

Board Approves Idaho Need For Online Classes

BY JESSIE L. BONNER
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho is set to become first state in the nation to require high school students to take at least two credits online to graduate. The state Board of Education gave the requirement final approval Thursday, despite heavy criticism of the plan at public hearings this summer. The measure is part of a sweeping education overhaul that introduces teacher merit pay and phases in laptops for every high school teacher and student.

Proponents say the virtual classes will help the state save money and better prepare students for college. But opponents claim they'll replace teachers with computers and shift state taxpayer money to the out-of-state companies that will be tapped to provide the online curriculum and laptops. The rule will apply to students entering the 9th grade in fall 2012. It goes before Idaho lawmakers for review in the 2012 session, which starts in January.

The education board gave the online graduation requirement its initial approval in September after heavy opposition was voiced this summer at public hearings across Idaho. Trustees collected more feedback during a 21-day public comment period last month.

“A majority of the comments felt there should not be an online learning requirement,” said board member Don Soltman during the meeting.

Schools nationwide offer virtual classes, but just three states — Alabama, Florida and Michigan — have adopted rules since 2006 to require online learning, according to the International Association of K-12 Online Learning. The online rules vary from state to state, but Idaho would be the first to require two credits online.

The Idaho Education Association blasted the decision in a statement Thursday, saying the board “overruled the wishes of a majority of Idahoans and disregarded parental choice” by mandating the online credits.

To online learning advocates, the requirement seems reasonable. They say children need to be prepared for the world that awaits them after high school.

“There is still a live teacher. It may be at a distance, but that teacher is still instructing and interacting with the student,” said Susan Patrick, president of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, a Washington-based nonprofit.

Kendra Wisenbaker, 28, is among those questioning the Idaho plan.

“The poor kids are guinea pigs,” said Wisenbaker, an elementary school teacher in Meridian, the state’s largest school district.

Like many of her students, Wisenbaker is on Facebook, and she spends several hours a day online. But when it comes to requiring her tech-savvy kids to learn in a virtual classroom once they enter high school, Wisenbaker is among Idaho teachers who aren’t so sure.

“I am a little conflicted, I am. It won’t work for every kid, and I think requiring it is a horrible idea,” said Wisenbaker, who also reasons that some students may thrive learning online. “But it shouldn’t be an option for saving money,” she said during an interview with The Associated Press.

In Idaho, members of the state Board of Education have said most of the opposition is directed at new education laws as a whole — not just the online requirements.

East Runs Low On Snow Days After Irene, New Storm

BY STEPHANIE REITZ
Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Alison Takahashi thought autumn of her senior year would be filled with memories-to-be like the homecoming dance, crossing her fingers over college applications and counting down to graduation from Glastonbury High School.

Instead, the dance is delayed, her graduation date is a question mark and she’s squeezing in study time during daylight hours as she — and hundreds of thousands of other Northeast residents — spends days without power after last weekend’s snowstorm.

“I feel so disorganized and disoriented because we’ve been living all over the place,” said the 17-year-old Takahashi, whose family has bunked in hotels since losing power Saturday, and who has squeezed in study time for an SAT specialty test in Spanish as part of her application to Georgetown University.

She must take that test Saturday in her high school, where that night’s homecoming dance has been postponed and town residents pop in to take showers and recharge their cellphones and computers.

Throughout the region and especially in hard-hit Connecticut, many school districts that lost several snow days to the remnants of Hurricane Irene in August found themselves losing this full week, too, because of snow-related power failures and tree damage.

A handful of districts in New Jersey also remained closed Thursday, leaving

those and other districts wondering they would have to cut into vacations to regain the lost days.

Throughout the Northeast, the storm’s legacy has left students, working parents and others looking for last-minute baby sitters as power-free day care centers remain closed, or going without access to email and other modern conveniences.

About 675,000 homes and businesses in the Northeast — more than half of them in Connecticut — went without power for a fifth day Thursday. Makeshift relief centers filled with weary parents and restless children.

The number of lost school days is forcing some districts to consider trimming their winter or spring vacations to ensure school doesn’t stretch beyond June — a consideration virtually unheard of so early in the academic year.

“It’s a difficult situation when you lose five off the bat. It’s only November and we haven’t even had the real snow yet,” said Paul K. Smith, superintendent of Bolton’s schools, which were set to remain closed Friday for their fifth consecutive day.

He and several other superintendents said that the past 10 months have been unlike any they remember in recent decades.

Record-setting snows in January forced many districts in Connecticut and elsewhere to stretch their school years to compensate for lost days — and just as they breathed a sigh of relief, Irene swept through the Northeast to steal away days at the start of the new school year.

Then, last weekend’s rare October

snow completed the triple whammy, forcing them to cancel even more days.

It also comes as many districts were wrapping up their marking periods and trying to compile report cards; as several sports were heading into state and regional tournaments; and as many students faced a Nov. 1 deadline for early admission consideration in certain colleges, some of which have said they will be flexible under the circumstances.

Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and some other states require public schools to have at least 180 days of classes and cannot extend the school year beyond June 30. Their state education departments can grant waivers in extraordinary circumstances, but rarely do.

“If this were to have occurred in March or April, then you’re really up against it and at that point you’d probably be looking for some relief at the state level. But at this point so early in the year, there’s still some flexibility to make up those days,” said Joseph Cirsuolo, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.

Schools in Tolland, outside Hartford, lost 11 days to snow cancellations last year, 10 of them in January alone. As of this week, its numbers were sneaking up again for the new school year: three days lost from Irene and five this week from the snowstorm, forcing its school board to consider whether to reduce winter or spring vacations.

As for whether snowy days are ahead that could exacerbate the situation, Tolland schools Superintendent William Guz-

man was trying Thursday to balance optimism and realism: “I’m wishing for a mild winter and just taking it one day at a time.”

Several students and parents said Thursday that being flexible was the only way they could maintain their humor as they gritted their teeth and faced another day without power, classes and many basic amenities. Several districts expected to reopen Monday but were not certain whether it would be possible.

“There’s wires down all over in our neighborhood, so I don’t know if they’ll be gone and the buses can get in and out,” said 13-year-old Brigid Gauthier, an eighth-grader in Simsbury, one of several towns remaining largely without power Thursday.

Even students and families whose electricity had been restored or who never lost it were thrown off kilter by the school days cancellations and what it meant to their schedules.

Seventeen-year-old Josh Florez, a senior at West Hartford’s Conard High School, was spending his days volunteering at the town’s relief shelter at the school, keeping up with training for his cross-country team and trying to schedule interviews with members of the state’s congressional delegation for his hoped-for nomination to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

But he had faith Thursday that once classes resumed, teachers would pace the lessons to catch up without overwhelming students and that in the end, it would all work out.

NEW CHEVROLET, BUICK, GMC & CADILLAC AT THE NEW NORTHTOWN!

2012 Chevrolet Malibu



Starting Only... \$18,990*
4 Choices At This Price!

2012 Chevrolet Impala



Only... \$22,490*
Bench Seat

2012 Chevrolet Traverse



Starting at... \$25,990*
All Wheel Drives Starting at... \$27,990*

2012 Chevrolet Equinox



Starting at... \$22,990*
All Wheel Drives Starting at... \$24,990*

6-’11 MODEL YEAR CLOSEOUTS! All New With HUGE Savings!

‘11 Chevrolet Cruze ECO	MSRP	PRICE*
2314, manual, crystal red, 42 MPG!	\$20,360	\$17,490
‘11 Chevrolet Silverado 1/2 Ton Crew Cab 4WD Z71 LT	MSRP	PRICE*
2135 red & ready, All Star & convenience pkg.	\$40,480	\$31,990
‘11 Chevrolet Silverado 3/4 Ton Crew Cab 4WD WT	MSRP	PRICE*
2225, white, cruise, HD trailering equipment	\$37,730	\$31,490
‘11 GMC Sierra 1/2 Ton Reg Cab 2WD WT	MSRP	PRICE*
2241, white, auto, 4.3L V6	\$22,620	\$17,490
‘11 GMC Sierra 1/2 Ton Ext Cab 4wd Z71 SLE	MSRP	PRICE*
2276, black beauty, 5.3L V8, convenience pkg.	\$36,170	\$27,990
‘11 GMC Sierra 3/4 Ton Ext Cab 4WD WT	MSRP	PRICE*
2266, white, 6.0L, V8, cruise, HD trailering equip.	\$35,975	\$29,990

5 HAIL UNITS REMAINING OUR LOSS IS YOUR GAIN!!

‘11 Chevrolet Silverado 1/2 Ton Crew Can 4WD Z71 LTZ	MSRP	PRICE*
2009, black, leather and loaded	\$45,415	\$35,990
‘11 Chevrolet Silverado 1/2 Ton Crew Cab 4WD Z71 LTZ	MSRP	PRICE*
2037, white, leader and loaded	\$46,290	\$31,990
‘11 GMC Sierra 1/2 Ton Crew Cab 4WD Denali	MSRP	PRICE*
2011, white, sunroof, nav. loaded!	\$52,993	\$39,990
‘11 GMC Sierra 1/2 Ton Crew Cab 4WD Z71 SLT	MSRP	PRICE*
2204 black, All Terrain, loaded!	\$48,220	\$35,990
‘11 GMC Yukon 4WD SLT	MSRP	PRICE*
2077, white, sunroof, quad seats, 20" chrome wheels, loaded	\$53,780	\$40,990

You may qualify for additional rebates! See dealer for details.

- GM Card
- Private Offers
- USAA
- College Discount
- Credit Union Discount
- Business Choice
- NAHB
- And Many More!

*Prices do not include \$75 doc. fee. After rebates.

PREOWNED SPECIAL PURCHASE GROUPS

5-2011 Chevrolet Malibus

Starting at...

\$13,990

3 Choices

Or \$189/mo*



STK#P2008

9-2011 Chevrolet Impalas

Starting at...

\$14,990

9,300-23,000 miles

Or \$209/mo*



STK#P1992

6-2011 Chevrolet Cruzes

Starting at...

\$16,990

LTs & LTZs

Or \$239/mo*



5-2011 Chevrolet Equinox AWD - 2LTs

Starting at...

\$28,490

Leather and teens for miles.

Or \$419/mo*



STK#P2010

18-2011 Chevrolet Traverse AWDS

Starting at...

\$22,990

AWD, LTs & LTZs. Some leather some cloth, bench & quads, DVDs

Or \$329/mo*



STK#P2036

4-2011 Buick LaCrosse CXLs & CXSs

Starting at...

\$23,990

white diamond

Or \$349/mo*



STK#P2028

7-2011 GMC Acadia AWD SLTs

Starting at...

\$29,990

3 Choices

Or \$439/mo*

8,300-25,000 miles.

Some bench, some quads, sunroofs, DVDs.



STK#P2043

3.9% APR
up to 72 Months WAC on Special Purchase Groups!
+3.9% APR for 72 months. \$2,000 cash or trade. WAC.



THE NEW Northtown
CHEVROLET • BUICK • GMC • CADILLAC

See Us On Facebook.com/NorhtownUSA

3818 Broadway, Yankton, SD



605-665-4500

888-876-7705

www.NorhtownUSA.com