

NEWS RELEASE



Office of Performance Evaluations Idaho Legislature

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The K–12 Longitudinal Data System

Full report and one-page highlights are available on the OPE website:

<http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/ope/>

(BOISE)—In a report released to the Legislature today, evaluators revealed that many of the mistakes made in the development of the state’s longitudinal data system for public schools were similar to the mistakes made in the failed Idaho student information management system (ISIMS) in the early 2000s. The Department of Education did not establish appropriate roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, and it did not involve stakeholders to understand their views, needs, and resources.

Since fiscal year 2009 the Department of Education has spent \$12 million to develop, implement, and maintain its new K-12 longitudinal data system—commonly known as the Idaho system for educational excellence (ISEE). Of this amount, \$5.9 million came from a federal grant and \$6.1 million came from state funds. The department rolled out the system to districts in October 2010 and estimates ongoing costs to be \$1.4 million annually, comprised entirely of state funds.

Legislators requested a study of ISEE because of reports that school districts and charter schools were struggling under heavy data collection requirements. The burden not only affected staff resources, but in some cases also affected funding if districts did not submit data correctly. Districts reported spending about two weeks of every month preparing for the ISEE upload, with a significant amount of that time preventing and correcting data errors.

Idaho was the last state in the nation to develop a longitudinal data system—a system that collects individual student data across multiple years. By being last, the department had available to it the lessons learned from all other states and lessons learned from its 2006 legislative evaluation of the failed ISIMS project. Despite access to these foundational tools, the department overlooked a critical component to the success of any big organizational change—collaboration with stakeholders.

The department had flexibility to develop a K–12 longitudinal data system tailored to its goals. It planned and implemented the data system in relative isolation with little input from department program areas or districts—essentially the development and ongoing management of K–12 data collection has been IT centric.

Districts are required to input a high number of data elements, many of which were not federally required or evaluated for necessity. The department uses data it collects more for federal reporting and state funding calculations than for answering longitudinal questions. Evaluators recommend the department justify its data elements in light of the burden, feasibility, and cost of district collections.

Evaluators said that if the data system is to be sustainable, the department must strengthen its management strategies and collaborate with stakeholders. The department has improved its communication to districts since the early years of ISEE, but evaluators cautioned that sustainability will always be at risk until stakeholders have a sense of ownership and see value in the ongoing success of the system.

The department has developed a robust data system. As it transitions to a new administration, the department has an opportunity to adopt a data governance structure that can include meaningful stakeholder input with goals for effective use that will make ISEE a valued, sustainable longitudinal system.

The Office of Performance Evaluations is a nonpartisan, independent office that evaluates whether state government programs and agencies are operating efficiently and cost-effectively, and are achieving intended results. OPE conducts all reviews in response to direction from an equally bipartisan committee of the Legislature, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. OPE's reviews are used by the Legislature to make policy and budget decisions, and by agencies to improve performance.