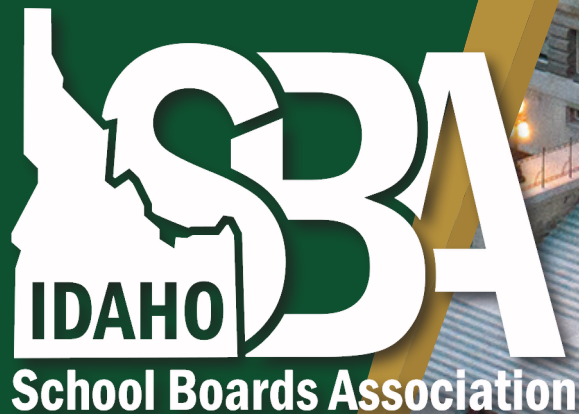


Welcome to

DAY ON THE HILL

FEBRUARY
16-17, 2026





Supporting Education Through Activities



MORE THAN A GAME

- Students involved in activities average fewer absences per year than the general student population
- Participation in high school activities is a valuable part of the overall high school experience
- Students who compete in high school activity programs achieve higher grades and have better attendance
- School activities teach lessons that include citizenship, teamwork, motivation, cooperation and self-discipline
- Those who participate in activity programs are less likely to have discipline referrals than the general student population
- High schools that offer multiple activities meet the needs of a wide variety of the student population
- High school activities are fun!

Students Now Citizens Forever

ABOUT THIS EVENT

Day on the Hill is an opportunity for board members to interact with other elected officials, share with them the needs of our students and employees, and work with them to accomplish our shared goal of improved achievement for all students. It also provides a chance to learn more about how to best work with your local legislators to obtain positive results while following the ethics laws in Idaho. This is your opportunity, as a school board member, to work with ISBA in reaching out to the Idaho State Legislature to preserve local governance while improving education across the State.

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Agenda

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

Lincoln Auditorium, Idaho State Capitol Building

8:00 AM - 4:45 PM

Registration Open / Lincoln Auditorium

8:15 AM - 9:00 AM

Update on Top Education Issues

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Committee or Office Visits

10:00 AM - 11:45 AM

Legislative Briefings

NOON - 1:15 PM - Lunch on your own

1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Greetings from Constitutional Officers & Legislators

3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Senate Education Committee Meeting

4:45 PM - 5:45 PM

WORKSHOP: Continuous Improvement – Literacy
(additional fee) - Grove Hotel / River Fork Room

6:00 PM - Dinner on your own

(3rd floor)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026

The Grove Hotel & Lincoln Auditorium

7:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Registration Open

- The Grove Hotel, Landing (2nd Floor)

7:00 AM - 8:30 AM - Breakfast & Keynote Speaker

- The Grove Hotel / Ballroom

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

House Education Committee Meeting

- Idaho Capitol Building, Lincoln Auditorium WW02

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Floor Proceedings / Legislator Visits

- Idaho Capitol Building, Lincoln Auditorium WW02

NOON - 1:15 PM

Legislative Luncheon

- The Grove Hotel / Ballroom

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

WORKSHOP: Overseeing Budget Reductions
(included in registration)

- The Grove Hotel / Ballroom

2:45 PM - Adjourn

TRANSPORTATION:

The distance between the Grove Hotel and the Capitol Building is 5 blocks. If you are unable to walk this distance, please plan to make transportation arrangements.

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- | Regulatory Compliance



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- | Attendance Tracking
- | SIS Administration
- | Internal Staff Training
- | Data Management



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115,000+
STUDENTS

MANAGING
\$2 BILLION
IN REVENUE

MONDAY - 2/16/26

Update on Top Education Issues

🕒 8:15 AM - 9:00 AM

📅 Monday, February 16

📍 Lincoln Auditorium, Idaho State Capitol Building

Stay informed on the most pressing education issues facing Idaho schools during the current legislative session. This session will provide a current overview of key bills, policy discussions, and emerging trends impacting school districts and charter schools. Participants will gain timely insights to better engage with legislators and advocate effectively on behalf of their students, schools, and communities.

Committee or Office Visits

🕒 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

📅 Monday, February 16

📍 Lincoln Auditorium, Idaho State Capitol Building

Participants will have the opportunity to engage directly in the legislative process by meeting with lawmakers in their offices or observing legislative committee meetings. This experience offers valuable insight into how education policy is discussed, shaped, and decided, while allowing attendees to build relationships with legislators and better understand the perspectives influencing public education in Idaho. ISBA staff are available to direct you to the appropriate committee room or office location.

Legislative Briefings

🕒 10:00 AM - 11:45 AM

📅 Monday, February 16

📍 Lincoln Auditorium, Idaho State Capitol Building

Speakers will include:

- *Speaker of the House Mike Moyle*
- *Senator James W. "Jim" Woodard*
- *Representative James Petzke*
- *Senator James D. Ruchti*
- *Representative Monica C. Church*
- *Senator Kevin Cook*
- *Representative Ben G. Fuhrman*
- *Representative Soñia R. Galaviz*

These briefings will provide timely updates on key education-related legislation and the status of bills moving through the Legislature. Attendees will hear directly from legislative leaders, gaining essential context and talking points to support informed conversations with policymakers throughout the day.

Greetings from Constitutional Officers & Legislators

🕒 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

📅 Monday, February 16

📍 Lincoln Auditorium, Idaho State Capitol Building

Speakers will include:

- President Pro Tempore Kelly Arthur Anthon
- Governor Brad Little (invited)
- Lt. Governor Scott Bedke
- Secretary of State Phil McGrane
- Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield

Attendees will hear welcome remarks and brief updates from Idaho constitutional officers, legislative leadership, and other key lawmakers, offering insight into their current priorities and perspectives impacting public education. This session provides a valuable opportunity to hear directly from state leaders and set the stage for the day's legislative discussions and activities.

WORKSHOP: Continuous Improvement – Literacy

🕒 4:45 PM - 5:45 PM

📅 Monday, February 16

📍 Grove Hotel / River Fork Room / 3rd floor

Presented by:



Dr. Phil Gore
Chief Learning Officer,
Idaho School Boards Association

This workshop focuses on the school board's role of establishing and monitoring measurable goals for K-3 Literacy. The workshop meets the requirements for Idaho code 33-1809, which requires all newly elected or appointed school board members to participate in at least one board member orientation on these topics.

Thank you to our Sponsors!



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**CHARTER
IMPACT**

TUESDAY - 2/17/26

BREAKFAST KEYNOTE: What's Going Right in Idaho Public Education

🕒 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM

📅 Tuesday, February 17

📍 The Grove Hotel / Ballroom

Alexis Morgan will highlight the successes, innovations, and positive momentum occurring in Idaho's public education system. Drawing on real examples from across the state, this session will celebrate what is working well in our schools and provide a balanced, forward-looking perspective to inform and energize education leaders and policymakers.

Presented by:



Alexis Morgan

*Host of The Purple Zone Podcast &
Director of Public Policy for Idaho PTA*

Floor Proceedings / Legislator Visits

🕒 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

📅 Tuesday, February 17

📍 Lincoln Auditorium, Idaho State Capitol Building

Attendees will have the opportunity to observe legislative floor proceedings firsthand or meet with lawmakers to discuss education issues. This session provides insight into the legislative process in action, offering a unique perspective on how decisions are made and the opportunity to engage directly with Idaho's policymakers.

WORKSHOP: Overseeing Budget Reductions

🕒 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

📅 Tuesday, February 17

📍 Grove Hotel / Ballroom

Attendees will hear panel members discuss best practices for boards in overseeing budget reductions. The audience will have the opportunity to submit questions to the panel.

Panel Members:

Chris James

*Cassia County School District
Director of Fiscal Affairs*

Anne Ritter

*Meridian Medical Arts Charter High School
Board Member*

Dr. Scott Woolstenhulme

*Bonneville Joint School District
Superintendent*

MAKE CONNECTIONS

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

Legislative Luncheon:

🕒 12:00 PM - 1:15 PM

📅 Tuesday, February 17

📍 The Grove Hotel • Ballroom (2nd floor)

The more you know about a legislator or official, the more effective you can be in communicating the public education message and ensuring a successful outcome from your advocacy efforts. Use the Advocacy Toolkit on pages 28 - 35 to guide your conversation.

Some legislators may have more influence than others as they sit on more relevant committees, are members of the governing body's power structure or leadership, or are considered experts in a particular area. When deciding which legislators to approach, always ask yourself, "who can make or break this piece of legislation"?

Policymakers who hold appointments on critical committees should be targeted first. After all, if your bill doesn't make it out of committee, it will never be voted on. Committees that often consider issues that affect public education include the JFAC, Education, Health & Welfare, and Tax committees.

How to Contact Your Legislators:

Capitol Mail

(Legislator's Name)

Idaho State Legislature

State Capitol Building

P.O. Box 83720

Boise, ID

83720-0038 (House)

83720-0081 (Senate)

Legislative Information Center

Tel: (208) 332-1000 or (800) 626-0471

Fax: (208) 334-5397

Hearing Impaired: (800) 626-0471

Email: idleginfo@lso.idaho.gov

NOTE: All mail, email, and faxes must contain your name and address to be processed.

MY LEGISLATORS ARE:

(see map on page 11)



2025 Legislative Luncheon



SAVE THE DATE ISBA Annual Convention

Nov. 4-6, 2026 • Boise Centre

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

MONDAY:

Senate Education Committee Meeting:

🕒 3:00 PM *

📅 Monday, February 16

📍 Idaho Capitol Building • Lincoln Auditorium WW02 *

*Time or location may change to accommodate the Committee's agenda.

➡ Find the agenda for this meeting at:
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/agenda/>

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chair Dave Lent (R)

Vice Chair Kevin Cook (R)

Sen. James W. Woodward (R)

Sen. Tammy Nichols (R)

Sen. Cindy J. Carlson (R)

Sen. Van T. Burtenshaw (R)

Sen. Christy Zito (R)

Sen. Janie Ward-Engelking (D)

Sen. Carrie Semmelroth (D)

Secretary

Lauren Young

• (208) 332-1321

• sedu@senate.idaho.gov

• Room WW39

Regular Meetings

• Room WW55

• Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs

• 3:00 PM



TUESDAY:

House Education Committee Meeting:

🕒 9:00 AM *

📅 Tuesday, February 17

📍 Idaho Capitol Building • Lincoln Auditorium WW02 *

*Time or location may change to accommodate the Committee's agenda.

➡ Find the agenda for this meeting at:
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/agenda/>

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chair Dale R. Hawkins (R)

Vice Chair Clay Handy (R)

Rep. Ron Mendive (R)

Rep. Barbara Ehardt (R)

Rep. Tony Wisniewski (R)

Rep. Dan Garner (R)

Rep. Jack Nelsen (R)

Rep. Mark Sauter (R)

Rep. Kent A. Marmon (R)

Rep. Douglas T. Pickett (R)

Rep. Clint Hostetler (R)

Rep. Michael Leman Veile (R)

Rep. Soñia R. Galaviz (D)

Rep. Chris Mathias (D)

Secretary

Amy Bengtzen

• (208) 332-1148

• hedu@house.idaho.gov

• Room EW49

Regular Meetings

• Room EW41

• Daily / 9:00 AM

Legend

S - Senator
R - Representative
(D) Democrat
(R) Republican

10 State Legislative District Boundary
10 State Legislative District Number
1st Congressional District
2nd Congressional District
County Boundary

IDAHO STATE LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS

68th IDAHO STATE LEGISLATURE SECOND REGULAR SESSION

SESSION BEGINS
JANUARY 12, 2026

1 S - Jim Woodward (R) R - Mark Sauter (R) R - Cornel Rasor (R) 2 S - Phil Hart (R) R - Heather Scott (R) R - Dale Hawkins (R) 3 S - Doug Okuniewicz (R) R - Vito Barbieri (R) R - Jordan Redman (R) 4 S - Ben Toews (R) R - Joe Alfieri (R) R - Elaine Price (R) 5 S - Carl Bjerke (R) R - Ron Mendive (R) R - Tony Wisniewski (R) 6 S - Dan Foreman (R) R - Lori McCann (R) R - Brandon Mitchell (R) 7 S - Cindy Carlson (R) R - Kyle Harris (R) R - Charlie Shepherd (R)	8 S - Christy Zito (R) R - Rob Beiswenger (R) R - Faye Thompson (R) 9 S - Brandon Shippy (R) R - John Shirts (R) R - Judy Boyle (R) 10 S - Tammy Nichols (R) R - Mike Moyle (R) R - Bruce Skaug (R) 11 S - Camille Blaylock (R) R - Kent Marmon (R) R - Lucas Cayler (R) 12 S - Ben Adams (R) R - Jeff Cornilles (R) R - Jaron Crane (R) 13 S - Brian Lenney (R) R - Brent Crane (R) R - Steve Tanner (R) 14 S - C. Scott Grow (R) R - Edward "Ted" Hill (R) R - Josh Tanner (R) 15 S - Codi Galloway (R) R - Steve Berch (D) R - Dori Healey (R) 16 S - Ali Rabe (D) R - Soñia Galaviz (D) R - Anne Henderson Haws (D) 17 S - Carrie Semmelroth (D) R - John Gannon (D) R - Megan Egbert (D)	18 S - Janie Ward-Engelking (D) R - Ilana Rubel (D) R - Brooke Green (D) 19 S - Melissa Wintrow (D) R - Monica Church (D) R - Chris Mathias (D) 20 S - Josh Keyser (R) R - Joe Palmer (R) R - James Holtzclaw (R) 21 S - Treg Bernt (R) R - James Petzke (R) R - Jeff Ehlers (R) 22 S - Lori Den Hartog (R) R - John Vander Woude (R) R - Jason Monks (R) 23 S - Todd Lakey (R) R - Chris Bruce (R) R - Shawn Dygert (R) 24 S - Glenneda Zuiderveld (R) R - Clint Hostetler (R) R - Steve Miller (R) 25 S - Josh Kohl (R) R - Don Hall (R) R - David Leavitt (R) 26 S - Ron Taylor (D) R - Mike Pohanka (R) R - Jack Nelsen (R) 27 S - Kelly Anthon (R) R - Douglas Pickett (R) R - Clay Handy (R) 28 S - Jim Guthrie (R) R - Richard Cheatum (R) R - Dan Garner (R) 29 S - James Ruchti (D) R - Dustin Manwaring (R) R - Tanya Burgoyne (R) 30 S - Julie VanOrden (R) R - David Cannon (R) R - Ben Fuhrman (R) 31 S - Van Burtenshaw (R) R - Jerald Raymond (R) R - Rod Furniss (R) 32 S - Kevin Cook (R) R - Stephanie Mickelsen (R) R - Erin Bingham (R) 33 S - David Lent (R) R - Barbara Ehardt (R) R - Marco Erickson (R) 34 S - Doug Ricks (R) R - Jon Weber (R) R - Britt Raybould (R) 35 S - Mark Harris (R) R - Michael Veile (R) R - Josh Wheeler (R)
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Prepared by Legislative Services Office
Revised January 14, 2026



TOP 10 BENEFITS OF ISBA MEMBERSHIP

A list of some of the most popular services provided by ISBA. For a complete list, contact ISBA.

1. COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION & SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Year-round, the ISBA advocacy staff works with legislators, the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Governor's office, and other education stakeholders in navigating public education topics. To advocate for school districts and charter schools, the ISBA staff and Government Affairs Committee are involved in day-to-day activities during the legislative session. To stay up to date on what's happening during the legislative session, be sure to read our weekly Capitol Notes.

2. INSURANCE

ISBA members have the opportunity to participate in the ISBA Insurance Plan which is provided through Moreton & Company. The ISBA Insurance Plan helps school districts and charter schools meet their insurance and risk management challenges. Property, liability, and travel insurance is offered along with dividends based upon the claims experience of the group.

3. BOARD DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

ISBA provides school board members with information, training, and the support needed to serve their district or charter well. We have a variety of free-to-members and reduced-fee webinars and workshops throughout the year. Board members are encouraged to participate in ongoing board development so they continue to gain knowledge and skills that can be applied to their school board service. We enjoy tailoring workshops to the needs of local boards and providing the learning opportunities you're looking for.

4. POLICY & LEGAL SERVICES

With ongoing changes in state and federal legislation, court decisions, and emerging issues, school policies need ongoing updates. ISBA offers a subscription-based service —our Policy Update Service — to help member districts and charter schools stay current with these developments. Also, ISBA membership includes four hours of pre-paid legal services through Anderson Julian & Hull each year.

5. EVENTS

ISBA provides numerous educational and networking opportunities at our events to provide school board members with tools they need to succeed. Those events include the Annual Convention, Day on the Hill, Leadership Institute, Region Meetings, State Required Literacy Intervention Workshop, Get on Board Webinars, Policy Update Webinars, and clerk trainings.

6. PUBLICATIONS

Members can stay up to date on hot topics and important information through various resources. Some of these resources include the SLATE magazine, Capitol Notes, Clerk's Manual, Salary Schedule, and Election Timeline.

7. SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

ISBA offers professional services to member school boards seeking to fill a superintendent or administrator vacancy. School boards that use this service not only get the skills and experience of the search team, they can also draw upon ISBA's other in-house resources such as legal advice, research data, promotional materials, and training. ISBA has assisted with over 80 superintendent searches since the inception of the program.

8. ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP WITH EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

ISBA frequently engages and meets with stakeholders in support of ISBA members. Some of these stakeholders include the Idaho Association of School Administrators, Idaho Rural Education Association, Idaho Digital Learning Alliance, Idaho Education Association, the Governor's Office, State Board of Education, State Department of Education, Idaho Charter School Commission, and more. During the legislative session, it's often on advocacy topics. However, we meet frequently and communicate throughout the year on issues and help unite our resources to support our school districts and charter schools.

9. LABOR RELATIONS

ISBA produces labor relation resources each year including the Job Descriptions Manual, Salary Schedule, Master Agreements site, and Job Center.

10. OPPORTUNITY TO CONTACT ISBA WITH QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

One of the most important and most-used services is the opportunity to contact ISBA staff when members have questions or need information. The staff receives questions from board members, superintendents, clerks, and others on a variety of topics. Often, we answer these on a case-by-case basis, but we also issue memorandums on urgent or popular topics.



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POLICY BRIEF

Refining Open Enrollment: Balancing Parental Choice with the Realities of Local Capacity



ISSUE

While Idaho's 2023 open enrollment revisions successfully expanded parent choice, the current statutes are overly restrictive for school districts. By recognizing only grade-level enrollment as a basis for denying transfers, the law prevents districts from considering physical building capacity, staffing realities, and specialized program limits (such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) or Special Ed).

Because maintaining safe and effective learning environments is paramount, districts need the authority to define capacity based on operational constraints of their facilities and programs.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill 1125 (2023) modified Idaho Code §§ 33-1402 and 33-1403, requiring districts to accept open enrollment students unless a narrow exception—grade-level capacity—is met. Under Idaho Code § 33-1409, "grade-level capacity" is defined simply as the maximum enrollment for each grade level, often calculated by the size of the physical space in the core classroom. Districts are required to report these "available seats" four times per year.

Specialized programs like CTE and Special Ed have unique staffing and space requirements that simple grade-level counts do not capture. Building-level capacity constraints (fire code, cafeteria limits, staffing ratios) can exist even when a single grade level's core classroom has available seats.

Additionally, special programs often have legal, age, proficiency, or skill-based requirements for student eligibility—requirements districts must verify to ensure proper placement and compliance with state and federal law.

Locally elected boards are responsible for ensuring safe capacity, fiscal stewardship, and equitable access to district programs while honoring Idaho's long-standing tradition of local control and community-centered governance.

CONCERNS

Lack of flexibility in capacity determinations:

Current law prevents districts from considering building-wide capacity (like hallways and common areas) or specialized program limits. This creates legitimate risks related to student safety, fire code compliance, and staffing shortages.

Program integrity at risk: Without the ability to set program-specific limits, districts may be forced to over-enroll specialized tracks or programs. This can lead to diluted instruction or requiring programs to accept students whose educational needs do not align with the purpose and intent of the program.

Operational challenges for specialty and online programs: Programs like CTE, special education, and district-run online schools rely on unique staffing ratios and accreditation standards. These models cannot be scaled by simple grade-level counts without compromising their legal and functional requirements.

Potential restrictions on district-run online schools:

Emerging policy proposals could restrict the ability of districts to offer online options. This reduces parent choice, undermines the local control, and limits the ability to serve students who thrive in a virtual environment.

Public accountability concerns: Restricting district control in open enrollment—while allowing private or alternative providers to expand—weakens governance transparency and shifts students away from locally accountable, elected boards.

CONCERNS CONTINUED...

Conflict with parent choice: Parents expect options that truly meet their child's specific needs, such as specialized programs and online flexibility. Rigid capacity rules may inadvertently force districts to close doors to these high-demand programs once a "soft" grade-level cap is reached, ultimately limiting the parental choice the law intended to expand.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

First, expand allowable capacity considerations in Idaho Code to include:

1. **Building Capacity:** Physical limits defined by fire code, lunchroom turnover, and hallway safety.
2. **Special Program Capacity:** Sustainable limits for CTE, Gifted & Talented, Special Education, and district-run online programs.
3. **Operational Requirements:** Staffing ratios and accreditation standards that ensure program quality.
4. **Transparency for Parents:** Allow districts to report and publicly post both building and program capacity to ensure transparency and set clear expectations for families.

Additionally, Modify Idaho Code to:

1. **Permit districts to consider program-specific enrollment requirements** (such as prerequisite skills or specialized staffing) when reviewing open enrollment applications.
2. **Add an exception** allowing districts to transfer students to another school within the district when a building reaches its safety or operational capacity, provided parents are notified.
3. **Protect the integrity of district-run online schools** by ensuring they remain accessible and sustainable under the oversight of locally elected boards.

HERE'S WHY

Safety and Compliance: Grade-level counts do not account for the "shared spaces" of a school. Building-level capacity protects your district from liability regarding fire codes, supervision ratios, and lunchroom overcrowding.

True school choice relies on giving local boards the tools to maintain safe, sustainable, and high-quality learning environments.



Program Viability: Specialized programs rely on specific equipment and staffing. Without the ability to cap these programs, districts risk legal consequences and diluting the quality of instruction.

Prioritizing Resident Students: Local taxpayers fund local facilities. These protections ensure that resident students are not "crowded out" of high-demand local programs by out-of-district transfers.

Strengthening Parent Choice: Choice is only meaningful if the options are high-quality. A functional capacity framework preserves the integrity of the programs parents are seeking.

Restoring Local Governance: As elected officials, school board members are directly accountable to their community. This solution restores their authority to make enrollment decisions that reflect local district priorities and budgets.

Transparency for Families: Clear, posted capacity limits reduce disputes and help families make informed decisions about their child's education.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

Idaho's open enrollment system is strengthened when local school boards have the tools to make responsible, student-centered capacity decisions. By updating Idaho Code to include building and program-level realities, we protect the safety, fiscal health, and program integrity of our schools.

This balanced approach preserves Idaho's commitment to parent choice while ensuring that local boards can manage their districts responsibly, sustainably, and with full accountability to their voters.

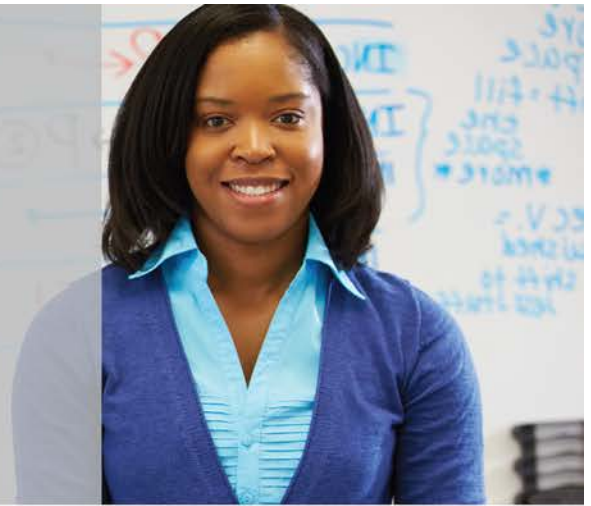
"In order to truly support parental choice, we need the tools to manage it safely."

"Parents can't make informed decisions without all the information."

"Local taxpayers expect us to prioritize local needs first."

POLICY BRIEF

Modernizing Career Ladder Placement to Recognize Diverse Instructional Experience



ISSUE

Idaho's Career Ladder was designed to reimburse districts and charter schools based on a teacher's specific placement on a performance-based salary schedule. However, current statutory language does not reflect the realities of today's educator workforce. As the state addresses a persistent teacher shortage, experienced professionals—such as former superintendents, administrators, and postsecondary faculty—are choosing not to teach in K-12 classrooms. The current model fails to recognize their diverse instructional experience and instead defaults them to entry-level placements, discouraging a vital pipeline of high-quality educators.

BACKGROUND

Evaluation Mismatch: Administrators are evaluated annually using frameworks tailored to leadership rather than the specific "Danielson" instructional framework required for Career Ladder advancement. As a result, experienced leaders returning to the classroom are often ineligible for placement on higher rungs.

The Reimbursement Gap: When a district hires a former administrator or university professor, the State often only provides reimbursement for an entry-level salary. This forces districts and charters to either offer uncompetitive wages or use local levy funds to subsidize the difference between the state allocation and the professional's actual value.

Postsecondary Experience: Idaho Code currently lacks a mechanism to fully recognize full-time, documented teaching experience from accredited colleges and universities, despite the direct relevance of curriculum planning and content expertise.

CONCERNS

Recruitment Barriers: Current barriers to appropriate placement discourage experienced professionals from entering the K-12 workforce, limiting the pool of qualified candidates.

Financial Disincentives: The discrepancy between actual expertise and state reimbursement creates an inequitable burden on local districts and charter schools that seek to hire the most qualified candidates.

Workforce Stability: Recognizing diverse experience aligns with statewide goals to strengthen retention and teacher quality. We need to ensure compensation follows expertise rather than position type.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association supports legislative changes that modernize Career Ladder placement to:

- Allow district-level administrators and superintendents to use documented prior evaluations to advance on the Career Ladder when returning to classroom roles.
- Grant full credit for documented postsecondary teaching experience from accredited institutions.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

- **"We should remove barriers to hiring qualified educators."** Modernizing the ladder allows districts and charters to recruit experienced professionals who are eager to teach but discouraged by entry-level classifications.
- **"Districts and charters should not be financially impacted for hiring the best candidate."** State reimbursement should reflect the actual expertise of the educator, rather than shifting the cost to local taxpayers.
- **"Instructional experience translates across settings."** A veteran university professor or former administrative professional brings deep content knowledge and stability to the classroom and should be compensated accordingly.
- **"This promotes fairness and retention."** Ensuring compensation reflects actual service strengthens the educator pipeline and supports student learning environments.

POLICY BRIEF

Increasing State Funding for Special Education Services in Idaho



ISSUE

Idaho's school districts and charter schools are required by law to provide specialized services to students with disabilities, yet state and federal funding consistently falls short of actual costs. This forces districts and charters to redirect general education dollars to cover mandates. As a result, educational quality is undermined for all students, and some districts and charters simply cannot remain in compliance because it is financially impossible.

BACKGROUND

The Idaho Constitution guarantees every child a "thorough and uniform" public education. However, Congress has never met its 50-year-old commitment to fund 40% of special education costs under IDEA, leaving states and local schools significantly underfunded. Districts and charters must provide costly individualized services—such as specialized instruction, technology, and staffing—that far exceed general education expenses. In the 2024-2025 school year alone, K-12 schools faced a funding gap of over \$100 million, subsidized by general funds or local property taxes.

CONCERNS

Safety Risks: Chronic underfunding leads to staffing shortages that jeopardize safety. In some cases, students have faced isolation or staff have been physically harmed because K-12 schools cannot afford appropriate accommodations.

Teacher Focus: When resources are stretched, teachers in already crowded classrooms are forced to split their focus, diluting instruction and support for every student in the room.

Increasing Local Burden: Districts and charters spend over \$100 million annually above state provisions, depleting general funds and driving up local levies.

Inequities: Wealthier districts and charters can absorb these shortfalls, while rural and smaller districts and charters face disproportionate financial strain.

Rising Costs & Outdated Models: Expenses for paraprofessionals and specialized equipment continue to rise, yet funding formulas fail to reflect these market pressures.

HERE'S WHY

Legal and Moral Obligation: Idaho schools are compelled to provide every child a meaningful education. Meeting this obligation should not come at the expense of the foundational resources provided to all Idaho students.

Fiscal Integrity: Adequate support would prevent districts and charters from having to make unsustainable trade-offs between federally mandated services and everyday operations.

Improved Outcomes: Proper funding would allow districts and charters to hire qualified professionals and provide high-quality interventions that lead to student success.

Reduced Property Tax Reliance: Increased state investment would decrease the pressure on districts to run supplemental levies.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

Idaho's current approach to special education funding strains local taxpayers and jeopardizes constitutional obligations. By modernizing the funding formula and increasing state investment, we protect general education resources, ensure safety and compliance, and safeguard the educational quality all Idaho students are entitled to.

"This is a safety issue." Staffing shortages are leading to unsafe environments where students or staff are getting hurt.

"We are forced to rob Peter to pay Paul." Every dollar we pull from the general fund to cover this \$100M gap is a dollar taken from general classrooms, increasing class sizes and splitting teacher focus.

"Compliance is becoming impossible." Without funding, we physically cannot provide the services federal law demands.

"Protect the local taxpayer." State underfunding forces us to ask our community for property tax levies just to meet basic federal mandates.

POLICY BRIEF

Maintain the Current Governance of the Idaho High School Activities Association



ISSUE

For decades, the Idaho High School Activities Association (IHSAA) has successfully managed high school sports and fine arts competitions through a board of education experts. Recently, however, there has been a concerning increase in legislative attempts to commandeer this governance structure. These efforts to replace expert-driven decision-making with political oversight threaten to undermine local control, subjecting student safety and eligibility rules to political pressure rather than competitive fairness.

BACKGROUND

Expert-Led Governance: The IHSAA is a non-profit governed by a Board of Directors comprised of superintendents, principals, athletic directors, and coaches—experts who understand the day-to-day realities of schools.

Representation: The current model ensures that policy decisions are made by the member schools themselves (both districts and charters), rather than by distant policymakers.

Legal Authority: Idaho Code affirms that local school boards have the authority to supervise extracurricular activities and contract with established entities like the IHSAA to ensure uniform standards across the state.

CONCERNS: THE RISK OF LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTION

Politicization of the Playing Field: Transferring authority to the Legislature opens the door for rules to be written based on constituent complaints or political lobbying rather than what is best for all students.

Lack of Agility: The Legislature meets for only three months a year. High school activities operate year-round. If a safety issue or eligibility dispute arises mid-season, schools need a responsive governing body, not one that requires a statute change to fix a problem.

Loss of Consistency: A "level playing field" requires a single, neutral arbiter. If the Legislature begins carving out exceptions to eligibility rules, it destroys competitive equity and creates a patchwork system that favors those with political access.

HERE'S WHY

Preserving the IHSAA's autonomy ensures that decisions regarding student activities remain:

Student-Centered: Prioritizing safety, development, and equitable access over political optics.

Fair & Uniform: Applying the same rules to a 5A school in Boise and a 1A school in rural Idaho reduces the risk of regional inequity.

Professionally Informed: Rule making must be guided by school board members, educators, and activity professionals.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

"We need to keep politics off the playing field."

Student eligibility and safety rules should be decided by educators and athletic directors, not by political committees.

"Local control means local decisions." Our current system allows schools to govern themselves through their own association. State intervention is a direct violation of local control.

"The Legislature isn't built to referee high school sports." Legislators meet for 90 days; our students compete year-round. We need a responsive, expert-led body to handle issues as they arise.

"Fairness requires a neutral arbiter." If we let politics dictate the rules, we lose the impartial standards that make competition fair for every student in Idaho.

POLICY BRIEF

Supporting Direct Flow-Through of Federal Funding to Idaho Schools



ISSUE

Idaho school districts and charter schools rely on federal funds to support essential services, including mental health supports and family resources. However, proposed changes in federal funding structures—including potential shifts if the U.S. Department of Education is dissolved—may create new administrative barriers if these changes are not streamlined.

Ensuring federal funds flow directly and efficiently to local schools is critical to maintaining high-quality, locally driven student services.

BACKGROUND

Idaho school districts and charters are responsible for meeting a broad range of student needs that extend beyond classroom instruction. Federal programs like 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and Community Schools have a successful record of supporting these services.

K-12 schools already have the infrastructure, staffing, and community relationships to deliver these programs effectively. Requiring third-party intermediaries to administer federal grants adds administrative burden, dilutes accountability, and creates delays.

If federal restructuring shifts dollars to state control without clear guardrails, we risk adding new layers of state bureaucracy on top of existing federal red tape. School boards are the governing

bodies closest to students and are best equipped to align funding with community needs.

CONCERNS

Administrative Burden: Third-party administration creates extra paperwork and fragmented communication that strain district capacity.

Cost of Bureaucracy: Increased bureaucracy is expensive; funding is diminished by the time it trickles down to the classroom.

Misalignment: Outside entities often lack understanding of local contexts, leading to programming that is less effective for students.

Inefficiency: Extra administrative layers slow the delivery of essential services, especially for programs relying on stable, timely funding.

Reduced Accountability: Direct district management ensures transparency; third-party systems dilute oversight.



Direct funding eliminates confusion, reduces administrative costs, and keeps dollars focused on student services rather than overhead.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Direct Federal Grant Flow-Through: Programs should distribute dollars directly to schools with demonstrated capacity.

Streamlined Federal Formula Funding: Formula-based funds (like IDEA) should flow to the State Board of Education and be transmitted immediately to districts and charters without additional state-level filtering.

Policy Reinforcement: Idaho's congressional and state delegations must advocate for federal structures that empower local districts and charters as the primary implementers.

HERE'S WHY

Local Capacity Exists: Idaho districts and charters have the personnel and relationships to run complex support systems—no intermediary is needed.

Efficiency: Direct funding reduces administrative costs and keeps dollars focused on students rather than overhead.

Local Educators Know Local Needs: School boards understand the specific needs of their students; keeping funding local ensures resources are used where they have the greatest impact.

Avoiding Bureaucracy: Idaho must prevent new administrative layers that slow funding or add compliance burdens.

Improved Accountability: Districts and charters are directly accountable to local voters, reinforcing trust in how federal dollars are spent.

Every layer of
bureaucracy between
funding and the
classroom is funding
taken away from the
students it is meant
to serve.



CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

Idaho's school districts and charters are best positioned to deliver federal programs that support their students. Direct flow-through of funding ensures efficiency, transparency, and alignment with local priorities. As national discussions regarding federal oversight continue, Idaho must prioritize pathways that keep resources close to the students they serve.

"Cut the middleman." Bureaucracy is expensive. Every layer we add between the Feds and the school is money wasted on overhead instead of student services.

"Local education leaders know best." Decisions should be made by the people who know the needs of their students, not by third-party intermediaries.

"We are already doing the work." Districts and charters have the infrastructure and the staff. We don't need help managing the money; we just need the money to reach us efficiently.

"Keep it transparent." Direct funding means direct accountability to local voters. Third-party systems can make it difficult to see where the money actually goes.

POLICY BRIEF

Understanding K-12 Funding Formula Principles

ISSUE

The 2019 Legislature defined a Student-Based Funding Formula (HB 293) but never implemented it. Consequently, Idaho relies on outdated mechanisms that create disparities between district and charter schools, inequitably burden taxpayers, and fail to adequately support student services.

HERE'S WHY

To ensure future legislative proposals are effective, we must establish a clear standard against which all funding formula ideas can be evaluated. These guiding principles aim to address the deficiencies in the current system to ensure fairness, transparency, and adequacy for all students.

BACKGROUND

Constitutional Mandate: The Idaho Constitution requires a "general, uniform, and thorough system of public, free common schools".

Charter Inequity: Charter schools are statutorily prohibited from levying taxes, leaving them without access to the funding streams that districts rely on.

No Facility Funding: Currently, the Legislature allocates zero state funds for the construction and maintenance of school facilities.

Result: These practices have led to an uneven, incomplete, and inequitable public school system.

CONCERNS

Teacher Shortage & Flight: Inadequate funding leads to uncompetitive wages, forcing talented educators to leave the profession or move to neighboring states, exacerbating Idaho's teacher shortage.

Unsustainability: The current funding model is not sustainable. It forces school boards into a reactionary stance, making it impossible to create strategic, long-term plans for student success.

Student Needs: The existing model fails to address the specific, high-cost needs of diverse student populations, regardless of whether statewide enrollment trends are flat or fluctuating.

Safety Risks: The absence of dedicated facility support impacts the physical safety and quality of learning environments.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association resolves to collaborate with the Legislature to adopt a funding formula built upon the following guiding principles:

Predictability, Stability, & Sustainability: The formula must ensure the ability to accurately budget for future years without abrupt changes, allowing districts and charters to plan for the long term.

Adequacy: Provide sufficient funding to cover essential needs, competitive wages that retain staff, and regular inflation adjustments.

Transparency: Funding sources and expenditure details must be clearly outlined and easily understood by all stakeholders, including taxpayers.

Constitutional Duty: The formula must fully meet the State's duty required by Article IX, Section 1 of the Idaho Constitution.

Accountability: Funding should be tied to documented Local Education Agency (LEA) goals, ensuring consistency in requirements for all recipients of public funding.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

"We cannot retain great teachers with unpredictable funding." To solve the teacher shortage, we need a funding model that guarantees competitive wages and sustainability.

"Every student deserves a thorough education, regardless of their zip code." Whether in a charter school or a rural district, state funding must be uniform and adequate to meet diverse student needs.

"We need to finish what was started in 2019." The legislature defined a new model years ago; it is time to implement a formula based on predictability, transparency, and adequacy.

POLICY BRIEF

Identifying New and Sustainable Revenue Sources for Idaho's Public Schools: Tax on ALL Nicotine Products and Capital Gains for Non-residents

ISSUE

Diversifying funding streams to benefit public education benefits taxpayers and students alike. Idaho's public schools face significant funding pressures, yet the State maintains outdated tax policies that leave millions of dollars in potential revenue on the table. By modernizing nicotine taxation to include vaping products and closing the capital gains exemption for non-residents, Idaho can secure a stable, sustainable revenue source for education without increasing the tax burden on Idaho families.

BACKGROUND

The 1974 Loophole: Idaho's tobacco tax statutes have not been updated since 1974. Vapes, e-cigarettes, and nicotine pouches are subject to sales tax, but currently users do not pay a state excise, or "sin", tax. This distinction is critical because "sin" taxes on alcohol and tobacco products are a primary revenue source for public education. As these products are now the dominant choice among nicotine users it's essential that we update the statutes to reflect the current market.

Youth Susceptibility: This lack of taxation ignores a public health crisis. Recent data indicates that approximately one in five Idaho teens vapes regularly, a rate significantly higher than the national average. While traditional cigarette smoking among youth has plummeted, the use of high-nicotine vaping products has exploded, yet the sale of these products contributes nothing to the state's prevention or education efforts.

Subsidizing Other States: Idaho currently grants a 60% capital gains deduction to residents and non-residents alike. When out-of-state investors sell Idaho property, they often pay the full tax rate on that gain to their home state.

Lost Revenue: By maintaining this exemption for non-residents, Idaho is effectively donating tax revenue to other states rather than retaining that wealth to support Idaho schools and communities. This exemption should be reserved for those who are contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and tax base.

IMPACT

Common Sense Modernization: Taxing all nicotine products equally is a matter of basic fairness. It closes a glaring loophole that allows dangerous, addictive products to be sold tax-free simply because the law hasn't kept up with technology.

Funding Prevention: Revenue from these products would provide critical resources for Safe and Drug-Free Schools programs, helping districts combat the very addiction these products cause.

Idaho Value for Idahoans: Restricting the capital gains deduction to residents ensures that tax breaks are reserved for those who live, work, and contribute to Idaho's economy.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association supports responsible tax modernization that:

Updates statutory definitions to include electronic smoking devices, vapes, and nicotine pouches in the tobacco tax code.

Limits the 60% capital gains deduction to Idaho residents only, redirecting the captured revenue from non-residents to K-12 public education.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

"It is common sense to tax vapes the same as cigarettes." There is no logical reason why a pack of cigarettes should be subject to excise tax while a high-nicotine vape pod is not. We must close this 50-year-old loophole.

"Keep Idaho dollars in Idaho." When we give tax breaks to out-of-state investors, that money often just goes to other state governments. We should capture that revenue to fund our own schools.

"The teen vaping epidemic requires resources to fight." One in five Idaho teens is vaping. We need this revenue to fund cessation and prevention programs in our schools.

"Diversify revenue without raising taxes on Idaho families." These proposals generate sustainable funding by modernizing the code and ensuring non-residents pay their fair share, protecting Idaho families from tax hikes.



POLICY BRIEF

Opposing Further Diversion of Public Funds to Private Schools



ISSUE

In 2025, Idaho enacted a voucher program allocating up to \$50 million annually in public funds to private education despite the fact Idaho public schools are funded at one of the lowest levels in the nation. Further, proposals are now emerging to lift this cap, expand tax credits, and even amend the Idaho Constitution (repealing the "Blaine Amendment") to allow direct public financing of religious and private schools. These expansions threaten to drain essential resources from the constitutionally mandated system that educates over 90% of Idaho's children.

BACKGROUND

The Accountability Gap: The 2025 program created a public subsidy for private tuition with zero mandates for academic standards, state testing, or public financial reporting. In contrast, public districts and charters are subject to strict oversight, graduation standards, and financial transparency.

Existing Choice: Idaho families already enjoy extensive school choice through open enrollment, public charter schools, magnet programs, and career-technical academies.

Lessons from Other States: Evidence from states like Arizona and Florida shows that voucher programs balloon in cost, often subsidizing families who were already paying for private school rather than creating new opportunities for low-income students.

CONCERNS

The Rural Subsidy: Idaho private schools are concentrated in urban centers. Expanding vouchers forces rural taxpayers to subsidize private schools in cities that their own children do not have access to.

Fiscal Irresponsibility: Idaho is facing massive budget shortfalls. Creating an expansive entitlement program for private education creates additional pressure on the General Fund, inevitably leading to "holdbacks" or cuts for public schools.

Inequitable Access: Unlike public schools, private schools can deny admission based on disability, religion,

or academic history. Vouchers transfer public tax dollars to institutions that are not required to serve every member of the public.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The Idaho School Boards Association opposes any expansion of public funding for private or parochial schools—including tuition tax credits, vouchers, or constitutional amendments. ISBA further supports the repeal of the existing voucher program to protect public school solvency.

CONCLUSION AND TALKING POINTS

"Public dollars demand public accountability." We should not send taxpayer money to schools that do not have to follow state standards, administer state tests, or open their books to the public.

"We cannot afford two separate school systems."

With public schools already facing tight budgets, we cannot afford to siphon millions of dollars into a parallel private system.

"Rural Idaho shouldn't pay for private schools they don't have access to." Vouchers take tax dollars from rural communities and send them to urban private schools, leaving rural students with less funding and no new options.

"Idaho already has school choice." We support choice through our robust system of charters and open enrollment—options that are accountable to taxpayers and open to all students.

Rural taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize private schools in cities that their own children cannot attend.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO TESTIFY BEFORE A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE?

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO KNOW.

Committee hearings provide the opportunity for individuals interested in a particular bill to testify about the proposed legislation. Committee hearings follow the guidelines and protocol outlined below. Legislators want to hear what you have to say, and they greatly appreciate the input and assistance you provide.

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE HEARING

Find out when and where your bill(s) will be heard. You may do so by contacting the Legislative Information Center (208-332-1000) or by checking the legislative website at www.legislature.idaho.gov for daily committee agendas when the Legislature is in session.

Read the bill and carefully plan your testimony. The bills are available online, arranged numerically and by topic, at: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2026/legislation/>

You will be more effective getting your message across if you have prepared your testimony in writing for distribution to committee members. You can then orally summarize your points to conserve time.

AT THE COMMITTEE HEARING

Be early and be prepared to wait. Many committees meet upon adjournment of the House or Senate, which means that you may have to wait for legislators to finish their business on the floor.

The chair will announce when a particular bill is coming before the committee for consideration and the bill's sponsor is the first to speak. After testimony from the sponsor, the chair will ask to hear from those who have indicated on the sign-up sheet that they wish to testify about the particular bill.

Begin your testimony by addressing the chair and committee members. State your name, address, who you represent if you are testifying on behalf of a group, and why you are there. For example: "Mr. (or Madam) Chair, members of the committee, my name is Pat Q. Public and I'm from Emmett. I am in favor of this bill because..."

Be prepared to answer questions from legislators. Respond to questions as best you can and don't be embarrassed if you do not have a specific answer. When answering a question, always address your answer through the chair: "Mr. (or Madam) Chair, and Representative Smith, I appreciate your question..."

Be courteous and brief, and try not to repeat testimony offered by previous speakers. Don't be offended if legislators come and go during a meeting. They have other commitments including the need, at times, to present information in other committee hearings occurring simultaneously.

AFTER YOU TESTIFY

Usually the committee will vote on the bill immediately following the hearing; however, sometimes the vote is postponed to give proponents and opponents time to work out a compromise, or if committee members want more information, or time to consider the legislation.

If the vote on your bill is postponed and the Chair does not announce a date for further consideration, check back with the committee secretary about future scheduling. You are welcome to stay after the discussion on your bill and listen until the end of the committee meeting.

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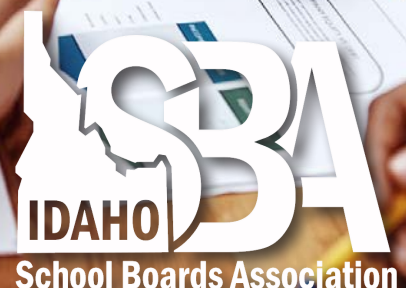
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ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

CHAMPION CHANGE:
YOUR CALL TO ACTION



CHAMPIONING CHANGE:

Your Call to Action

This **ADVOCACY TOOLKIT** is intended to complement the board and board member efforts by providing a guide to lobbying local, state, and federal officials on behalf of Idaho's public schools and students.

WHY ADVOCATE?

Local boards of education are integral to the political system in Idaho, because school board members are closest to the education and future of the young people in their communities. As such, board members should see themselves as the people making the decisions instead of trying to influence them.

There are a number of reasons why school board members cannot function effectively if they ignore their role in advocacy. Under Idaho law, school boards "govern" local schools. School boards do not have "self-executing" powers, and in fact, their authority is granted by the Idaho Legislature.

For example, school boards do not have independent authority to raise revenue unless granted by local tax levies. The Idaho Legislature decides how schools are funded – and how much – including what kinds of taxes or fees school boards can impose. The Legislature may also impose controls on school district budgets and spending through local or statewide legislation.

All state and federal laws and regulations have an impact on the governance and operations of school districts and public charter schools, and a majority of it is decided by your Legislature. Just a few of the areas affected include employee rights and benefits, building and transportation safety codes, student and staff rights, and investment and accounting practices. The primary responsibility of schools is to educate students, but neither schools nor the education of Idaho's children exist in a vacuum.

Other institutions also touch the lives of the children. Local governments deal with the safety of a child's walk to school or provide health services. Other agencies deal with children whose families cannot or will not support them. Children who are disadvantaged or may need help that the school alone cannot provide.

In each of these cases, the ability of school boards to carry out their mission is affected by decisions made at other levels of government. School board advocacy means working to influence those decisions in the interest of local and statewide education.

DOES ADVOCACY BY BOARD MEMBERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

YES, IT DOES! Board members are uniquely positioned to educate and influence the legislative process.

- Board members can provide information about education policy from a local perspective.
- As the policy makers for school districts, board members play an integral role in conjunction with state and congressional policymakers and the

state board to carry out the mission of educating all students.

- Through ISBA, the unity of local school boards lends strength to our voice in the legislative process, ensuring that the Idaho Governor, Idaho Legislature, Idaho State Board of Education, and congressional delegation turn to ISBA to help determine what is best for Idaho's public schools.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

KEEP IT SIMPLE - It's possible to provide a clear explanation and express a position using only a few sentences.

KEEP IT LOCAL - Highlight the pros or cons of legislation on your local school system.

USE THE TOOL THAT WORKS FOR YOU - Call, write a letter, email, or schedule a meeting.

SPEAK UP TO BE HEARD ON KEY PUBLIC EDUCATION ISSUES - Actions and inactions count.

SET PRIORITIES - When everything is important, nothing is important.

BE A TEAM PLAYER - Be sure that your advocacy efforts conform to your local board's policies and protocols.

JOIN FORCES - Remind legislators of any association, coalition, or other stakeholder support for your position.

BE AN EDUCATOR - Invite elected officials to visit local schools to showcase successful programs.

STATE THE POSITIVE - Be enthusiastic and courteous. In politics, there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies.

SAY THANK YOU - Remember to thank each of the elected officials for their time and their position or action on issues where there is agreement.

FOLLOW UP - Be sure to provide any information offered or requested.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES - Your fellow board members, boards, ISBA, and our allies can benefit from what you've learned.

Relax! Effective advocates do not need to be polished, professional lobbyists.

ADVOCACY TOOLS

All professionals have "tools of the trade" that assist in doing the work required. Board members as advocates should become well acquainted with the tools available to prepare and assist them in speaking and writing effectively on behalf of public education.

Advocacy tools include items such as:

- Talking points
- Written and oral testimony
- Correspondence (mail or email)
- Meetings (formal or impromptu)
- Social media interactions



SAMPLE: Letter

Dear Representative John Doe,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Sam Sample, and I am a board member in the ID Town School District. As a concerned stakeholder in our local education system, I am writing to bring your attention to the critical need for increased funding for our schools.

Our school district plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of our community by providing quality education to our children. However, we are currently facing significant challenges due to limited financial resources. Our schools are struggling to meet the growing needs of our students and maintain the high standards we all aspire to achieve.

I am reaching out to you as a trusted representative to request your support in advocating for increased funding for education at the state level. Investing in education is an investment in the future of our community and our state. Adequate funding is essential to ensure that our schools have the resources they need to provide a well-rounded education that prepares students for success.

Specifically, I urge you to champion the following priorities:

1. **Increase in Overall Funding:** Advocate for a substantial increase in funding for K-12 education to address the current funding gaps and provide schools with the resources they need to excel.
2. **Teacher Salaries and Professional Development:** Support initiatives that aim to improve teacher salaries and provide opportunities for ongoing professional development. A well-compensated and highly qualified teaching staff is crucial for the success of our students.
3. **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Advocate for investments in school infrastructure and technology to ensure that our classrooms are equipped with the latest tools and resources that enhance the learning experience.
4. **Special Education Funding:** Ensure that funding for special education programs is sufficient to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities and provide them with the support they require.

I understand the challenges and competing priorities faced by our legislators, but I believe that a strong education system is the foundation for a thriving community. Your support in securing adequate funding for our schools will have a lasting impact on the lives of our students and the future of our community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this crucial matter. I look forward to hearing about the actions you take to support our schools and ensure that every child in our community receives a high-quality education.

Sincerely,

Sam Sample
1234 Sample Ln.
ssample@example.com
208-123-4567

Dear Senator John Doe,

I'm Sam Sample, a school board member in ID Town School District. Our schools, vital to shaping our community's future, face financial challenges impacting our students' education.

As a trusted representative, I urge your support in advocating for increased state-level education funding. Adequate resources are essential for a well-rounded education, preparing students for success.

Priorities include:

- **Increase Overall Funding:** Address current gaps to ensure excellence in K-12 education.
- **Teacher Salaries and Development:** Support initiatives for competitive salaries and ongoing professional growth.
- **Infrastructure and Tech Upgrades:** Advocate for investments to equip classrooms with the latest tools.
- **Special Education Funding:** Ensure sufficient support for students with disabilities.

Your backing will impact our community's future. Thank you for considering this crucial matter.

Sincerely,
Sam Sample
208-123-4567

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ARE YOU INFLUENTIAL?

Tips for effective grassroots lobbying:

Your board must be involved in the political process.

The board should:

- 1.** Identify legislative priorities
- 2.** Develop an advocacy plan
- 3.** Identify supportive community contacts
- 4.** Develop key messages
- 5.** Communicate these messages to state and local decision makers

Make sure your legislative delegation knows what is going on in your district.

The board should:

- 1.** Ask them to visit schools
- 2.** Let them know how legislation will impact the district or school
- 3.** Develop a positive relationship for the long haul

Building positive relationships with your legislature is the key to success.

There is an old saying that, "All politics are local," and it is true. Building positive relationships with your legislative delegation at home in your school districts will help you effectively communicate the needs of your district to your legislative delegation. Success is dependent on good relationships.

Lobbying tips for school board members.

- 1.** Foster a positive relationship with your legislator(s). Make sure your legislators know your name and information about your school district.
 - a.** Meet with your legislators prior to the session on a one to one basis. Research shows that this is the most effective lobbying technique.
 - i.** Get to know them on a personal level - ask about family, children, schools, interests, etc.
 - ii.** Tell your legislators you appreciate their support for your school district/charter school.

- iii.** Tell them what is important to your school district/charter school.

- iv.** Tell them positive stories about what is happening in your school district/charter school.

- v.** Tell them what you are doing with any new funding you have received from the legislature.

- vi.** Tell them what you need to accomplish your goals.

- b.** Invite your legislators to tour your schools.

- c.** Attend legislative or political functions in your community to familiarize yourself with your legislators' ideas, beliefs, and goals.

- 2.** Encourage your legislators to seek your opinion on educational issues.

- a.** Let your legislators know you are willing to provide information on education issues.

- b.** Be willing to share your insight and experience as a school board member on the issues the legislators will have to vote on.

- c.** Be willing to put together information that your legislators need.

- d.** Call ISBA or access the web to find supporting materials needed on issues.

- e.** Give your legislators your home or cell numbers and your e-mail address so they can contact you easily before a vote.

- f.** Use the school district's/charter school's expertise on issues you are not familiar or comfortable with.

- g.** Be familiar with the ISBA position on bills. Speaking with a unified voice helps your legislators know where there is support for issues.

- 3.** Hold your legislator accountable for votes, public statements, and actions.

- a.** Attend any meeting your legislator(s) hold in your community.

- b.** Ask your legislators questions if you don't understand an issue or why they voted one way or another.

ARE YOU INFLUENTIAL?

Practical Communication Tips

To communicate effectively with legislators, certain guidelines apply no matter where you meet.

Do these:

Identify yourself: Be sure the legislator understands who you are and which school district you represent.

Be brief: Get to the point quickly, and be specific.

Know what you're talking about: Explain the facts, and understand the opposition's point of view.

Use a local angle: Explaining how a bill will positively or negatively affect the local school district can be very persuasive. Remember that you're not only the legislator's constituent; you're also a fellow elected official.

Show respect: Be positive. Remember to compliment the legislator's successes, and thank them. Although you are both elected officials, some legislators may follow an unspoken sense of hierarchy between local and state representatives, statewide officials, and federal elected officials.

Communicate often: Be friendly. Keep in touch with legislators year-round, not just during the legislative session when you want something. Invite your elected representative to attend school board meetings, special events, workshops, and other events.

Recognize effort: Thank legislators in writing when they vote as you asked. Let lawmakers know their support on your district's behalf is appreciated.

Thank legislators for meeting with you and for their support or consideration, even if they are against you: You may need their vote in the future on another matter.

Consider compromise: Stake out your position, but if a legislator makes a reasonable request or offers an alternative to the position, take the compromise into consideration.

Choose battles wisely: Decide from the start if an issue is important enough to risk ruining a personal relationship with a legislator or whether you would rather keep the relationship long-term and let the issue go.

Notify the legislator of a deadline: When writing lawmakers, tell them where the bill you're writing about is in the process and when action is scheduled. Give legislators all the information you can to make it easier for them to support your position.

Be sensitive to partisan politics: But, always try to come across nonpartisan.

Use correct forms of address: Always address legislators as Representative X or Senator Y.

Print out your fact sheets, letters, and testimony: Date them. Be sure they include how you can be reached.

Know other issues or problems the legislator is working on: Help them when you can.

Offer to be a resource for specific information related to the district

Look for friends in unusual places: In politics a Republican, Democrat, liberal, or conservative may work with you on a specific issue even if they oppose you on every other issue.

ARE YOU INFLUENTIAL?

Practical Communication Tips

To communicate effectively with legislators, certain guidelines apply no matter where you meet.

Don't do these:

Don't be rude: Threats, rudeness, or other inappropriate behavior will not help your cause.

Don't be bullied: Don't let yourself be intimidated by legislators' authority or status. But recognize and respect their responsibilities.

Don't underestimate legislators: With rare exceptions, they are honest and intelligent and want to do the right thing.

Don't distort the facts: Present your position honestly and thoughtfully. If you don't know the answer to a legislator's question, say so. Then find the information and call back as soon as possible.

Don't assume the legislator or staff member has read or remembers something you sent: Lawmakers are inundated with volumes of information. So, if you have something you want read, make it brief. It's also a good idea to give copies to the legislator's aid, who will probably be the one who reviews the submission.

Don't break a promise: If you tell the legislator you will get information or that you will do something in exchange for support, follow through.

Don't change your position: If the legislator has publicly committed to a position you encouraged, don't change your mind about it later, unless the bill was significantly amended or local circumstances have changed. Let your legislator know how the bill has changed and why your position has shifted. Recommend they do the same.

Don't give inaccurate information

Don't make moral judgments based on a vote or an issue.

Don't begin by saying "As a citizen and taxpayer..."

Don't send form letters.

Don't write to members of the House when the vote is in the Senate, and vice versa.

Don't ignore your legislator and then contact one from another district for help with your issue.

Don't complain publicly or privately about your legislator.

Don't hold grudges or give up.

Don't interrupt legislators when they are obviously busy.

Don't cover more than one subject in a contact.

Don't write a letter longer than one page.

Don't press for an answer on your first visit.

Don't blame legislators for all the things that go wrong in government.

Don't be offended if they forget your name or who you are, even if it is just five minutes after you visit.

Don't assume that education is at the top of the legislator's priority list.

Don't cut anyone off from contact. Don't let a legislator consider you an enemy because you disagree. Today's adversary could be tomorrow's ally.

KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

Getting to know your legislators

Taking the time to assemble information about your legislators is an important step to take before you contact them. The more you know about the individual you are talking to, the better prepared you are to make arguments that they will respond to. Here are some pieces of information to collect about your representatives before you contact them.

Committee Assignments

Take specific note of the committees your legislator serves on, and the impact their service may have on achieving your advocacy objectives. For example, if a legislator from your district is on an education committee, they play a key role in nearly all education legislation that is introduced in a given year. If a legislator in your district is on the appropriations committee, they will be a critical player in the battle to increase education funding.

Tip: Access the list of Idaho legislators by visiting the Idaho Legislature website:
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/>

Remember that it is important to keep all members advised on education issues. Ultimately, every member has a vote.

Voting Records

Knowing how your legislators voted on key education issues will give you an idea of where each is likely to stand on the issue at hand. It may also help you shape your arguments.

Personal Information

Knowing some personal tidbits about your legislators can help you establish ties. Did they attend public school in your district? Are they a former school board member? Do they have a background in education? What do they do for a living? Do they have children in school? Do they attend public or private school?

Any information you can gather may help you establish a relationship.

Location of Local Community Meetings

Many legislators establish local community meetings during session. Community meetings are the legislators' attempt to gather community input on legislation during session. Typically, these meetings are set up on a Saturday morning. Make sure to find out where your legislators hold their meetings, and plan to attend during session. Community meetings are a great opportunity for face-to-face interaction during session.

Committees that Impact Education

There are several issues beyond traditional education programs that impact education. In addition to legislation on education programs and funding, education advocates may pay close attention to taxation laws and local government issues. So, we are looking to see if your legislators are on "key" committees that are important for public schools.

- House and Senate Education - Handles a large majority of education-related legislation.
- House and Senate Appropriations - Has budgetary authority for all state dollars.
- House and Senate Local Government - Considers the authority of local government entities.
- House and Senate Taxation - Considers taxation issues.
- House and Senate State Affairs - Considers legislation on election and other issues, like firearms in schools.



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