

STATE EXTENDS CONTRACT AHEAD OF NEW K-3 READING TEST

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School chief Sherri Ybarra's State Department of Education and the vendor Imagination Station have agreed to extend their contract and roll out a new reading test in 2018-19.

Istation and the state originally signed a contract in December 2016 to develop a pilot version of the Idaho Reading Indicator test in 2017-18.

This week, both sides confirmed they have agreed to extend the contract into a second year, enabling Istation to develop a new reading test that will be given to all K-3 students in 2018-19.

The future of Idaho's reading test proved to be source of controversy during the dying days of the 2018 legislative session. Lawmakers **killed the first version of Ybarra's office budget** over reading test concerns, as they debated whether to move forward with a new statewide test or grant local schools the flexibility to chose their own tests.

Eventually, lawmakers approved a new version of Ybarra's budget with funding to expand the pilot test statewide next year.

SDE spokeswoman Kris Rodine said the first-year cost of the pilot test was \$64,350. Rodine estimated the 2018-19 rollout cost at \$90,000, although she said the contract is still being finalized.



Istation will provide the test to all K-3 public school students. Services include a screener, diagnostic, monitoring progress, automatic scoring and school, district and state reporting.

State officials and Istation executives say replacing the IRI is long overdue. The new test, they say, will be more modern and provide more usable data to educators and students.

"This assessment will provide a holistic view of a students' reading ability, and the in-depth reports can immediately be used to inform classroom teachers on their instructional next steps," Karlynn Laraway, the SDE's director of assessment and accountability, said in a written statement this week.

Istation calls its formative reading test the ISIP. While adjusting to each student's reading ability, the interactive test keeps developing readers engaged and provides educators with the data they need to help students grow, the Dallas-based company said.

"We are honored to be expanding the Idaho pilot program into a full statewide initiative," Istation Chairman and CEO Richard H. Collins said in a news release. "We are confident that Istation's enhanced technology and diagnostic data will save teachers time and help students improve in their reading abilities."

Istation officials said an entire class of students can be tested in 30 to 40 minutes in a computer lab. The company says the test will provide instant scoring results, as well as more than 2,500 lessons to support teachers.

Although the next phase of the contract is not finalized, Rodine said state contracts generally do not prohibit a vendor, such as Istation, from marketing other materials to school districts.

"Istation is not prohibited from marketing non-reading programmatic curriculum to schools or school districts," S. Kay Christensen, the division chief of the Office of the Idaho Attorney General's contract and administrative law division wrote in a November 2017 letter to Ybarra. "In doing so, Istation is permitted to indicate that it is a provider to the SDE. Istation is, however, prohibited from implying or suggesting that the state of Idaho has somehow endorsed any of its programs or offerings."