Program Overview

WHAT

A grant program that empowers parents to make eligible purchases for their students.



How It Works:

WHO

ALL Idaho students Kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible regardless of whether they attend a public school, private school, or are homeschooled.

WHEN

Applications for the school year will open in the fall. Student awards are made in waves based on a parent's Adjusted Gross Income verified by the Idaho Tax Commission.

AWARD

Eligible families may receive \$1,000 per student and a maximum of \$3,000. Grant awards will be sent directly to a digital wallet and spent through an online Marketplace.



STAY INFORMED

Parents are encouraged to visit the Empowering Parents website to stay abreast of important news and updates at <https://empoweringparents.idaho.gov/>

Idaho State Board of Education
(208) 488-7583



AUTHORITY

The Empowering Parents Grant Program, created by the Legislature and Governor Brad Little, gives families the ability to choose and purchase educational products and services to support their children's academic success. This successful school choice program is open to all school-age (K-12) children of Idaho residents.

§33-1031 **IDAHO CODE**

Idaho Code §33-1031 establishes the Empowering Parents program to be administered by the State Board of Education. The purpose of the program is to provide education grants for eligible students. To administer the program the State Board of Education shall create and administer, or designate a third party to create and administer, a grant distribution platform, establish a grant application process for parents and award grants.

Grant awards shall be made:

- (i) First to eligible students whose household has an adjusted gross income under sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000), as verified by the Idaho state tax commission using the prior year's tax returns. Notification of grant awards for students in this category shall be made within thirty (30) days of application, and grant funds shall be made available for participants' use as soon as practicable, but no later than thirty (30) days after the notification of a grant award;
- (ii) Starting sixty (60) days after grant awards in a fiscal year are made under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, to eligible students whose household has an adjusted gross income under seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000), as verified by the Idaho state tax commission using the prior year's tax returns; and
- (iii) Starting sixty (60) days after grant awards in a fiscal year are made under subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, to all other eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis until all available funds are distributed.

Grant funds shall be expended within two (2) years after they are awarded. Any unused funds at the end of the two (2) year period shall revert to the Empowering Parents Grant Program fund. Grant awards per family shall be capped at three thousand dollars (\$3,000), regardless of the number of eligible students in the family.



ELIGIBILITY

ALL K-12 Idaho students are eligible regardless of whether they attend a public school, private school, or are homeschooled.

Kindergarten is the age of five (5) years attained when the fifth anniversary of birth occurs on or before the first day of September of the school year in which the child is to be enrolled.

Income eligibility to be based on the parent or guardian's AGI verified with the Idaho Tax Commission from the previous year's filing.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY

All tax information will be verified with the Idaho Tax Commission

- While everyone is not required to file an Idaho tax return, only individuals who file will be eligible for the program.
- State law does not allow discretion on using anything other than the applicant's AGI verified by the Idaho Tax Commission.
- Income eligibility is verified using the prior year Idaho State adjusted gross income from personal (not business) tax returns.
- We are unable to take income information from other years or consideration of recent employment status changes.
- All tax information will be verified with the Idaho Tax Commissioner's office.

No student may be used to determine eligibility in more than one family. Parents may be asked to verify legal custody of the child. Documentation could include paperwork from Health and Welfare to verify foster children in your care or custodial paperwork.



HOW TO APPLY

Applications are verified and approved using an outside vendor, A link to the application is posted on the Empowering Parents website.

[HTTPS://EMPOWERINGPARENTS.IDAHO.GOV/](https://empoweringparents.idaho.gov/)

To complete your application be prepared with the following information:

- Parent First and Last Name
- Social Security Number or Individual Identification Number
- Mailing Address
- Phone Number
- Adjusted Gross Income
- Child(ren) First and Last Name
- Date(s) of Birth
- School name
- Grade

To complete the verification process, parents will be asked to present one of the following documents: a US passport, a government-issued State ID, a driver's license, or a Green Card. Additionally, for child verification, parents must provide one of the following options for their children: a birth certificate, a US passport, a government-issued State ID, a 1040 Federal Tax Return, or a driver's license.

AGE VERIFICATION

Parents might be asked to upload documentation to verify the student's kindergarten thru grade 12 age. Acceptable documentation can include a state-issued ID, passport, or birth certificate.

PARENT PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Idaho Code § 33-1031(3) requires all applicants to sign a parent participation agreement:

The parent of a participant must use grant funds only for eligible education expenses. If a parent is found to misuse grant funds, then neither the parent nor another parent of the student living in the same household may apply for a grant in the future for any student, provided that the parent may appeal the finding to the board.



UNVERIFIED ELIGIBILITY

If your application is deemed ineligible because your information cannot be verified you will receive an email notification. Grants are discretionary and not subject to appeal rights, including, but not limited to, appeals under the Idaho Administrative Procedure Act. You may request reconsideration within five (5) business days of the notice. To request reconsideration, applicants can contact the Office of the State Board of Education.

Reconsideration Requests

If you request reconsideration, you must submit all requested information in the time specified by the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education's determination concerning your eligibility must be final and binding. No additional rights or challenges must be provided following the Office of the State Board of Education's decision.

CHANGES TO AN ACCOUNT

A parent/legal guardian may transfer ownership of an account to another parent/legal guardian eligible to oversee the account. To transfer ownership, the existing designated parent/guardian should submit a request for a Change of Designated Parent/Guardian to the State Board of Education. Once reviewed and processed by the State Board of Education, the new designee assumes all oversight of the account. The State Board of Education will email the vendor with the requested change. The vendor will update the system and resend welcome emails and/or password resets as needed. A student's name cannot be transferred to another family member.

WITHDRAWAL FROM PROGRAM

A parent may withdraw their student from the program at any time by submitting a notice of withdrawal to the State Board of Education. The student's account will be closed, and any remaining funds will be returned to the SBOE for redistribution to other qualified students.



USE OF FUNDS

All funds distributed through the Empowering Parents Grant Program are to be used for the benefit of an eligible kindergarten through 12th grade student and for the purchase of eligible education expenses through an online Marketplace.

Misuse of funds will result in the denial of eligibility to make future purchases or to apply for future grants.

Grant funds become available in the applicant's Digital Wallet within thirty (30) days of award. Parents have two calendar years from the date of the award to spend the funds. Any funds remaining in an Awardee's Digital Wallet after the date of expiration are returned to the Empowering Parents fund for redistribution to another awardee.

All education expenses are required to be used to support a student's current class or curriculum needs.

Parents agree that all funds distributed through the Empowering Parents Grant Program are to be used for eligible education expenses and therefore used to support a student's current class or curriculum or identified through a student's individual education plan (IEP) as necessary to facilitate their learning.

The use of the funds may be subject to audit by the state of Idaho. If funds are found to have been used for non-eligible expenses the confirmed misuse of funds will result in the denial of eligibility for future grants.

A list of commonly approved and denied education expenses is updated and maintained on the Empowering Parents website. This is not a conclusive list but is guidance regarding what items are allowed and not allowed under the Empowering Parents Program.



ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Parents and guardians of an eligible student must agree to use funds deposited into their digital wallet only for qualifying educational expenses. Section 33-1030, Idaho Code, defines eligible education expenses to include: Computer hardware, internet access, or other technological devices or services that are primarily used to meet a participant's educational needs;

Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials, including educational software and applications;

Fees for national standardized assessments, advanced placement examinations, examinations related to college or university admissions, or industry-recognized certification examinations;

Therapies, including but not limited to occupational, behavioral, physical, speech-language, and audiology therapies, or other services or therapies specifically approved by the board;

Educational programs offered for a fee or pursuant to contract by a school district, public charter school, or career technical education program to nonpublic students, provided that such students may not be counted for purposes of calculating public school enrollment; or

Other education expenses and services as approved by the board, upon recommendation of the parent advisory panel established pursuant to section 33-1032, Idaho Code. This includes:

Registration fees and required materials for education camps and classes offered for a fee by a Board approved vendor

Non-technological education equipment that may be necessary to facilitate a student's participation in educational activities

Physical educational equipment, gear, uniforms, or pay-to-play fees required for participation in organized physical education activities

Musical instruments and tutoring services

Costumes and uniforms – clothing necessary to facilitate participation in an educational camp, class, or event



MARKETPLACE PURCHASES

Product Safety: Parents are responsible for reviewing the manufacturer's recommended minimum age use and safety disclaimers when determining whether an education product is appropriate for their student.

Returns and Damages: The State Board of Education is not responsible for returns or damaged goods or services. Purchases made through the Marketplace are subject to the return policies of each individual vendor.

Prepayment: The prepayment of services is at the risk of the parent. The State Board of Education is not responsible for prepaid services that cannot be fulfilled by an online Marketplace vendor.

Customer Service: The Empowering Parents online Marketplace is managed by a third-party contractor. The contractor is responsible for management of the Marketplace and transactions through the Digital Wallet. All customer service issues must be reported through the customer service line: 208-768-8132.

REFUNDS

Empowering Parents funds shall not be refunded, rebated, or shared with another parent. Any refund or rebate for goods or services purchased by a parent will be credited directly back to the digital wallet from the vendor within 30 days.



MISUSE OF FUNDS

The State Board of Education takes its duty to manage public funds with the utmost seriousness. Parents and guardians are asked to approach participation in the program with similar conviction. The State Board of Education frequently monitors for fraud and misuse to ensure that the public funds are spent responsibly.

Misuse of Funds - Ineligible Purchases: When a parent attempts to purchase an ineligible product or service, the purchase will be denied, and the parent will be notified. Future attempts to purchase ineligible items will be considered a misuse of funds.

Misuse of Funds - Monetary Benefit: Seeking a refund, or rebate of grant funds directly from a vendor is considered misuse of funds. Similarly, reselling products purchased through the Marketplace for monetary benefit is also considered misuse of funds. All payments to vendors and all refunds or rebates due to the Awardee must be processed through the Digital Wallet.

Reimbursements: Reimbursements are not allowed. Grant funds are for the purchase of upcoming goods and services. Reimbursements and payments for past-due invoices are prohibited.

Fees: Late payment or refund payment fees are not allowed.

Account Suspension

A parent account may be suspended if the Program Administrator has reason to believe that the parent made an ineligible purchase on the Marketplace. Parents will be notified of the ineligible purchase with a copy of the participation agreement stating the risk of permanent removal and notice that parents can request reinstatement of the account by providing additional documentation to justify the eligibility of the purchase within (30) days. If parents do not submit a request for reinstatement the account will be permanently deactivated at the conclusion of the thirty (30) day window. Parents will not be allowed to apply in the future, and any remaining funds will be returned to the State Board of Education for redistribution to other eligible applicants.



PARENT ADVISORY PANEL

Parents are the number one factor in determining the success of Idaho students. The Parent Advisory Panel for the Empowering Parents Grant program advises the State Board of Education on ways to implement, administer, and improve the Empowering Parents grant program.

The panel is established in Idaho Code 33-1032 and includes seven members. Three members are appointed by the Governor, two members are appointed by the Senate Pro Tem, and two members are appointed by the Speaker of the House. The panel meets at the call of the State Board of Education.

Current Parent Advisory Panel members are found on the Empowering Parents website.

Parent Advisory Panel meetings are open to the public and will be noticed through Townhall Idaho.



GET IN TOUCH

To contact the panel or submit a public comment:
eppanel@edu.idaho.gov

APPEALS

Parents who have been notified that they have made an ineligible purchase, have requested reinstatement, provided additional documentation, and have been denied reinstatement by the State Board of Education may appeal that decision to the Parent Advisory Panel.

The panel will review the request for reinstatement and will make a recommendation to either uphold the decision or recommend that the parent account be reactivated. Recommendations from the Parent Advisory Panel regarding appeals of parent account reactivations are made to the Executive Director of the State Board of Education to whom the Board has delegated the authority to accept or reject such recommendations. This is a final decision.



DEFINITIONS

- (1) "Assessment" means an examination or another objective evaluation of a student's academic performance, academic engagement, or college or career readiness.
- (2) "Board" means the state board of education.
- (3) "Eligible education expenses" means:
 - (a) Computer hardware, internet access, or other technological devices or services that are primarily used to meet a participant's educational needs;
 - (b) Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials, including educational software and applications;
 - (c) Fees for national standardized assessments, advanced placement examinations, examinations related to college or university admissions, or industry-recognized certification examinations;
 - (d) Therapies, including but not limited to occupational, behavioral, physical, speech-language, and audiology therapies, or other services or therapies specifically approved by the board;
 - (e) Educational programs offered for a fee or pursuant to contract by a school district, public charter school, or career technical education program to nonpublic students, provided that such students may not be counted for purposes of calculating public school enrollment; or
 - (f) Other education expenses and services as approved by the board, upon recommendation of the parent advisory panel established pursuant to section 33-1032, Idaho Code.
- (4) "Eligible student" means a person in kindergarten through grade 12, whether a public school or nonpublic school student.
- (5) "Grant" means an award of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), which must be used for eligible education expenses.
- (6) "Grant distribution platform" means a digital platform through which grant funds are transferred from the board to participant accounts.
- (7) "Parent" means the parent or legal guardian of an eligible student or a participant.
- (8) "Participant" means an eligible student for whom a grant is awarded under section 33-1031, Idaho Code.
- (9) "Program" means the empowering parents grant program established by section 33-1031, Idaho Code.



Eligible Education Expenses

Idaho Code defines eligible education expenses. Approved and not approved items are listed below. This list is not conclusive. Examples are included but are not limited to the following items. The list presents examples of eligible and ineligible items in each category but is not extensive.

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (a) Computer hardware, internet access, or other technological devices or services that are primarily used to meet a participant’s educational needs	
Approved	Not Approved
Laptops, desktops, and tablets	TV’s
Headphones	Smartwatches
Internet access	Computer Components
Speakers	Smartphones, Phones
Cameras	Karaoke machines
Printers	Video game consoles and console accessories
	Video games
	Video/TV/Online Streaming Services
	Live Television
	Musical Streaming Services

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (b) Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials, including educational software and applications	
Approved	Not Approved
Textbooks	Pornography
K-12 Curriculum	Content that poses a safety threat to the student or others
K-12 Books	Adult content (such as mixology guides or books)
Educational software	In-Game Purchases or Credits
Educational applications	
Educational workbooks	
Dictionaries	
Software subscriptions (single use with a maximum of 3 users for a family)	

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (c) Fees for national standardized assessments, advanced placement examinations, examinations related to college or university admissions, or industry-recognized certification examinations	
Approved	Not Approved
SAT, ACT, AP, and IB	Fees for tests paid to a school district, public charter school, or career technical education program for students counted for public school enrollment

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (d) Therapies, including but not limited to occupational, behavioral, physical, speech-language, and audiology therapies, or other services or therapies specifically approved by the board

Approved	Not Approved
Speech therapy	Services performed by interns
Occupational therapy	
Physical therapy	
Behavioral therapy	
Audiology therapy	
Vision therapy	
Dental therapy	

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (e) Educational programs offered for a fee or pursuant to contract by a school district, public charter school, or career technical education program to nonpublic students, provided that such students may not be counted for purposes of calculating public school enrollment

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (f) Registration fees and required materials for education camps and classes offered for a fee by a Board approved vendor

Approved	Not Approved
Tuition, technology, textbook and curriculum fees, and instructional materials for camps and extracurricular classes	Tuition and fees for enrollment in a virtual school or class in which the eligible student is enrolled as a private paying student
	Private school tuition and fees
	Religious camps
	Annual funds
	Giving Funds
	Fundraising fees, donation fees, volunteer waiver fees
	Homeschool co-op tuition and fees
	Gift cards
	Transportation and fees

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (f) Non-technological education equipment that may be necessary to facilitate a student’s participation in educational activities

Approved Expenses	Not Approved Expenses
Backpacks, messenger bags, tote bag	Toys
Computer cases	Kitchen Appliances
School supplies	Household Appliances

Sensory items (handheld or specific to a student's educational program)	Household items: cleaning supplies, batteries, packing tape, etc.
Timers	Furniture, bean bags, gaming chairs, and loungers
K-12 lego kits	Animals
STEM project kits	Cricut or Silhouette machines and accessories
Art supplies and easels	Food (human or animal)
Board games	Green Houses
Calculators	Gas or electric-powered gardening tools
Planners/organizers	Label-makers
Educational flashcards	Desk organization: pen holders, file organizers, etc.
Microscopes	Gift cards
Telescopes	Water and sensory tables
Puzzles	Liquid floor tiles
Laptop stands	Stuffed animals
Horticulture and garden tools and kits	Weighted blankets and sheets
Sewing machines	
Lunchbox	Swings (indoor and outdoor)
Manipulatives: items that help with counting, time, measurement, shapes, addition, etc. (e.g. math cubes, legos, blocks, shapes, letters, etc.)	Games or puzzles with content that may pose a threat to the student or others or that promote violence or criminal behavior are ineligible for purchase.
Tools for CTE coursework	Rugs or foam tiles
	Storage and organization containers

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (f) Physical educational equipment, gear, uniforms, or pay-to-play fees required for participation in organized physical education activities	
Approved Expenses	Not Approved Expenses
Sports gear	Motorized equipment (treadmills, stationary bikes)
Sports competition fees	Recreational equipment
Weights, weight benches	Trampolines
Balls and ball goals	Motorized and recreational boats
Racquets and bats	Scooters/ride-on (including motorized and golf carts)
Swim goggles, fins, kickboards	Pools (in-ground and above)
Yoga mats, gymnastics mats	Camping equipment
	Bikes
	Playsets/swing sets
	Bouncy houses

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (f) Musical instruments and tutoring services	
Approved Expenses	Not Approved Expenses
Instruments (purchase and rental)	Maintenance, repairs, and related fees
In-person and online tutoring services	Tuning
	Insurance and service agreements

Idaho Code § 33-1030 (f) Costumes and uniforms – clothing necessary to facilitate participation in an educational camp, class, or event	
Approved Expenses	Not Approved Expenses
Leotards	School uniforms
Dance shoes	Dress up and imaginary play clothing
Karate uniform and belts	
Extracurricular class and camp t-shirts that are required to participate	
Sport uniforms	
Dance uniforms and costumes	
Theatrical costumes	
Uniforms for competitive sports teams	