**Andy Grover, Republican candidate, superintendent of public instruction, March 26, 2014**

**1. What letter grade would you assign to the 2014 session?**

There are two parts to this year’s session that each deserve a letter grade.

1. Letter Grade A – I believe this was the second shortest legislative session in history. Great job of getting in, getting the job done, and closing up the session in record time.
2. Letter Grade of B – This grade goes towards educational legislation.

**2. What do you think the Legislature did right this session, regarding K-12?**

1. The Legislature did a great job of working with educators, parents, and community. Listening to concerns and working towards solutions that will benefit education. A 5.1 percent increase in a budget that has seen some decreases over the past few years is a step in the right direction. The following are a few of the areas that create the “above average” letter grade I gave to the legislature this session.
   1. Extending the sunset clauses HB261- reduction in force/seniority, SB1040a – reducing salaries, and SB1147 – The evergreen clauses will continue to aid school districts as they deal with tough budgets.
   2. HB504 – Leadership premiums was a great bill that allows local control over rewarding teachers for the leadership many of them perform that is above and beyond the regular contract hour. This is a great way to thank those many teachers who constantly give of their time and talents.
   3. HB521 – Strategic planning and training. Ben Franklin said, “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” These dollars that are put into developing a strategic plan are key for local school boards and local leadership to create the direction of the district. This is the planning that determines how and what our students will learn and the Legislature has helped provide the funding to make sure this happens.
   4. HB557- Use it or lose it – As a superintendent, this is one of the funding bills that has helped over the past few years with the ability to receive funding on a percentage of positions that were not hired by the district. This has given local districts options when it comes to hire or not hire.
   5. HB589 – School safety funds – this was a great bill that gave dollars to the Idaho State Police and school districts to help create better safety plans for the school. This is a great use of the cigarette tax.
   6. HB637, HB638, HB639 Appropriations bills – This gives employees of the school district a 1 percent increase in their pay. This is an area that the cost of living has exceeded any increases, but I am grateful for the plus, it is a step in the right direction.
   7. SB1233a – Advanced opportunities – one of the few legislative bills that is all about students. This is an awesome bill that gives students $200 their junior year and $400 their senior year to offset the cost of dual credits and professional technical certification. Hats off on the creation and funding of this bill.
   8. SB1372a – Secure student data – Sen. John Goedde deserves praise for listening to the public on issues with student data and creating this legislation that defines and sets procedure for data that is collected. It also requires local school boards to come up with local policy on data security.
   9. SB1377 – Curricular materials – Responsibility for curriculum is left to local school boards. Leave the local governance up to the locals.

**3. What do you think the Legislature did wrong this session, regarding K-12?**

1. The direction and emphasis of education is and should be tied to the 20 educational recommendations created by the Governor’s Educational Task Force, which was made up of a diverse group of Idahoans. My observation of this year’s legislative session was that there was not enough emphasis placed on these 20 areas of focus. Some of the recommendations were touched on, Sen. Monty Pearce’s bill on the $200 and $400 gives students advanced opportunities and this is going in the right direction, but there are so many opportunities that there is still a lot of work to do in that one area. The following areas are places that there needs to be continued emphasis on.
   1. Creating the mastery-based system.
   2. Idaho Core Standards.
   3. Annual strategic planning, assessments, and continuous focus on improvement.
   4. Statewide collaboration system.
   5. High-speed bandwidth and wireless infrastructure (still lots of questions on this issue and districts cannot live without this. It is as important as electricity to turn on the lights).
   6. Educator and student technology devices.
   7. Restoration of operational funding – Remembering this only brings back funding to the 2009 numbers, we are still a long way from the cost of running schools in 2014.
   8. Career ladder compensation model.
   9. Tiered licensure.
   10. Mentoring.
   11. Professional development/collaboration.
   12. College readiness.

**4. Based on what you saw this session, what do you consider to be the top priority facing Idaho's next superintendent of public instruction, in the 2015 session? How would you approach that priority?**

The continuation of working with Idahoans, legislators, superintendents, parents, business, and the community in a forward direction. Education and our students cannot afford to go backward in any way. The following are areas that I believe will and should be the direction moving forward.

1. The implementations of the task force recommendations are key to moving forward. The creation and implementation of these recommendations need to be the blueprint for moving education forward and creating successful experiences for our students. The 20 recommendations when implemented will directly or indirectly address most of the issues below.
2. Parental choice needs to be discussed, parents need to know about all the opportunities that exist for their students. Charter schools, magnet schools, professional-technical pathways, college pathways, Advanced Placement classes, and dual credit opportunities are all choices in schools today that lend direction and successful opportunities for all students.
3. The discussion of the amount of local levies that are being run is a concern to me. Five or six years ago, supplemental levies were run to do something new and innovative, such as putting in a computer lab, today, supplemental levies are run to just keep the doors open. Being a superintendent and having run numerous levies it is a huge concern that a portion of the funding burden has moved away from the state and is being imposed on local taxpayers. While this is a local decision to run a levy, the majority of districts in Idaho do not have a choice, and have to run levies to survive. By implementing and properly funding the 20 recommendations, I believe we can fund schools at an appropriate level where levies become a choice, not a necessity.
4. Accountability – This is another area that needs to continue to be discussed. A large portion of the state’s revenue goes towards education. A system needs to be created that adequately shows schools are preparing students for life after high school. This is happening throughout the state and there has to be a reliable, sustainable way to keep everyone accountable for educating our students.
5. Student information systems – With the data questions that are going on and the collection of that data, SIS systems need to meet the standards and confidentiality of the new direction created by the Legislature this year.
6. Working with the federal government and their educational waiver. This has been an area that needs to be addressed and direction needs to be clear to not only legislators, but to school districts, leaders, teachers, and parents. There is a lot of work here as well.
7. Fiscal responsibility – As a current superintendent, running a budget that includes all areas of educations, working with federal and state agencies, it is imperative that the next state superintendent is grounded in this area. Both the state Legislature and local districts need to spend the dollars allocated to education in way that reflects student achievement and growth. This will continue to be an issue over the next few years.
8. Working with legislators and being able to provide leadership on direction, fiscal responsibility, and finding what is best for students. Creating the trust and working relationships with both houses of the Legislature is going to be key in moving education forward in Idaho.

The next state superintendent will need practical experience in dealing with these issues and having a collaborative view of creating direction for education in Idaho. Experience and successful programs are key to having the right person in this position. I have both the experience and the success and will be able to work with all stakeholders in education.