

Idaho Schools Face Cuts After U.S. Funding Freeze

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Idaho's public schools are bracing for difficult decisions after the federal government froze over \$33 million in funding that was supposed to support students and teachers across the state. The Boise School District announced the freeze in a message to staff and parents this week, warning that vital programs could face sudden cuts.

The funding freeze is part of a broader halt affecting approximately \$6.8 billion in kindergarten-through-12th-grade education funding nationwide. (Multiple reputable sources estimate the freeze at \$6.8 billion, not \$6.9 billion. This money, which comes from the federal budget, is usually distributed to states at the start of each fiscal year on July 1. Schools use it to pay for essential services like language learning for English language

learners, professional development for teachers, and after-school programs that help students stay on track.

In Idaho, where school budgets are often tight, the loss of these funds, even temporarily, could have an outsized impact. Educators say programs that help the most vulnerable students are especially at risk. For example, language support services and after-school activities may need to be scaled back or suspended if the funding does not arrive soon.

Debbie Critchfield, Idaho's superintendent of public instruction, told the *Idaho Statesman* that the Idaho State Department of Education has not received any clear timeline from the federal government about when a decision will be made to release the funds. This uncertainty is creating stress for administrators who must finalize budgets and staffing plans for the upcoming school year.

Parents and teachers are worried about what this means for students' learning. Many families rely on after-school care to ensure their children have a safe place to go, and teachers depend on training programs to improve instruction. Without funding, districts may be forced to lay off staff or cancel critical services at the last minute.

The freeze was ordered under a January 27, 2025, Office of Management and Budget memo during President Trump's administration. It's part of an ideological review of federal grants, and while a federal court later temporarily blocked the pause, uncertainty remains over which programs will be affected and for how long. School leaders across Idaho are hoping federal officials will act quickly to release the money so they can avoid harming students.

For now, local districts are preparing contingency plans and urging families to stay informed as the situation unfolds.

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