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SLATE

magazine

summer
2021

MOVING BEYOND A CHALLENGING YEAR IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

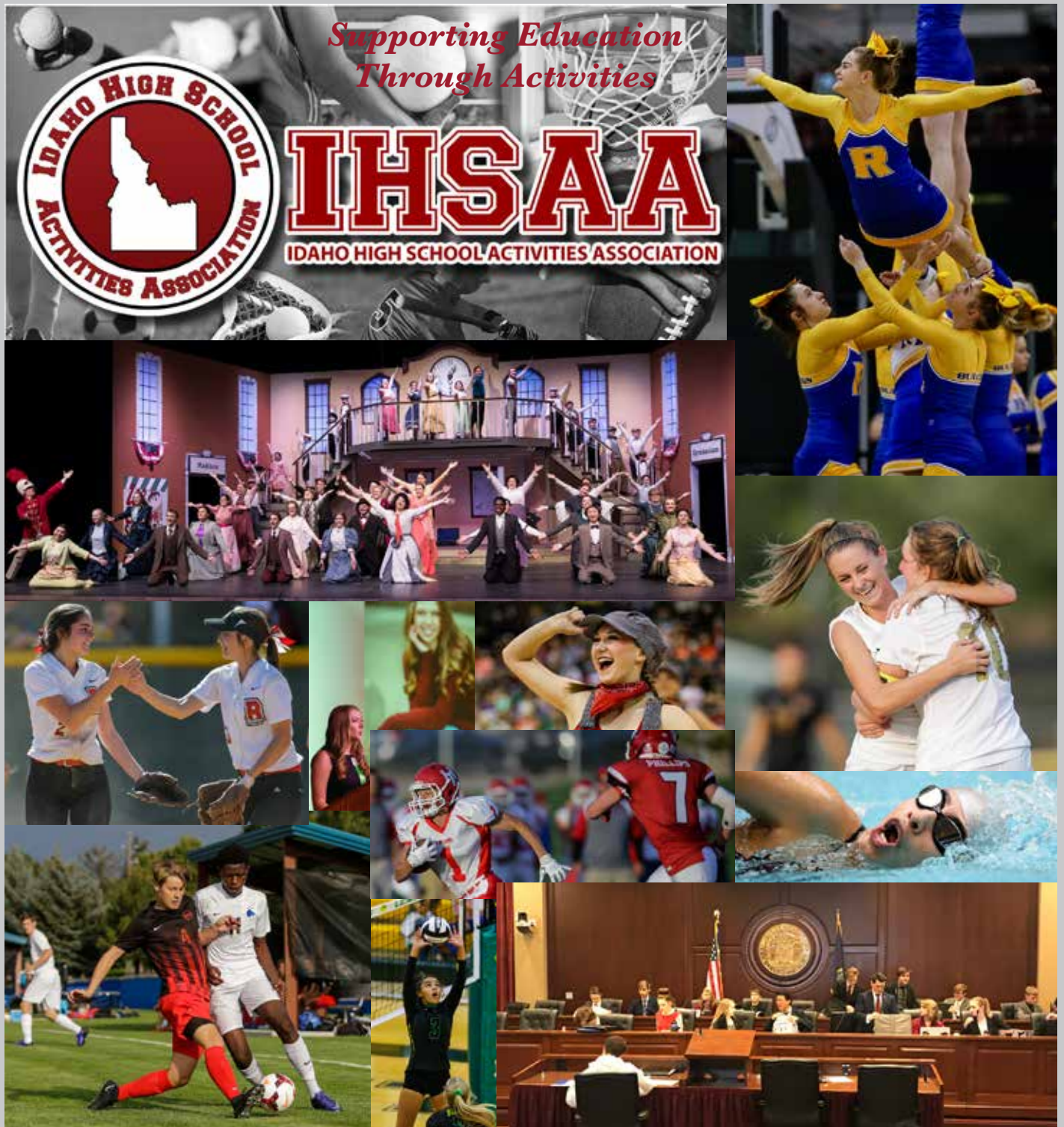
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SUMMER / 2021

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MISSION:

The Idaho School Boards Association advocates for Idaho students and public education with leadership and service for local school boards.

VISION:

Empower Local Boards for Student Success

STANDARDS:

1. Vision and Mission
2. Continuous Improvement
3. Advocacy
4. Accountability
5. Community Engagement
6. Board Operations and Professional Development

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magazine

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2021 ISBA CALENDAR

July 5	Independence Day Recognized • ISBA Office Closed
August 12 -15	NSBA Summer Leadership Seminar
September 6	Labor Day • ISBA Office Closed
September 10-11	Executive Board Meeting • Boise, ID
September 14	SLI & Region 4 Meeting
September 15	SLI & Region 3 Meeting
September 21	Region 9 Meeting • Virtual
September 22	SLI & Region 2 Meeting
September 23	SLI & Region 1 Meeting
September 29	SLI & Region 6 Meeting
September 30	SLI & Region 5 Meeting
Date TBD	SLI & Region 7-8 Meeting • Virtual
November 17-19	ISBA Annual Convention • Boise Centre - Boise, ID

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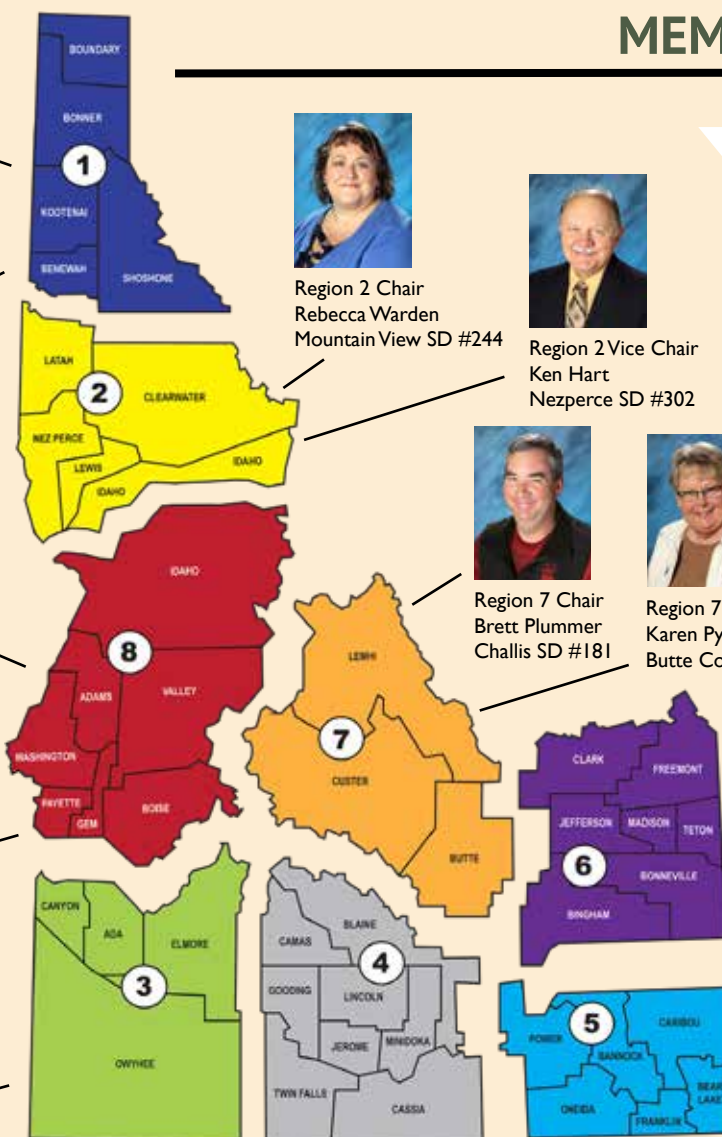
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jody Hendrickx / ISBA President



A Review of Idaho Code 33-512 Governance of Schools

There has been a lot of discussion about local control/governance this year, as well as a bit of a push for the State to place limits on what is happening in the classroom. In Idaho, school board members are responsible for governing schools. The duties school board members have in governing schools are clearly laid out in Idaho Code 33-512 School Governance.

1. **Set the school calendar and school day:** Sometimes setting the school calendar is one of the most contentious duties for the board. Staff, parents, and patrons often have strong personal reasons for the timing of the first and last day as well as breaks, such as winter break or spring break.
2. **Set the school budget:** Translating the state and local revenue sources into a budget that meets the local needs can be challenging. A good business manager is key to success in this process.
3. **Adopt textbooks:** Selecting curricular materials is a task larger than simply approving the recommendations of a committee. The school board members are responsible for selecting a text that follows the learning standards and aligns with the beliefs and needs of the community.
4. **Protect the morals and health of the pupils:** This year, school board members have likely made more health decisions than they have ever made in the past. They have been faced with decisions about face-to-face school, sports practices, and event attendance, to name a few. In making their decisions, the school board may take into account the recommendations of the local health districts, but in the end, the decision lies upon the shoulders of the school board.
5. **Enroll school age children:** Children who will be 5 on or before September 1 are eligible to begin school. However, schools are also responsible for meeting the needs of children with disabilities between the ages of three and twenty-one.
6. **Set discipline code:** School Boards approve school handbooks and school or district policy setting discipline codes for their districts/schools.
7. **Exclude from school children with contagious or infectious diseases:** Typically, this topic has included such things as chicken pox, scabies, or head lice. This year school boards have had to make decisions in regard to COVID.
8. **Equip a suitable library, excluding books, tracts, papers, and catechisms of sectarian nature:** This duty comes before the Board when there are challenges to materials made available in libraries.
9. **Determine school holidays:** School Boards must ensure that the district/school appropriately recognizes holidays, as Idaho Code mandates learning activities if school is in session for certain holidays.
10. **Erect and maintain a flagpole:** Each campus must have a flagpole. Flags must also be replaced if showing wear.
11. **Prohibit individuals who distract the educational process from entering or loitering in schools:** This responsibility, too, has changed with COVID. For years the practice has been to use a single entry and exit to limit access to the buildings. This year, in order to provide for social distancing, many schools began using additional entry and exit points. With more entry points, there are more opportunities for unwanted people to enter the buildings.
12. **Supervise and regulate board approved extracurricular activities:** This duty has also come to the forefront during the pandemic. The decision to allow extracurricular activities to continue while protecting the health of the athletes, coaches, and spectators has not been an easy task this year. There have been challenges in the manner that each region has reacted to the expectations of the Governor.
13. **Govern the school district or charter school in compliance with state and federal laws:** School Boards often rely upon board training, the district superintendent, and legal counsel in order to stay in compliance with state and federal law. It is important to stay informed of these demands and any changes to them.
14. **Submit by July 1 documentation of compliance with the federal gun-free act of 1994:** While these reports are completed by school personnel, it is important that the board sets policy to ensure compliance.
15. **Complete background checks on all employees:** Like the federal gun-free reporting law this is another duty that is performed by school personnel and should have supporting board policy.
16. **Develop a comprehensive safety plan:** The comprehensive safety plan should be regularly reviewed. Approving and reviewing the safety plan should be done in open session, however the specific details of that plan to do not have to be made public.
17. **Provide administrative, mentor, peer assistance, and professional development support for teachers in their first two years of service:** Professional development for all school board members and staff is important to the success of a district. Supporting teachers in the first two years of their service is an important part of recruiting and maintaining high quality staff.

School Governance is one of the Board Development topics offered by the Idaho School Board Association. It is important for school board members to understand each of the 17 duties outlined in Idaho Code and how the board is responsible for leading schools. The work of a school board member is often difficult and too often undervalued, however, in my experience it is one of the most important things that I have ever done. This has been a difficult year for schools across our nation, but when school board members know and understand the duties of governance it will lead schools to success.

Jody Hendrickx

Idaho School Boards Association

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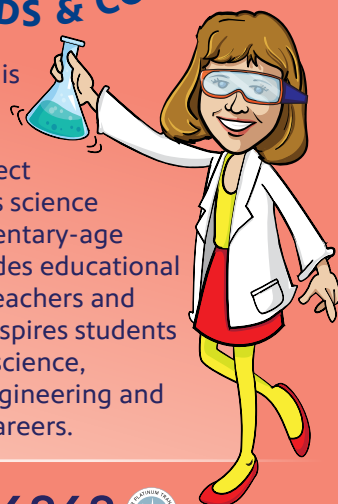
FOR COMMUNITIES, IdahoPTV supports the entire learning ecosystem by educating communities across Idaho.



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STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

By Sherri Ybarra / Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction



Emerging from an Extraordinary Year, We're Ready for Brighter Days

Congratulations! We've made it through a school year that defies description: "Extraordinarily challenging" is an understatement.

At last the pandemic is shifting to our rearview mirror, but the learning loss, social-emotional toll, and other impacts still linger. The state's longest-ever legislative session dragged answers to school funding questions close to the beginning of the next fiscal year.

Then, in the midst of tackling these challenges, came our worst nightmare: On May 6, a sixth-grader at Rigby Middle School shot and wounded two students and a custodian. It was the worst day of my career -- a moment we've all dreaded and hoped would never happen in Idaho.

I traveled to Rigby the next day, to offer support and find out what the school and community needed. I am so relieved that there was no loss of life, and thankful that an amazing teacher acted quickly, bravely, and compassionately, disarming the suspected shooter and holding her until law enforcement arrived.

I am extremely proud of the actions and resilience of administrators, staff, and students who had effectively prepared for the unthinkable. Like all of you, they dreaded this moment, but they were prepared. We are so lucky to have heroes and helpers, committed to seeing that all Idaho students achieve and succeed.

The tragic incident in Rigby reinforced the need to safeguard the mental and social-emotional health of our students, educators, and staff. My department is committed to offering resources and supporting your efforts to make our schools safe and healthy for every child and for the people who serve them.

Over the past year, my team has applied for and received numerous grants to address mental and behavioral health and to provide more resources to address these critical needs.

Last fall, our Idaho Lives Project was awarded a five-year Project Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (Project AWARE) grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to expand three school districts' capacity to address mental and behavioral health concerns and connect students and their families with appropriate services.

I will continue advocating for every resource possible to optimize conditions for learning for all Idaho students. Right now, nearly 70 Idahoans -- including representatives from school districts throughout the state -- are actively working as part of a statewide committee to make recommendations for how my department can best provide safe, positive conditions for students throughout the state.

We must provide more social-emotional interventions, including counseling services, training in core instructional models, and wrap-around community services such as connections to social workers and food pantries. We know from the research and from experience, interventions work!

The same is true of academic interventions. One very important conversation for educators and policymakers alike centers on how we can provide support for academic recovery by identifying and addressing pandemic-related learning loss. I am excited to announce several new efforts to help Idaho students succeed in and beyond the classroom.

My office recently kicked off a new effort to improve kindergarten through third grade literacy with a summit on the science of reading attended by more than 600 Idaho educators. They heard from national experts about how to integrate math, science, and literacy to maximize our youngest learners' ability to read and succeed. These educators will also participate in continuing professional development around the science of reading and how to ensure students are reading at grade level by the end of the third grade.

About 180 kindergarten through third grade teachers from 55 districts have signed up as the first cohort taking Idaho's SMART Path to Reading. The 10-month program, Striving to Meet Achievement in Reading Together (SMART), includes three full days of training throughout the year to learn about the science of reading and monthly classroom coaching for teachers to implement new strategies to help young Idaho students learn to read so they can read to learn.

Both the K-3 Literacy Summit and SMART are expected to repeat next year.



A highlight of the 2021 legislative session was the strong support for Superintendent Sherri Ybarra's in-person learning bill, which will make sure students can be with their peers and their teachers whenever safety concerns can be met at the local level. Gov. Brad Little signed the bill into law April 22.

In order to get caught up and get ahead, Idaho students need access to tutoring. But many can't afford a tutor, or they live in remote or rural areas with limited options. My department's new partnership with Schoolhouse.world helps even the playing field with an innovative online platform of free, small-group tutoring in math topics for middle and high school students. This great program comes from a source already trusted by Idaho teachers and families: Sal Khan, whose Khan Academy provides a wealth of free online classes for millions of students throughout Idaho and the world. To learn more, go to my department website.

Of course, to reach and teach students, we need to listen to them. So, I am launching a Student Advisory Council representing different grade levels, backgrounds, cultures, school sizes, and parts of Idaho. The council will meet quarterly, playing a direct role in improving education for students across the state and gaining important skills in leadership, public speaking, decision-making, team-building, and networking. If you know someone I should consider for the council, please encourage them to check out my website for details and an application form.

I was thrilled to be able to talk with students face to face in May, meeting with government and history classes at schools along the route of our annual Legislative Roadshow. It also was wonderful to meet with district and charter school leaders from all regions of Idaho in person. Roadshow presentations in Moscow, Coeur d'Alene, Twin Falls, and Idaho Falls drew great crowds, good questions, and a strong sense of shared commitment. *(see photo below)*



As always, of particular interest was the Public School Finance portion of the Roadshow, in which Chief Financial Officer Julie Oberle walked participants through the public schools appropriations. Check out her detailed presentation online. I encourage you to read the intent language in this session's budget bills – including the provisions regarding use of the Public Education Stabilization Fund.

On a positive note, the Legislature did appropriate the entire amount of the American Rescue Plan Act (ESSER-III) funds, and my department will be distributing these and other federal pandemic relief funds. I successfully advocated on school districts' behalf to get spending authority, effective July 1, for the full American Rescue Plan grant without micromanaging how districts can spend that money. You need those funds to address at-risk students and ensure your schools can remain open safely.

Our finished K-12 budgets aligned very closely with my requests, including expanding mastery-based education, restoring \$21.7 million for the career ladder, and continuing our essential efforts to boost K-3 literacy.

Free Gatekeeper Training

School and district personnel are encouraged to sign up for **free online Gatekeeper training** for a quick course (it generally takes an hour or two) in how to detect and prevent suicidal or destructive ideas and actions among students. Thousands of teachers, staff, and other interested Idahoans have already benefited from this superintendent-sponsored QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer) Gatekeeper training.



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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

By Kurt Liebich / President / Idaho State Board of Education

Moving Beyond a Challenging Year in Public Education



I cannot think of a more difficult time in the history of our state to be a leader in public education.

Whether you serve on a local school board or are an administrator, classroom teacher, college professor, or university president – this past year has been a remarkable challenge, and we should all be proud of how we have responded.

We quickly transformed our entire system last year to accommodate remote learning, marshalling resources to purchase laptops and connectivity for students across our state. At the same time, we brought students back to school without compromising the health and safety of our students and teachers.

As a result, Idaho kids were able to attend school and college at rates higher than just about any other state in the country.

However, our students did experience learning loss, and we must do something about it.

I thought this would be the top education priority during the legislative session, and it is unfortunate more time was spent on anecdotes claiming that our education system indoctrinates students, rather than talking about getting our students back on track.

As the new president of the State Board of Education, I am very concerned about this type of dialogue. When the term “indoctrination” is loosely thrown around, it is an attack on our entire public education system.

I have seen no evidence of systemic “indoctrination” in our schools or in our colleges and universities. I have enormous confidence in our local school boards, and if anything like this were occurring, there are policies and procedures in place at the local level to address it.

But the State Board of Education has heard the concerns.

The Board will review and possibly modify its higher education policies around freedom of expression and academic freedom. We have also asked our institutions to conduct campus climate surveys of their students because we must get beyond anecdotes and look at what campus-wide data shows before we can figure out if first, we have a problem, and if so, how we can address it.

In a system as large as ours, with more than 300,000 students and more than 15,000 teachers in our K-12 system, there will be instances where parents may take issue with something their student heard in class. As a school board member, it's a good idea to become familiar with those policies and maybe have a board discussion about whether the policies are adequate in the current political environment. I would also encourage you to communicate with your local constituents to ensure that they are aware of our existing policies, so when an issue arises, our constituents have a clear pathway for resolution.

We want to make sure all students, are comfortable enough in class that they feel like they can speak their mind without repercussions.

House Bill 377 is now law. It is my hope it will assuage concerns and that our public schools and institutions of higher education can move forward and continue to fulfill their duty to educate and prepare our young people for successful futures that will benefit students personally as well as our state as a whole.



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² Source: Thomson Reuters



SAFETY NOTES

By Dane Higdem / Moreton & Company

District Risk Reduction by Policy Training and Documentation



Whether you've developed an employee handbook, a policy manual, or some other form of documentation of your school district's or charter school policies, it is crucial to communicate the contents of these documents to your staff. Your staff should be advised why it was created, what the purpose is and how the document will be used in your district or charter. This applies with new policy and when updates to policies are being made and implemented.

When your district or charter school programs, policies, and procedures change, communicating information and changes with employees is essential to avoid costly mistakes and errors. Depending on the nature of the change, there could be legal and financial consequences if your employees either are not aware of any change or they do not comply.

Determine who is going to be affected by the new/modified policies. It might not only be employees, but also students, parents, and community stakeholders. This will help determine how and when to communicate your district or charter school policy and procedural changes.

Depending on the changes, you may need to roll out district-wide training when a new policy first goes into effect or just as required by affected employees. Refresher and follow-up training should also be factored in as necessary and tracked for demonstration of training.

When you have district or charter school policy and procedural changes to communicate, there are several communication methods you can use to explain those changes.

Communications can include:

- Sending emails to employees
- Putting information on your intranet site in appropriate locations
- Sharing the policies on your internal internet platforms
- Write directly to employees
- Have administration at the district or charter school and school/building level discuss the changes at team meetings
- Include information about the policy in internal newsletters
- Posting updated policies on company noticeboards
- Include policies in any staff handbooks

There are, however, some limitations with these communication methods. They rely on employees paying attention to emails, actively looking at intranet and other internal channels or being present at the meetings where policy changes were discussed.

Depending on the changes, you may need to roll out district-wide training at the beginning of the new initiative, or just as required. Refresher and follow-up training should also be factored in as necessary.

As with any good internal communications approach, the best ways to communicate policy changes include:

- Use of a combination of delivery channels to ensure the message gets across
- Send reminders or hints and tips about the policy update as part of an internal communications campaign to really make sure that the message gets through.
- Quiz your employees on their understanding of the new policy
- Monitor compliance with the policy changes and tailor any further communications to address any problems.

Sometimes policies and procedural changes are complex and require a completely new approach to work practices. When concepts are difficult to grasp, just writing them down and hoping for the best isn't going to cut it. Administration needs to ensure that employees are given appropriate training in both new and modified procedures to ensure staff can carry out tasks as expected.

Employees are often resistant to change, particularly when they've done something a particular way for a long period of time. They may have an emotional reaction to change, and they may also feel that the changes aren't practical. Management of Change (MOC) is a difficult process and is difficult to manage, but it is not impossible with the tools provided in this article.

The next important step in policy change and implementation is to be able to verify and demonstrate that all appropriate employees have read, understood, and acknowledged the policy in its most current version.

The most difficult task involved with policy change is tracking and documenting who has obtained copies of new/modified policy and demonstrating the policy been effectively communicated and employees understand and are implementing the policy.

Tracking, documenting, and demonstration of understanding training used to be accomplished with spreadsheets, emails and printed pages, all of which take large amounts of effort by staff and are difficult to keep current and accurate. In today's world, we have Learning Management Systems (LMS) that are very effective at assigning, tracking initial and retraining dates for recurrences. These systems also have the ability for the district or charter school to create quizzes to demonstrate understanding of the content at time of training. By having this information in an LMS it easy to show specific documentation of training and employee understanding if ever needed.

By utilizing an LMS, administration may create and integrate specific district/charter information and policy materials, articulate policy goals, track information dissemination progress, and create customized quizzes/tests to show understanding of the policy. The leverage of an LMS is that it delivers learning content and tools straight to learners. Such systems have built-in customizable features including assessment and tracking.

Districts and charter schools that participate in SafeSchools already have a fully functioning LMS system. This LMS is the backbone of the system that provides training, reporting, and the ability to assign courses by employee type, groups, or individuals. Many districts already utilize the SafeSchool system to deliver and track course content and personal development information to staff. The full curriculum that is offered by SafeSchools can be found here:

https://vectorsolutions.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#41000000dzt8/a/41000000Aa4B/JQMZFt0lRtfw6D7hCF_psX.puEdog.cLbRxgNt3YzAg

It is not difficult to develop district/charter specific content, create a quiz, and upload the information to the system. From there the content can be assigned, tracked, and generate reports on who is taking the training, the timing of class completion, and if an employee has or has not taken the content as assigned.

If your district or charter school would like to create a custom course that can be assigned, tracked, and have a knowledge quiz to ensure content understanding please use the link provided below:

<https://support.vectortrainingeducation.com/s/article/How-to-Create-a-Custom-Course>

If you would like to learn more information on policy documentation and risk reduction, please contact Chad Ranstrom or Dane Higdem with Moreton & Company at (208) 321-9300.



SafeSchools



AT YOUR SERVICE

By Misty Swanson / ISBA Chief Deputy

How the NSBA Impacts ISBA and Idaho's Schools

You may have heard of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) in the past, but, do you know how it directly and indirectly supports and impacts ISBA and Idaho's schools?



Photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages

For more than 80 years, the NSBA has been dedicated to working “for the general advancement of education for the youth of the United States and its possessions,” which the founders of NSBA set as a top priority. Similar to ISBA’s first leaders, the NSBA recognized the incredible need to create opportunities for all children. They set goals, many of which have been achieved and continue to evolve.

NSBA leads the conversation on public education and assists state associations, such as ISBA, in advocating for the nation’s 90,000 school board members and over 50 million public school children.

NSBA provides its members, such as ISBA, with essential resources and support.

NSBA’s mission is to work with and through the state school boards associations across the nation to enhance public education. NSBA helps to shape federal education policy and raise awareness of the critical issues surrounding our youth. They do this in many ways—through legislative advocacy, national events, publications, and services.

Federal Advocacy

NSBA is truly a leading advocate for public education as they work with school boards associations nationwide. They understand the members they represent and that school board members are responsible for the education of more than 50 million public school students. They represent the students and the nation's public schools to federal policymakers, people who have an impact on federal policy (including the media), and the public.

NSBA's federal advocacy team meets with policymakers and stakeholders nearly every day at the nation's capital. Their work and strategies prioritize the support of public schools and schoolchildren. Some of the topics they work diligently on include:

- Securing full federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- Advocating for E-Rate, which helps connect schools to the internet;
- Advocating for more investment in resources to enhance student safety and health;
- Battling against efforts to shift taxpayer funds to nonpublic schools;
- Higher Education Act reauthorization; and
- Other topics such as school safety, infrastructure, equity, and more.

The NSBA Advocacy team engages state leaders on state and federal advocacy, educational equity, effective school governance, as well as education research, school safety, and much more.

National Events

ISBA Officers and staff have had the great privilege to attend NSBA events in the past. Some of the events NSBA offers includes: The Annual Conference, Advocacy Institute, COSA School Law Seminar, CUBE Annual Conference, Equity Symposium, and Summer Leadership Seminar. These events are really top-notch opportunities for school board members, school administrators and staff, and many others. As we have experienced attending these events, they provide many learning opportunities, networking sessions, and provide information to take back to home districts and charters.

Work-Alike Groups

One of the most beneficial services that ISBA staff receives from the partnership with NSBA is the ability to participate in work-alike groups. State associations across the country have staff members who do work similar to that of the ISBA staff. Each of us find great value and benefit in our work-alike groups. They are a way for us to share ideas, ask questions, discuss best practices, and much more. Here is a list of the work-alike groups that the ISBA staff frequently participate in:

- Convention Managers
- Communicators
- Deputy Executive Directors
- Executive Directors
- Human Resources
- Legislative Staff
- Policy Services
- Trainers
- Superintendent Searchers

Publications

One of the many ways to stay abreast of national topics is through the NSBA publications. NSBA distributes publications such as the national award-winning American School Board Journal, legal guides, Becoming a Better Board Member, Key Work of School Boards, reports by the Center for Public Education, and more. Some of the goals of these publications are to promote learning and planning, foster engagement, provide assistance, and promote advocacy discussions.

Equity & Member Services

There is a myriad of other ways that NSBA provides support. For example, they provide amicus curiae (friend of the court) legal briefs to bring a different point of view to U.S. Supreme Court cases that impact public schools and schoolchildren. They also do this to bring a national voice to key cases in appellate courts across the country.

continued on next page...

NSBA's communication team works diligently on media efforts to provide opinion and discussion on major topics such as educational equity, federal funding, infrastructure, nutrition, and school safety.

NSBA is perhaps one of the most influential entities for educational equity. They work tirelessly on behalf of students to bring them equitable educational opportunities regardless of disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. NSBA is committed to bringing equity and recognizing that children have unique needs and that obstacles to learning must be identified and eliminated. Additionally, they advocate for the full funding of IDEA, which provides critical equal access to public education for all children.

A Little More About the NSBA

The NSBA is a federation of state associations (such as ISBA) that represent local school board members who serve over

50 million public school students. NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education. NSBA is a not-for-profit organization. The advocacy and policy agenda is determined each year by a Delegate Assembly. Similar to ISBA's Business Session, school board members who comprise the NSBA Delegate Assembly represent their state associations as they vote on various platforms, topics, and policy. The NSBA is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of four elected officers, 15 directors (three from each NSBA region), and the chairs of various councils. This totals a Board of 23 members plus three non-voting members.

The list of ways the NSBA provides value to ISBA and Idaho's schools could go on and on. I hope this gave you a glimpse of the many ways they are helping our school boards, students, and staff.



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By Lauren Gilchrist / Skyward / School Management Software

Four Surefire Ways to Increase Parent Engagement

We all know parent engagement is crucial to student success. With many kids practicing eLearning, it's perhaps more important now than ever before.

Fortunately, many parents were quick to jump on board and help their students with eLearning. In fact, surveys from Learning Heroes and Pearson found that more than two-thirds of parents say they're more involved in their child's education than ever before.

But while some parents didn't need prodding, others may need a little help from your district/charter before they feel confident enough to join in. Here are three steps you can take to encourage parent engagement at your district/charter.

1. Educate

Some parents simply don't realize the important role they play in eLearning. While in-classroom education placed students in the same classroom as their instructors all day long, remote learners no longer have that luxury.

It's the responsibility of both administrators and teachers to communicate with parents the important role they can play in helping their child succeed. In an ideal environment, the role of "educator" is now a parent-teacher partnership. The teacher may be the head coach, but parents will have to step up as assistants for their child to achieve the best results.

2. Reach Out First

While you may be excellent at striking up conversations, many people are more likely to respond to a message than be the initiator of a chat.

Encourage your district's educators to make the first move, inviting parents into ongoing conversations about their child's academics. When teachers open that channel of communication, parents will be more likely to follow suit, responding to inquiries and reaching out themselves when they have questions or concerns.

Ready to get started? Check out the Message Center tutorials we created for teachers in the Family Access Toolkit:

SMS 2.0 version: <https://www.skyward.com/parents-and-students/family-access-toolkit/teachers/video/using-the-message-center>

Qmlativ version: <https://www.skyward.com/parents-and-students/qmlativ-toolkit/teachers/video/message-center>

Note: Don't hesitate to share these Power-Ups or any of our Family Access Toolkit videos on your website or social media—that's what we created them for! Find them here: <https://www.skyward.com/discover/insider/april-16/introducing-family-access-toolkit>

3. Set Families Up for Success

Jacqueline Jeffus is a full-time online teacher at K12's California Virtual Academies. Here are a couple tips she offered on setting families up for success.

Be consistent: Remote learning is not like the traditional classroom where you can sometimes get away with only reaching out once a quarter for conferences. Teachers should get in touch in a way that works for families and make sure that connection is consistent.

Host online orientations: Teachers should consider hosting two orientation sessions—one with students and the other with parents. Use this time to introduce everyone to the video conferencing tools, learning management system, and any other tools they'll be using throughout the term. Walk them through use of each of the platforms and answer any questions.

4. Make It Easy

If your district is not using push notifications, now's the time to start! With push notifications in Skyward, for instance, you can eliminate the need for parents to log in to Skyward or check their email to find out about missing assignments, test scores, or communication in the Message Center.

Check out this video tutorial for parents in the link below! It can be found in the Family Access Toolkit (<https://www.skyward.com/toolkit>).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFDihnlMjIo>

By using push notifications, you'll make it even easier for parents to stay in the know about their child's education—and make stories like this one more likely: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJUY8XfllWo&feature=youtu.be>

eLearning provides a special opportunity for parents to play an increased role in their child's success at school. Don't let this opportunity pass them by! Encourage parents to get involved—and make it easy for them to do so—and you'll set your students up for success.



Lauren Gilchrist is a writer, video host, and travel enthusiast. She enjoys visiting school districts and spreading the word about the creative ways they educate students.



STATISTIC OF THE QUARTER

By April Hoy / ISBA Research & Policy Specialist

Statistic of the Quarter

22 or more of Idaho's 115 school districts are hiring a new superintendent this year.¹

Approximately 19% of Idaho school districts will be shifting to a new superintendent in the 2021/2022 school year. According to Education Week, there are signs that superintendent retirements and moves to other districts may be up across the US this year.²

¹ Nik Streng. (05/04/2021). "Idaho experiencing "unprecedented" superintendent turnover". <https://www.idahoednews.org/news/idaho-experiencing-unprecedented-superintendent-turnover/>. Idaho Ed News. Retrieved May 12, 2021.

² Stephen Sawchuk. (05/06/2021). "Has COVID-19 Led to a Mass Exodus of Superintendents?". <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/has-covid-19-led-to-a-mass-exodus-of-superintendents/2021/05/>. Education Week. Retrieved May 12, 2021.



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2021 Legislative Session Recap

By Quinn Perry / ISBA Policy & Government Affairs Director

2021 Legislative Session Recap

I don't know how to summarize what happened during the 2021 legislative session, especially as it has been the longest legislative session in all of Idaho's history. It was a tough and turbulent year to be an advocate for public education. People went into the session having experienced the COVID-19 pandemic from 105 different perspectives. We had many hard discussions, and public education in general took center stage. I will be candid that it was one of the hardest legislative sessions that any of us had experienced – including for Karen as she closed out her 30th and final session. I will close my intro with this: it will be dependent upon all of us to continue our advocacy efforts throughout the summer and fall. Our students in Idaho depend on us.

In the meantime, here is a snapshot of what passed and will become law.

H22a – This legislation came at the request of two virtual charter schools who had unexpectedly exceeded their support units afforded to them by Idaho Code, likely a product of the pandemic. This legislation will allow, for this school year only, the schools to exceed those caps and receive the necessary funding for them to continue to operate. Funds for HB22 – roughly just above \$6 million – came from COVID relief funds.

H66aaS – Even though it does create a new section of code for both bond/levy disclosure, the biggest change that will take effect is the new ballot disclosure language that will be required for any levies. Districts will still include the tax per \$100,000 of taxable assessed value. If you have an existing levy, however, the ballot will need to include language in the form of the current tax per \$100,000. The District will also have to disclose whether the new levy is an increase, decrease, or no change from the current levy, and list the expiration date of the existing levy. No other language is allowed, and if the language on the ballot is not included, the levy question will be null and void. For bonds, if you leave off the required bond disclosure, it will also invalidate your bond question.

H67 – This legislation modified Idaho Code 33-512 (The K-12 Governance Code) to clarify that the school board is the body responsible for whether or not they close school, based upon recommendation and consultation of the public health district. Previously, the code section stated that school boards would be required to close schools based on order of the state board of health and welfare or local health authorities. It essentially codified the current relationship between local public health districts and school boards. **This legislation has an emergency clause, so it is in effect today.**

H73 – A recommendation from the property tax interim committee, all school districts and charter schools will be required to begin reporting their expenditures and revenues a bit differently. Instead of posting your monthly financials on your own website, as part of your ISEE reports to the SDE, you will submit all expenditures and revenues accompanying general ledger codes that align with Idaho's financial accounting reporting system on a schedule determined by the State Board of Education. Once the State Board of Education (SBOE) receives that information, they will transmit that information to the State Controller's website, which will be a new "Transparent Idaho" type website for all taxing districts in Idaho. ISBA, along with key staff from the SBOE, is working with your information and enterprise resource planning systems to align to the statute, which will hopefully create a smoother transition for business managers.

H111 – This legislation, based upon an ISBA resolution, clarifies that no employee who is in the process of receiving his or her initial 5-year renewable teaching certificate can be issued a Category 4 (or, renewable contract) until they have received their 5-year renewable certificate and have been issued a professional endorsement.

H136 – This legislation will allow school districts who have less than 140 registered voters at the last election to apply to their county commission to have elections "at-large" instead of by zones or sub districts. This may be particularly helpful to our small, elementary school districts.

H149 – This legislation simply extends the sunset on the Coronavirus Liability Immunity act to June 30, 2022 instead of June 30, 2021. Again, this provides liability immunity to coronavirus transmission with the exceptions of "reckless, willful, or wanton misconduct."

H172 – This legislation will require school districts and charter schools to adopt policies and procedures to allow students to receive credit toward “Extended Learning Opportunities.” The policy/procedure will need to provide a process by which entities – such as nonprofit organizations, trade associations, or businesses in your communities – may apply to offer extended learning opportunities to your students, provide a process by which the student may request credit for the extended learning opportunity, and define criteria that the school district or charter school will use to determine whether a proposed extended learning opportunity qualifies for credit toward a graduation requirement, elective, or required skill or standard. By 2023, a high school student may request credit for a course by demonstrating an understanding of subject area content standards, and the district/school will need to adopt a policy outlining that process and establishing what methods a student can use to demonstrate knowledge in subject area content.

H173 – This legislation moves the Idaho Office of School Safety and Security from the Division of Building Safety over to the State Board of Education.

H175 – Sponsored by Superintendent Ybarra, this legislation updates the “thoroughness” statute in Idaho Code to say that students have a right to an uninterrupted education that covers all disciplines, and that in the event of state or local emergency, schools should offer in-person instruction “to the greatest extent practicable.”

H203 – This legislation added individuals who are qualified to drive school buses as someone who may be hired under Idaho’s “Hire the Retired” program. As we discussed at length during our Spring Leadership Institute, this legislative intent behind this statute was intended to fill an emergency need, and you must follow certain due diligence factors such as: ensuring there is a true gap in service, ensuring the retired employee is not hired on a continuing basis, and ensuring the position must be opened at the end of every year. **This legislation has an emergency clause, so it is in effect today.**

H220 – In essence, this legislation prevents any political subdivision – including school districts and charter schools – from contracting or referring to services with abortion providers or their affiliates. There are exceptions for such transactions subject to federal law or Medicaid, and hospitals. It also specifically prohibits any kind service for emergency contraception (except in cases of rape) and prohibits any school employee from referring a student for abortions or emergency contraception. We suggest locating a copy of the legislation – specifically page 3 of the bill – to share with your school counseling and/or nursing staff. **This legislation has an emergency clause, so it is in effect today.**

H222 – This legislation consolidates several required reports and sets up infrastructure so that stakeholders including the legislature, state agencies, and more can consider ways to incentivize, encourage, and recognize “bright” spots in Idaho’s K-12 system and encourage more schools to use practices that are proven highly successful. Among a few things, the Continuous Improvement Plan will have the most changes. First, it will require new metrics to be in the annual continuous improvement plan, including literacy goals, targets, and measures. It will need to include trajectory growth targets on literacy, college and career advising mentoring goals, and the individual staff performance on the on each of the performance criteria including measureable student achievement and student success indicators. It removes the annual submission of the literacy plan and college and career readiness plan, since those are now required indicators in the CIP. It adds additional criteria that may be used as measureable student achievement guidelines, and adds language that says any individual holding a professional or advanced professional rung may be evaluated in only two domains. Lastly, it sets up a “State Commission for Education Excellence” of which the purpose is to study and discuss the Continuous Improvement plans in order to guide productive legislative discussions. Lastly, Charter Schools may use their performance certificate in lieu of their CIP.

H264 – This legislation only applies to our charter school members, and removes a provision in Idaho code that would have triggered an automatic decrease in Charter School Facilities Funds if there were a reduction in the overall Education Support Funding. The 5% FY21 holdback highlighted the risk that if a \$1.00 decrease in the total education support program would have resulted in a decrease of 20% of the Charter School Facilities Fund. As a reminder, charter schools do not participate in property tax school bonds or levies, which were not subject to holdback.

H265 – This legislation will provide that in cases of emergency where transportation is disrupted from normal school operations, the transportation formula will compare the reimbursable cost to the last non-emergency impacted fiscal year. If there is a decrease of 10% or more, the reimbursement to the district or school will be based upon the non-emergency year. Even though we all experienced school closings during the last quarter of FY2020, the operational costs of the contracted school bus companies and busing offered by our public schools still had fixed costs, maintenance costs, start-up costs, and training new bus drivers. **This has a retroactive clause, so it will retroactively take effect since July 1, 2020.**

H280 – This legislation strikes the specific minimum amounts outlined in the career ladder, and refers to the section of code that only refers to the minimum salaries that must be paid for FTE staff. Additionally, there is new language to provide for a streamlined process for instructional staff coming from out-of-state to receive a professional endorsement and be placed on the career ladder. It also provides additional clarification that applies to individuals coming from an Idaho accredited private school in order to receive the professional or advanced professional endorsements in the same manner as individuals coming from out of state.

H298 - This legislation will require ALL communications – letters, emails, and website information - about immunization requirements to include a description of all the immunization exemptions available (medical, religious, and philosophical), and cite the section of code that allows for exemptions.

H377 – This legislation is the response to the claims of “indoctrination” happening at the K-12 and higher education level from the Idaho Freedom Foundation. The first half of the legislation codifies the Idaho Constitution, and states that school districts and charter schools shall not “direct or compel students to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to tenants” that any “sex, race, ethnicity religion, color, or national origin is inherently inferior or superior”, and further goes on state that any member of those categories “are inherently responsible for actions committed in the past.” To be frank, teachers and administrators are already prohibited by Idaho’s Professional Standards from forcing personal beliefs on students of any kind. ISBA will likely create a model policy that reiterates what is already a current practice in our schools.

S1006 – The bulk of S1006 consolidated the various sections on K-3 literacy and put them into one new legislative chapter. However, one area that is new is that all the newly elected/appointed board members, and every school board member by June 30 2023, shall participate in at least one board member orientation that focuses on the school district or charter school’s resources available for literacy intervention and improvements, the school, district, and state level data available to track literacy proficiency, and how to set measurable goals for improving student proficiency.

S1039a – This legislation created a new “Workforce Readiness and Career Technical Education” diploma, which will allow school districts and charter schools the ability to create a specialty diploma if students meet certain technical/workplace readiness assessment criteria.

S1042a – This legislation created clarifications on Idaho’s Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) process for procurement. QBS is a selection process for the procurement of professional services such as engineering, construction management, architecture, landscape architecture and land surveying. QBS has been in law for over 35 years, and focuses on retaining knowledgeable and skilled professionals with specific experience on projects involving major projects, like schools and bridges. This legislation helped make QBS more transparent, and provides more guidance on maneuvering through the QBS Process. For instance, the bill calls for a general description of the services being procured, measurable scoring and ranking, and provides examples of selection criteria.

S1043a – This legislation will allow you to take action on a student disciplinary hearing in a closed, private session. You cannot name the student in the minutes of the meeting, but a record of the decision must be placed in the student’s educational record and in the official records of the board.

S0145 – This legislation creates a separate, more narrowed Advanced Opportunities program for private school students. The amount per student is limited to \$750, and the funds can be spent on dual-credit courses, AP exams, CLEP tests and fees for industry certifications.

S1046aa,aa – This legislation creates a path forward for school boards who wish to enter into an innovation classroom agreement with a ‘requesting party’ if the requesting party wishes to learn from an “alternative curriculum.” The requesting party must represent a group of students that is equal to or greater than the average class size of the school. If the school board agrees, the agreement must include the name of the teacher or certificated staff member who works in the school – which must be agreed upon by the school and the parents of the students, the names of the students participating, a description of how and where the innovation classroom’s instruction will take place, growth criteria or other measures of student learning, the alternative curriculum and instructional materials to be used in the classroom (which must align to or be supplemented in order to meet standards), a description of the services that the classroom has access to (transportation, play ground, cafeteria, etc.), and the date upon which it will start. ISBA will issue a model procedure if you wish to implement this policy.

S1075 – This legislation allows any school district or public charter school who offers a kindergarten “screener” to use their existing funds in order to start a 4-week kindergarten jump-start program for students whose score indicates they are not ready for kindergarten. If the school offers the jump-start program, it is mandatory that they also offer a training program for parents on actions and activities that will help their student prepare, and parents will be required to attend the training. ISBA testified in favor of the bill, but also had concerns that this may be prohibited under Idaho’s School Age statute. The bill sponsors received an Attorney General opinion, and the opinion indicated that this legislation could avoid unnecessary confusion and would allow you to use your state funds for children who have enrolled in kindergarten.

S1115 – This legislation separated the Public Charter School Commission and made it a stand-alone agency under the State Board of Education. It also amends the appointing authority of all seven commissioners to the Governor.

S1116a – This legislation amends the current ‘denial of school attendance statute’ that required school boards to automatically expel a child who carried a weapon of any kind on school property. It removes the broad term of “weapon” but keeps the standard of firearms as a condition of expulsion. As always, the Board has the latitude to modify those expulsions if you determine the student is not detrimental to the health and safety of other students.

SJR102 – This legislation is a constitutional amendment that would allow the legislature to convene itself into an extraordinary “special” session with 15 days of a written request of 60% of each of the House and Senate Membership. The voters of Idaho must pass this amendment in order for it to take effect.

Budget Bills: After one tumultuous floor debate regarding unfounded claims of “indoctrination” in our K12 schools that killed the teachers division budget, most all of the remaining budgets passed nearly unanimously in the House and Senate. The legislature did reduce the discretionary amount by \$51 million for FY21, but gave spending authority for roughly half of ESSER II (COVID-relief funds) for FY21. They did grant full spending authority for the remainder of ESSER II and all of ESSER III beginning July 1.

Lastly, at the risk of making this article too long, I did want to include a few bits of legislation that did not move forward this year. We expect all of these to surface again next regular session:

August Election Date Removal – HB106 – and later, a hostile amendment to SB1061 – would have removed the August election date for school districts. There have been multiple attempts throughout the years to remove our bond/levy election dates. Last session, HB393 would have removed both the August and March election date for the stated reason that is the voter turnout is too low on these dates. This year, it was sponsored by the Secretary of State’s office upon complaints that county clerks do not have enough time to clean their voter rolls. Ultimately, the Senate has rejected these proposals, acknowledging that schools rely on them while simultaneously acknowledging that property taxpayers are carrying a large burden.

Strong Families Grant/Scholarship Bill – Modeled after the Governor’s grant program he created to help with the start of the school year during a pandemic, this legislation would have been the first time in Idaho’s history that would have allowed for taxpayer funds to go to private and parochial schools. ISBA has always supported the grant program, and only objected to the provision in the bill that would have gone to private and parochial institutions. As a reminder, private schools do not need to comply with a multitude of laws that public schools do – including transparency, accountability measures, anti-discrimination measures, and due process rights for staff and students. School Re-Opening, Financial Penalty: This legislation would have forced school boards to open their schools at least four days a week. If the schools did not do that, it would have allowed parents to withdraw the per-pupil amount from their child’s school to be able to go to private school or be provided another form of education.

Teacher Certification, LEA Certificates: This legislation would have allowed any school district or charter school to be able to create their own version of a “teaching certificate” so that you could fill a need in hiring staff. The minimum requirements were that the teacher must hold a bachelor’s degree, and receive mentoring and professional development. The teaching certificate would not have been transferrable. This legislation was largely contentious to educators and administrators, and ultimately died in committee on a split vote.

Funding for Full-Day Kindergarten: Arguably, the most popular bill of the session, a bill that would have funded optional, full-day Kindergarten never received a public hearing. The bill sponsors have committed to working with folks over the summer to move something forward next year. It will likely contain a provision that would prohibit districts from using property tax levy dollars towards full-day Kindergarten.

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79th Annual



This year, we are trying something new with a celebratory theme. As you have heard, ISBA's Executive Director, Karen Echeverria, will be retiring and this will be her final event with ISBA. Those that know her well understand the strong Basque culture she represents. The lauburu symbol in the Convention logo is a traditional Basque symbol which stands for unity – a strong message that we hope will resonate for this year's Annual Convention. We're excited to share more about this celebratory theme and much more during the event.

WE NEED YOUR AWARD NOMINATIONS!



Board Chair Of The Year Award

Nominate Your Outstanding Board Chair For The 2021 Board Chair Of The Year!

Submit An Application For Them To Receive Recognition!

ISBA would like to recognize an amazing Board Chair who runs a well structured meeting, keeping their Board on task, and complying with Idaho Open Meeting Laws. We're seeking a Board Chair who is a great leader for their team.

Please submit your Application by October 1, 2021.



20 Years Of Service Award

Do You Know Someone Who Has Served As A Board Member For 20 Or More Years?

Submit An Application For Them To Receive Recognition!

ISBA would like to recognize those individuals who have selflessly given **20 years** or more to the students and education system of Idaho. Award recipients will be recognized during the Awards Banquet. If you are a board member (or know of a board member) who has reached their 20 year mark, we want to know!

Please submit your Application by October 1, 2021.



Clerk Of The Year Award

Nominate Your Outstanding Clerk For The 2021 Clerk Of The Year!

Submit An Application For Them To Receive Recognition!

ISBA would like to recognize an amazing board clerk who goes above and beyond in his or her duties. Someone who provides outstanding service, provides direction to the Board, and has provided contributions to the Board and District or Charter.

Please submit your Application by October 1, 2021.



Jessica Gearino Harrison "Bulldog" Award

This award recognizes an individual who best embodies the "bulldog spirit" of Jessica Harrison, through their tenacious efforts to support and provide leadership through advocacy on behalf of Idaho's public schools with unrelenting courage.

This award should honor an individual for their leadership and advocacy at the local, county, regional, state, and/or federal level. Though it is preferable that the nominee is a school board member or school leader, it is not required.

Please submit your Application by October 1, 2021.

Awards Will Be Presented At The Annual Convention

Download nomination forms at www.idsba.org / Please submit via email, fax, or mail.

Email: misty@idsba.org / Fax: (208) 854-1480 / PO Box 9797 / Boise, ID 83707-4797

Workshop Proposals

Can The Board Members & District/Charter Leadership Of Idaho Benefit From Your Expertise & Experience?

ISBA invites Board members, administrators, agency representatives, and others to submit proposals for workshops to be presented at the ISBA 79th Annual Convention. Convention attendees are seeking information and skills to help them govern and lead more effectively in the ever-changing world of public education. Workshop proposal applications are available at:

www.idsba.org/convention-workshop-proposals/.

*** (Please apply by July 15, 2021.)**



LIP SYNC BATTLE COMING SOON

Do you have what it takes to be ISBA's 2021 Lip Sync Champion?

Spaces are limited due to other celebrations, so reserve your spot by emailing Mika at mika@idsba.org by October 8, 2021. All performances must be no more than three minutes in length.



2021 ISBA Scholarship Recipients



This year, the ISBA Scholarship Trust awarded scholarships to 28 children and grandchildren of school board members. Those awarded included students from all areas of the State.

Thank you to all of those who participate in the Scholarship Auction held each year at the ISBA Annual Convention! The items you donate to be auctioned off and your auction purchases are what make this program possible.

RECIPIENT:	REGION:	BOARD MEMBER:	RELATIONSHIP:
Emma Austin	8	H. Lane Austin	Parent
Hannah Black	4	David Humpherys	Grandparent
Rylee Black	8	Layne Howell	Grandparent
Charlotte Brockman	4	Jim Brockman	Parent
Olivia Farr	7	Trish Farr	Parent
Mardee Fillmore	6	Tyler Fillmore	Parent
Bailey Herbst	7	Aubree Herbst	Parent
Jace Johnson	2	Sharlene Johnson	Parent
Kayleigh Kearsley	6	Kenneth Kearsley	Parent
Aengus Kennedy	2	Brian Kennedy	Parent
Halle Klapprich	2	Tara Klapprich	Parent
Makenna Kohtz	4	James Ritchie	Grandparent
Genevieve Landers	6	Amy Landers	Parent
MayCee Maynard	7	Sharese Maynard	Parent
Brenna Morris	2	Mike Gilmore	Grandparent
Maddie Nelson	6	Troy Nelson	Parent
Emma Parker	3	Leslie Parker	Grandparent
Braden Permann	5	David Lent	Grandparent
Emme Richards	8	Brandy Richards	Parent
Owen Rogers	4	Lucinda G. Rogers	Parent
Brian Smith	5	James R. Smith	Parent
Libby Swan	5	George Hutchison Swan Jr.	Grandparent
Mark Warren	9	Chris Warren	Parent
Travis Wells	4	Todd Wells	Parent
Kinley Whitmarsh	4	Bryan Whitmarsh	Parent
Garrett Williams	5	Jason Williams	Parent
Sidney Woodworth	5	James (Jim) Woodworth	Grandparent
Wyatt Wootan	4	Richard Wootan	Parent



By Lea Duffin / Senior Safety Services Consultant
Idaho State Insurance Fund

Defensive Driving/Vehicle Use Program

Introduction:

In 2017, over 35,000 people died in vehicle collisions and more than 2.7 million were injured. According to the National Council of Compensation Insurance, motor vehicle accidents have declined over the last decade overall, but motor vehicle accidents at work have increased, resulting in more workers' compensation claims.

School districts can take steps to protect their employees and reduce injuries and claims by implementing a Defensive Driving and Vehicle Use Program. With proper employee training, the number of motor vehicle accidents can be decreased.

Defensive Driving

Defensive Driving is defined as driving to save lives, time, and money in spite of the conditions around you and the actions of others. SIF, Idaho Workers' Compensation offers Defensive Driving Training. This training develops the driver's knowledge of how to handle particular and difficult situations, in turn resulting in accident prevention.



At a minimum, drivers should be trained on the following subjects:

- The company's vehicle use policy
- Pre-trip inspections: includes a vehicle walk-around and inspection
- Review of major driving errors and how to correct them
- Major defensive driving techniques including leaving a space cushion and maintaining eye movement
- How to handle difficult situations such as inclement weather and special situations (e.g., trains and driving at night).

Defensive Driving Training aims to instill that driving is not to be viewed as "me versus them" and alternately teaches workers to exhibit patience, cooperation, and courtesy on the road. The techniques are simple to learn and training highlights knowledge, foresight, alertness, judgement, and skill when behind the wheel.

Vehicle Use Policy

A Vehicle Use Policy is a powerful safety tool highlighting the proper maintenance and use of company vehicles. This policy should include seat belt and cell phone use language.

Seat Belt Policy:

In 2017, 47% of occupants killed in vehicle related deaths were not wearing a seat belt. Although we know that seat belts increase survival in accidents, some people still do not use a seat belt. Consider creating an acknowledgement form for employees to sign. Encourage use and communicate the benefits of compliance.

Cell phone policy:

Cell phones are ubiquitous in our society, but as many of us know, they pose a serious threat to our safety while driving. Your workers are 4 times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision if they are using their cell phone. What about hands-free devices? Processing information (such as visual images) can decrease almost 40% while just listening. We recommend creating a policy that does not allow any cell phone use while driving. Train your workers to pull over to a safe location to make or take a phone call and stress that phones should be used for emergencies and in a safe location. Consider creating an acknowledgement form for cell phone usage as well and follow up with messaging about the benefits of compliance.

Major elements of the Vehicle Use Policy should include the following:

- Responsibilities and expectations of school district drivers
- General requirements and exclusions (including drug and alcohol policies)
- Motor vehicle records and review plan
- Pre-trip inspection checklist and expectations
- Maintenance and records
- Cell phone policy
- Seat belt policy
- How to report accidents
- Accident investigation
- Safe-use policy
- Acknowledgement forms

Conclusion:

Creating a Vehicle Use Program is a simple and effective way to build the foundation for a safety culture, specifically for your drivers. Defensive driving training is a valuable tool and should be offered to your employees on a regular basis. SIF can provide this training. For more information contact your local Safety Services Consultant or Lea Duffin, Senior Safety Services Consultant at 208-332-2234 or Lea.Duffin@IdahoSIF.org.





School Board Member Appreciation Month

ISBA honors the School Board Members of Idaho. We thank you for your dedicated leadership in public education and continuing service to the children of this community. We commend you for the countless hours you dedicate to benefit Idaho Public Schools.





MAXIMUM IMPACT

**Helping School Board and Superintendent
Teams Build Communication Capacities**

- Brian K. Creasman & Brad Hughes -

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As COVID-19 scrambled school schedules and unbalanced district budgets, America's school board members and superintendents have been hard-pressed even more than usual to keep constituents, stakeholders, and communities informed.

In real time, we have seen education transform, as superintendents and boards of education have had to modify rigid governance structures to adapt to a global health pandemic. With each vote, school boards and superintendents grew, becoming more flexible and constituent-centered through clear and concise traditional and virtual modes of communication.

In Maximum Impact: Boards of Education and Superintendents Communicating as a Team, we've drawn from our 67 years of experience in education leadership, journalism, and public engagement. Our primary aim is to give readers practical examples of situations and strategies by which superintendents and school board members—individually and as teams—can craft compelling messages and then deliver them to their intended audiences.

This article includes two edited excerpts from the book.

THE ART OF LISTENING

One of the main characteristics of a high-performing organization is the ability to listen to its employees, customers, and community members. Listening is critical to all organizations, especially to those that want to be successful in meeting the demands of the people who serve within the organization and the people the organization serves. Too often, organizations focus on public relations, marketing, and conveying a message but fail to include the critical piece of listening to their overall strategy.

Within any school district in the U.S., the amount of information that must be released to students, faculty, staff, parents/guardians, and the community is massive. However, the importance of listening far outweighs the need to release information.

Listening signifies to the person communicating a message that the other person(s) understands, and more importantly, they care and respect the individual who is

talking. School boards and the superintendent, together, must encourage feedback and input from the district's stakeholders. No team can be successful without practicing the art of communication through listening. Think about how powerful listening can be for the board and superintendent. Too many boards of education and superintendent teams never take the time to seek feedback or input, encourage comments, or develop a relationship with stakeholders.

Listening goes well beyond listening to stakeholders. To be effective as a board of education and superintendent team, listening must be a critical element of the team's relationship. No matter whether the conversation is positive or negative, words of praise or critique, board members and superintendents must have a relationship based on mutual trust—which always begins with listening.

A team culture where each voice is welcomed, heard, and valued is essential. On boards where voices are silenced, members find it difficult to stay focused on their priorities. No matter the issues, boards and superintendents must remain focused on their goals. If not, the slightest problem can have lasting negative effects.

Real listening isn't easy. Taking the time to listen to each board member, the superintendent, and stakeholders will prove to be difficult, especially during times of budget cuts, curriculum adoptions, controversy, and political years. We maintain that it is during these times that more listening should occur and less talking. No one person, board member, or superintendent has all the answers, which is why a team approach to talking about some of the biggest issues is a no-brainer. Listening in difficult times to diverse voices should be non-negotiable for high-performing teams of boards of education and superintendents.

Low-performing boards and superintendents often focus on placing blame and pointing fingers, not on next steps or possible solutions. A culture of listeners lends itself to a culture of risk-taking, innovation, and stretching the boundaries when it comes to student success. High-performing boards of education and superintendents recognize that focusing on solutions is far more productive for students than finger-pointing.

Practical Strategies for Listening:

- **Create listening opportunities**—many of them. Though there are many things to do in a school district, boards of education and superintendents must make time to listen. Many school districts host districtwide opportunities monthly, like “Coffee with the Superintendent,” where stakeholders and constituents have an opportunity to speak informally with leaders within the district. Districts that regularly hold these events not only enjoy districtwide support but also create an empowering district culture that sends the message that every voice is critical to the district's mission.
- **Designate time for each board member to speak.** Many school boards use committee structures to empower each board member to concentrate on items they want to pursue, learn more about, or discuss. Furthermore, many boards allow each member time at the biweekly or monthly board meeting to speak briefly about their topics of choice, ask questions, and speak about their interactions with stakeholders since the previous board meeting. Though this may scare some boards and superintendents, this is a great strategy to empower each board member to be part of the district's mission.
- **Focus on the signal, not the ground noise.** When differing opinions are expressed and disagreements occur, listen to what is truly being said. Overwhelmingly, each board member and the superintendent is trying to do what is right and create the best opportunities for each student. With this understanding, there must be some give and take. Don't focus exclusively on some of the most outlandish ideas or remarks but try to figure out what the speaker means. One mistake doesn't mean a board member is an obstructionist regarding transforming the district, and neither is the superintendent the devil by speaking the truth. Board members and superintendents must focus on action, votes, and deeds, and not necessarily on what is said in the heat of the moment.

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‘We’ not ‘Me’

In the worst-case scenario, stakeholders’ confidence can dissipate—not just in the leaders themselves but also in the validity of the leaders’ decisions—when boards and superintendents are viewed only within the scope of their different leadership roles. These leaders form a core team essential in school districts everywhere. In many cases, the foundation for these teams’ effectiveness, or the lack thereof, is set by the overall communication strategies they choose to employ.

Though personal ideas, values, and agendas will always be present, the need for a unified message cannot be underestimated. We contend that a unified message does not silence the individual board member, since every board member should have a voice in developing a shared and collaborative message. The board chair and superintendent are responsible for ensuring that every member of the board is active in developing the team’s message to reduce the possibility of public disagreements.

Nor can the word “we” be overemphasized in the relationship between the board of education and the superintendent. Board and superintendent relationships can be complex. They have different, sometimes competing roles, but need each other to provide effective leadership for the district. To be clear, board members and

superintendents hopefully took their positions with the desire to do something positive for students. Creating positive outcomes for students must be the “North Star” that forms the united relationship between boards of education and superintendents. From the desire to create positive outcomes for students, a unified message should form in all matters.

The public—constituents, parents, faculty, and staff members—pay attention to what is said by board members and superintendents. If there are competing messages, the public could begin to question the effectiveness of districts and their leaders. Additionally, competing messages foment factions within the district, instead of getting everyone working toward the same goal of helping every student to earn a quality education that helps to prepare them for college or a career.

The word “we” should be heard and clearly conveyed repeatedly in board meetings, press releases, and social media posts, and in public face-to-face meetings. No matter how successful the outcome or the size of the failure, “we” should resonate throughout the message. With “we,” there is no finger-pointing, but rather a collaborative reflection of how the team—the board of education and superintendent—could do things differently that will result in success.

Practical Strategies:

- ***Develop a strategic vision and communicate this vision regularly and consistently.*** When the board communicates about any topic, issue, or policy, the message should always relate to the strategic vision for the district. When the board communicates the vision, there is no place for a singular voice, but instead, a united voice.
- ***Ensure the board has clear roles for communication.*** In many cases, the board chair should be the face of the communication for the board. Together, the chair and superintendent can communicate agreement in decision-making. Whenever possible, individual board members should work closely with the board chair or vice chair, the superintendent, the public relations officer, or all of the above to make sure that the message is in line with the overall goals of the board.
- ***Understand that the superintendent works for the board in most cases and communicates the board’s message.*** Superintendents should not be communicating their personal views alone but the views of the board team. The superintendent can only communicate the message of the board if the superintendent and board have a strong, positive, and collegial working relationship based on trust. Too often, those relationships can derail because of a loss of trust, breach of confidence, or failure to communicate the leadership team’s message accurately.

Brian K. Creasman (brian.creasman@fleming.kyschools.us) is in his seventh year as superintendent of the Fleming County Public Schools in northcentral Kentucky. Brad Hughes (bradhughes1952@gmail.com) retired in 2017 after 24 years as director of communications services for the Kentucky School Boards Association.

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- a foreword and book review by former NSBA president and current Kentucky state representative C. Ed Massey
- an afterword and review by Iowa Association of School Boards Executive Director and former NSBA associate executive director Lisa Bartusek
- reviews by former NSBA presidents C.H. “Sonny” Savoie of Louisiana (a sitting school board member) and Norm Wooten of Alaska (that state association’s current executive director); Arizona School Boards Association Deputy Executive Director Tracey Benson and Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Senior Field Service Director Nick Caruso (both former chairpersons of NSBA’s Council of School Boards Association Communicators); Terry Grier, who worked as superintendent of large school systems in California, North Carolina, and Texas; and Greg Goins who served as the superintendent of two Illinois school districts and is a professor of school leadership at Georgetown College in Kentucky.

A hand holds a tablet displaying a vibrant forest scene. A river flows through a lush green forest with tall evergreen trees. The text 'LEARNING' is in large, white, sans-serif capital letters, followed by 'that takes you where you want to go!' in a white script font. In the bottom left corner is the Idaho Forest Products Commission logo, and in the bottom right corner is the Project Learning Tree Idaho logo.

LEARNING

*that takes you
where you
want to go!*



LEARN AND TEACH ABOUT IDAHO'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Free resources • Personalized support • Professional development

idahoforests.org/plt

Environmental Literacy



Why Tree Cookies Should be on Your Education Menu

Slices of tree trunks are powerful teaching tools for environmental literacy. Give someone of any age a tree cookie and watch how it inspires curiosity and exploration. This simple disc of wood can help learners understand how trees grow, to be sure. But can it also help solve some of the critical issues facing Idaho and the world?

Why Environmental Literacy Is Important

Our future depends on a population that is environmentally literate. Agriculture, forestry, water, outdoor recreation, tourism, energy, and mining are important facets of Idaho's economy. How do we maintain the quality of the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the land we all love, while sustaining the natural resources that underlie Idaho's quality of life? In order to answer these critical questions we need engaged citizens with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to make responsible decisions for how we achieve this balance. We need citizens who can work collaboratively to develop innovative solutions to perplexing problems. We need our schools to prepare students for these challenges and encourage them to pursue rewarding careers in natural resources and related fields.

What is Environmental Education?

Environmental Education (EE) is a process that encourages students to explore issues, engage in problem solving, and take responsible action to resolve challenges. EE does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, EE teaches students how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking. It enhances problem-solving and decision-making skills. EE is a broad umbrella, encompassing multiple subject areas along with development of a variety of skills.

Environmental Education has far-reaching effects. The National Environmental Education Foundation notes that research has shown these benefits of EE:

- Creates enthusiastic students and innovative teacher-leaders
- Builds critical thinking and relationship skills
- Fosters leadership qualities
- Makes other school subjects rich and relevant
- Teaches students to be real-world problem solvers
- Helps students become self-directed learners
- Gets apathetic students excited about learning
- EE schools demonstrate better academic performance across the curriculum
- Matches perfectly with community service learning requirements
- Offers all students equal chances at academic success
- Access to nature and outdoor play offer a host of health benefits

How can Idaho schools incorporate EE into their already full instruction time?

Luckily, EE doesn't need to be an add-on. By using the environment as an integrating instructional theme, EE topics can be woven throughout existing curricula to meet current Idaho content standards. Our state has a wealth of affordable and easily accessible high quality EE resources that are available to teachers and students. Many of these resources are provided through well-respected professional development classes that equip and empower teachers to effectively use the activities and materials to accomplish curricular goals and increase student achievement.

Forest-Related Environmental Education In Idaho

One exemplary model of EE in Idaho is provided by the Idaho Forest Products Commission (IFPC), a state agency funded by forest products businesses. IFPC partners with local, state, and federal agencies and organizations to provide forest-related environmental education throughout the state. The cornerstone of IFPC's approach to education is Project Learning Tree (PLT), an award-winning EE program designed for teachers and others working with youth from preschool through grade 12. PLT is delivered in all 50 states and several countries through a large and diverse network of partners. IFPC serves as the home base for PLT in Idaho.

Through standards-aligned activities, PLT helps develop students' awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the environment, builds their skills and ability to make informed decisions, and encourages them to take personal responsibility for sustaining the environment and our quality of life that depends on it. By teaching students how to think, not what to think, about complex environmental issues, PLT helps young people learn the problem-solving skills they need to make thoughtful choices about the environment, and to be part of a modern workforce faced with devising solutions to increasingly complex environmental issues.

How Can Idaho Schools Access These Resources?

Project Learning Tree is provided in Idaho through in-service teacher trainings in the school year, and during weekend and summer workshops. To support PLT activities, the Idaho Forest Products Commission provides abundant Idaho-specific resources and opportunities, such as grants, free posters, and other printed materials, Forest History student readers, essay and photo contests for students, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) outreach programs, the weeklong Sustainable Forestry Tour for Teachers & Counselors, hands-on teaching kits, and social media. Information about these resources and opportunities, along with videos and other online resources, are available at the comprehensive website: idahoforests.org.

But Wait, There's More!

People who work in natural resources tend to be happy individuals who are passionate about their jobs. Reach out to people in your community who work in these fields. You may be surprised at what they can offer your schools, including guest presenters, mentors, field trip opportunities, job shadowing, citizen science projects, and hands-on specimens. Maybe they'll invite you to join them for tree cookies! Working together, we can set our students on the road to success and know that Idaho's sustainable future is in good hands. *Esto Perpetua!*

The youngest students begin with counting annual rings. Older students grapple with the complexities of how decisions are made to achieve sustainable forest management. A humble tree cookie can help build environmental literacy from PreK through high school



**IDAHO FOREST
PRODUCTS
COMMISSION**



THE LAST WORD

By Karen Echeverria / ISBA Executive Director

CHANGE: An Ongoing Process at ISBA



As I stated in my last SLATE article, I thought I would take some time to reflect on my career here at the Idaho School Boards Association as I write my last articles. In the Spring issue, I wrote about the legislative session and what we have accomplished the last 14 years.

In this issue, I want to focus on the business part of ISBA. ISBA is a small non-profit that has been in existence since 1942. ISBA's Mission is, "The Idaho School Boards Association Advocates for Idaho Students and Public Education with Leadership and Service for Local School Boards" and our Vision is "Empower Local Boards for Student Success". Essentially, the reason for our organization is to provide services to our members. As you can imagine, those services have changed extensively over nearly 80 years.

Relevant Services

In order to remain relevant to our members and to assure we are providing them with a return on investment, we need to continuously review the services we provide. We ask whether the service is useful or helpful, if there is a service we don't provide that our members need, or if there are services we do provide that are no longer useful. During the years I have been here, we have added, changed, and removed services. We believe that this should be an ongoing process. Otherwise, we would risk becoming stagnant. Thus, the need for continuous review.



Events

Annual Convention

ISBA has held an Annual Convention for as far back as we can research – decades. As near as we can tell, it has always been held around early to mid-November. We think there are many reasons for that. The first reason is, the rates we can get at hotels during the “off-season”. Second, there is the need to set our legislative platform before the legislative session begins, so January or later doesn't work. We can't do it in the summer because of high hotel rates and because many of our members may not attend. Late summer and early fall is a busy time of year for schools. With that said, we have looked at other times but always end up back in the same timeframe.

The Annual Convention used to begin on a Tuesday and end on a Saturday at noon. We realized that the Saturday morning event was not well attended, and the Tuesday Early Birds did not fare much better. We decided to work on a new, truncated schedule that would eliminate a couple of days while still providing the same amount of content. It meant longer days and less (no!) down time but a shorter schedule.

Thus far, our members seem to like the shorter schedule. Even though we shortened the number of days, we included more workshop options. Because of those two things, we have more than doubled our attendance at the Annual Convention. That has caused some logistical issues with workshop rooms, but it is a good problem to have!

Another big issue with the Convention is the location. We are required to sign contracts for facilities three years out, so there is definitely some planning involved. By the time I arrived, Sun Valley had been moved out of the mix, and were going back and forth between Boise and Coeur d'Alene. We left Sun Valley because they were no longer big enough to handle our increased numbers when it came not to hotel rooms but to workshop session space. However, after some remodeling that now provides for more space, we have signed a contract to go back to Sun Valley. That should have been this last year but, because of COVID, it has been postponed. As those of you who attend Convention know, the Coeur d'Alene Resort is also getting too small. We are do believe using the boats helped ease that at the last Convention. In any case, as long as Sun Valley works out for us, I imagine you will be using all three locations in the future.

All of us at the ISBA offices enjoy Annual Convention so much. We really enjoy getting to see everyone. For many of us, it is the only time of year that we get to see our members. It is a ton of work, and we are exhausted after, but it's a good tired.

Day on the Hill and Region Meetings

We continue to hold Day on the Hill (DOTH) in February. We have changed the format some, but that has been at the request of the House and Senate Education Chairs. We have managed to keep the main purpose for DOTH which is for all of you to meet with your legislators during lunch.

We hold Region Meetings in the fall each year. We changed the timing of region meetings this year. In the past, we would hold region meetings with legislators PRIOR to the approval of our resolutions by our membership at the Business Session. That meant we ended up discussing issues that we then did not approve. While they have not been totally planned for this fall, we are going to combine the Region Meetings with some professional development. We hope that will bring more members to the Meetings.

While they are an “event,” I will write more about Summer/Spring Leadership Institute in the Professional Development portion of the article.

Legal Services

One of the first big changes we made was with our legal services. ISBA used to employ an in-house attorney. Because he was an employee of ISBA, school districts and charters could call our office for free legal advice. He also oversaw the policy program. However, that employee really had no connection to the legislative department. As such, I felt like there was a disconnect between our legal and policy department and the new laws that were passed. How on earth could we provide updated policies and legal advice if we didn't know the impact of the new laws?

In 2010, we made a decision to contract with an outside legal firm, Anderson, Julian and Hull (AJH). That meant no more in-house free legal service, so we needed to find a way to provide some free legal service to districts and charters. This is when each of you started receiving four free hours of legal service each fiscal year.

Our research indicates that districts and charters call AJH for legal advice far more often than they used to call our office. In addition, we spend less money for this service than we did to employ a full-time attorney on staff.

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In addition to the legal work AJH does individually for you, they also craft and/or review many of the Questions of the Day that we send out. For instance, all of the information we sent related to employment during COVID and on the use of ESSER funds were drafted by AJH. That assures that you are all getting the same advice, statewide. We then share that information with the State Department of Education, State Board of Education, and the Governor's Office.

This decision was a win-win for our members and ISBA.

Advocacy

About a year after we hired AJH, we also made a change in our advocacy department. Because I wrote in detail about our advocacy efforts in the last issue, I won't go into that here again. However, we knew that in order to be effective, we needed to understand the impact of any piece of legislation. We also needed to understand the laws well enough to know what policies would need to be amended, removed, or redrafted. Finally, that information needed to be shared with our legal counsel. In order to accomplish that, we needed to have all of this work done under the supervision of one director.

Quarterly Policy Update Service

As part of our restructure, we moved Misty Swanson out of the policy department and moved her into a larger management role. Jess Harrison took over the policy department.

We had recently hired Jess, and her first order of business was to figure out what policies we had and what policies needed to be written. Again, because there was a disconnect between advocacy, legal, and policy, so many of our policies were out-of-date. Her involvement in the legislative session helped start that process. However, it would be a years' long process to get the policies to a place that we felt like they were all accurate. That was a concerted effort between ISBA and AJH.

Her second goal was to increase the number of districts that participated in our quarterly update service. At that time, about 60% of our members subscribed to this service. We worked to increase that to our current level of about 90%. One of our biggest selling points was the cost of our service.

Much like they were a decade ago, our competitors are still charging 10-15 times more than what we charge for the same service. In addition, they were only providing an update once a year, sometime in the fall. That meant they were missing many of the federal updates. I believe that our competitors are now doing quarterly updates.

Complete Policy Manual Rewrite Service

Once we got all of our policies cleaned up and had essentially saturated the policy update market, many of our member districts realized their policies were woefully out-of-date. Many superintendents and Boards did not realize the importance of keeping policies current and the impact that can have on a district. When a district's or charter's policies get this far out of whack, sometimes, the best course of action is to do a complete rewrite.

When we first started the restructure of this department, we were working on one rewrite. That rewrite took far longer than it should have and, quite frankly, was not done to our specifications. Today, we have a full-time employee, April Hoy, who is currently working on 24 rewrites, and we have completed several more. For those of you familiar with your policy manual, you know how many policies there are. We work on one section at a time, and it usually takes 2-3 years to complete.

Charter School Specific Manual

After adding charter schools to our membership, we had many of them asking if we had a policy manual that was specific to charter schools. While much of the information is the same for both charters and districts, some is not. For instance, charter school Board elections are much different than those run by traditional districts. In addition, they don't run bonds or levies but they do run lotteries for school attendance.

Several years ago, we worked with AJH to write a new manual that was specific to charters. We keep that manual up-to-date just like we do the traditional Policy Manual.

Bringing Advocacy, Policies, and Legal Altogether

Based on legislation or rule and regulation changes in either Idaho or Washington DC, Quinn and April craft new or updated policies. AJH (usually Amy White) reviews the policies and puts her seal of approval on them. Once AJH approves the policies, we send them out to districts and charters.

From there it is up to each of you to adopt the new policies. This should be a part of your regular monthly meetings. If you don't have a regular process for policy adoption, we would recommend that you create a committee to begin this process. If not, you will be one of those districts or charters who will be looking at the arduous task of a complete rewrite.

We have been successful in tying advocacy, legislation, policy, and legal all together. We think this helps create a better product.

Professional Development

Our next area of focus for services to our members was the professional development department. We had always done professional development for Boards but it was sporadic at best. We really didn't have a plan and we didn't have anyone doing outreach.

Then we made this wild decision to hire a clerk from Salmon to run our professional development department. And, as they say, the rest is history. Krissy and the rest of our team turned the professional development department into the successful program it is today.

Our statistics tell us that we train at least one person from every Board or charter for around 90% of our membership every year! That professional development can happen in your district/charter, at the Annual Convention, Day on the Hill, or Summer/Spring Leadership (SLI).

We used to have about five workshops you could choose from and the choices are now endless. In fact, you don't have to choose from a specific list, you can tell us what you need and we will create it for you. In addition, after an initial analysis by a member of our team, we can put a package of professional development together for you based on the specific needs of your district or charter.

We have also completely revamped SLI. It used to be strictly for new Board members. However, we found that several seasoned members as well as superintendents were attending the New Board Member Workshop. That prompted us to change the format as well as the content. Because we have so many members who want to attend, we hold SLI in five locations. That makes it easier for you to travel to and easier for us to provide room for everyone.

Several years ago, the legislature approved professional development funding for school board members. That was based on a recommendation from Governor Otter's Education Task Force. They realized that teachers and administrators, including superintendents, have professional development dollars. However, school Board members did not. When you are first elected, you are volunteers with no knowledge of the work you are about to undertake. The Task Force and the Governor felt it was important for Boards to receive professional development as well as the staff they govern. So, as long as you receive professional development from a qualified trainer, (all of ISBA's trainers are qualified,) and you received it for a qualified topic, all of it is fully reimbursed. In order to make that process as simple as possible for you, ISBA completes the form for you. All you need to do is get it signed and submit it!

We have just recently started Wednesday Webinars. These are one-hour webinars conducted by ISBA staff and/or others that may be able to bring expertise to you. They are typically conducted on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 1 pm MT. There is no charge for

these webinars and anyone in your district/charter is welcome to attend.

Finally, we have included the ability for you to receive a free job description manual or a free year's subscription to the Policy Update Service if you book a package of professional development. We know that many of you already use the policy update service, so this offer saves you \$695 a year.

Our professional development department and program has grown by nearly 200%. We expect to continue seeing it grow but at slower rates.

Superintendent Searches

We started the superintendent search service about six years ago. As I stated above, we started it based on feedback we got from our members and Misty Swanson's desire to start this service for our members. Prior to starting this program from the ground up, we didn't have any program like it. As with all new programs, we started off slowly, but today we have more searches in a year than we can almost handle. Once again, a good problem for us to have! We read last week that 1/3 of Idaho's superintendents will have turned-over in the last two years. That is a lot of searches and we have been involved with most of them. Some of our districts have been repeat customers for us.

As with many of our other services, we offer different levels of service with this program. We can help you with just the advertising or with the full search. If your district needs/wants more, you can also hire us for a year of mentoring for your new superintendent.

We recommend that you start your search early in the year. The entire process takes 6-8 weeks to complete and is time intensive for the Board if done properly. In addition, many superintendents start signing contracts early in the Spring, so you will want to have your search completed early to have access to the best pool of candidates.

We believe this new service has been a tremendous asset and value to our members.



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Publications

ISBA has always had a number of publications. Those that we have had for years have been revamped and we have created new ones as well. In addition, we hired a true publication specialist – someone who has expertise with artwork, placement, and color. This job used to be added to some employee's responsibilities with much of the work being outsourced.

SLATE

Our quarterly SLATE magazine is our premier publication and is still printed in hard copy and mailed to our members, including the district/charter office. We survey our members periodically, and they continue to ask for this publication in hard copy. For almost everything else, we publish electronically.

The SLATE used to be published six times a year. However, there was no set schedule or theme related to any issue. We now publish four times a year. That allows us to focus on certain topics in each issue. For instance, the Fall SLATE gives us the opportunity to highlight the upcoming Convention.

We have also worked incredibly hard to find writers that can provide you with relevant topics and issues that are important to all of you. If you are ever interested in writing something for us, please feel free to reach out.

Clerk's Manual

We started this publication sometime after I started with the office. While we call this the Clerk's Manual, it is also a good tool for superintendents, business managers, and Board members. It contains the forms and meeting notices that a Clerk is most likely to need while doing his/her job. We update manuals regularly after the legislative session so that it includes all of the amendments.

If you have not had the opportunity to look at the manual, I would encourage you to do so. It is available online on our website. It is a member service so it is password protected. If you need the password, please call our office.

Job Description Manual

Another new publication we started is the Job Description Manual. It contains over 100 job descriptions from janitor to principal. Each job description includes qualifications, a job summary, major duties, and responsibilities. This makes your hiring process much simpler. In addition, by using these job descriptions, it will ensure that you have included all of the necessary responsibilities and legal requirements for each description. The job descriptions are sent to you electronically and in Word format so that you can easily edit them.

As a reminder, you can receive a free copy of the Job Description Manual if you book a professional development package with us.

New Board Member Packet

We created this publication in order to provide our new Board members with a one-stop-shop publication that they could refer to any time during their tenure as a Board member. The ISBA New Board Member Packet provides newly-elected board members with the tools they need to make educated decisions. Each packet includes:

- Basics of Governance
- Parliamentary Procedure Motions Guide
- Being an Effective Board Member
- 8 Characteristics of an Effective Board Member
- What Every Board Member Needs to Know About the District/Charter
- Glossary of Education Terms
- Education Acronyms / Abbreviation

If your new Board members are in need of this packet, please reach out to us.

Other Publications

In addition to those publications that we create on a regular basis, our publications department is also responsible for creating the Convention Book (including the Business Session Book), Day on the Hill program, ISBA Prospectus, Membership Services brochure, So You Want to be a School Board Member brochure, advertising post cards for all of our events, and Superintendent Search brochures.

Master Agreements and Salary Schedules on the Website

Several years ago, we began collecting master agreements and salary schedules from all of the districts around the state and publishing those on our website. That allows any member to search master agreements for other districts in your area or districts that are similar in size. This will help you to know if the salaries and benefits you are providing to your staff are comparable to those in other districts.

We believe that by having a full-time employee dedicated to our publications we have upgraded the quality and amount of publications we provide. That means more benefit to our members.

Bylaws of ISBA

The composition of our Executive Board is outlined in our bylaws. It consists of 22 members – 2 from each of our nine region--and four officers. The full Board meets at least three times a year. There are several subcommittees of the Board, most of which are also outlined in our bylaws. Those subcommittees are responsible for overseeing the activities of the staff and office.

Charter Schools as Full Members

During my time at ISBA, we have made several significant amendments to the bylaws. The first of those bylaw changes was to include charter schools as full members of ISBA. This was a significant amendment and took several years to accomplish. When the bylaw amendment was finally approved by the membership it passed with over 90% approval of our members.

Charter schools used to be affiliate members only. They received all of the services available to traditional schools but were unable to hold office in our association or bring or vote on resolutions. There was a concern by some that by allowing charters to be full members, they would eventually take over our association.

The main reason for the amendment was related to advocacy. Prior to including charter schools, we were always at odds with them during the legislative session. By including them as members, we can now all speak with one voice instead of having “them vs. us” discussions resolved by state policymakers. Additionally, ISBA advocates for ALL public school students, not just those who attend traditional schools.

Adding charters has accounted for a significant increase in our revenue. At the same time, we also provide more services as well.

Voting Structure

This bylaw changed the voting structure used by the ISBA for the Resolution process. The old voting structure had been in place for decades. As you all know, Idaho has seen tremendous growth over the years. Much of that growth has been in the larger metropolitan areas of the State.

Both the old and the new voting structures are based on student populations. The intent was then, and still is, to assure that a few big districts can out-vote a larger group of small districts. However, with the growth in population, the old voting structure did just the opposite. It made it impossible for the large districts to out-vote the small.

The new voting structure that was approved by the membership uses a multiplier to assure that extra-large and large districts have approximately the same amount of votes as do the small and medium districts. It allows the ISBA Executive Board to change that multiplier but only to assure that the votes stay consistent between groupings of districts.

This bylaw change now gives everyone an equal vote based on their student populations and allows for the bylaw to remain valid for years to come.

Dues Structure

This bylaw amendment was much the same as the voting bylaw change. It was something that needed to be done for at least a decade, but it was difficult to find the right balance. It was a complicated formula based on M&O and student populations.

The old bylaw was one we “backed into”. In other words, staff and the Board would determine how much revenue was needed for the next fiscal year, subtract out how much other revenue we were expecting, and what was left was the amount of dues we would request. Wouldn't that be a nice way for each of you to set your budget each year?

This new formula did away with M&O and is based strictly on student populations. We set a baseline the first year and any future dues increases will now increase by a certain percentage – for instance, a 3% increase. While your dues may increase or decrease as the new amount is phased in, if your student population increases or decreases, or if the Executive Board increases or decreases dues, this formula is easier to understand and should offer greater predictability from year to year.

As with the voting formula amendment, we believe this will provide more stability for districts and charters in determining the increase in your dues each year.

The Business of ISBA

ISBA is a small nonprofit that was formed in 1942. As part of that nonprofit, we have bylaws adopted by the membership, Governance Policies adopted by the ISBA Executive Board, and an Employee Handbook that is approved by that Board.

The Board approves an operating budget each year, and we live within those parameters. We have reserve accounts for emergencies like all of you do. We are required to file a tax return every year and our financial statements are audited or reviewed each year.

The Board's officers have more oversight over the day-to-day work than the remainder of the Board. However, each Board member is also involved in at least two subcommittees.



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Business Partners and Affiliates

ISBA partners with several companies that either already do business with school districts and charter schools or are hoping to do business with them. They sponsor events throughout the year, write articles for the SLATE, and place advertisements in our publications.

We have a strong vetting program to assure that the companies we partner with are ones that we would be proud to have work with you. They come with good recommendations from other state school board associations or districts in those states.

We recently revamped this program. In doing so, we hope to bring even more possible business partners to all of you.

BuyBoard

One business affiliate we want to highlight is BuyBoard. They are a buying consortium. By purchasing through BuyBoard, you can don't have to go out to bid because the consortium has already done that part for you. In addition, you can buy everything from pens to school buses and everything in between. Because it is a consortium, you can usually buy products at prices much lower than would otherwise be available.

We know this service has been of huge value to several Idaho districts and charters that have purchased millions of dollars in products through BuyBoard.

Selling the Building

One of the big things that happened in the last few years was the sale of the building we owned since 2007. It was an older building with two separate floors and was not conducive to all of our staff being on one floor. In addition, the building was old and in need of some significant repairs.

After much discussion, the Board decided to sell the building in 2017. It didn't take too long before we received a reasonable offer from a development company in downtown Boise. We did not yet have a piece of property that we wanted to buy but the offer was good enough that we decided to figure out the rest later.

As luck would have it, we found our current location and were able to move from one location directly into the next. In addition, the new location came completely furnished, so we did not need to move any of our big furniture!

This new building has been a great location for us. It is literally 1.5 blocks from the Capitol and two blocks from the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education. We are able to walk back and forth to meetings on a moment's notice, and we don't have to try to find parking in downtown Boise.

Furthermore, we were able to pay off the loan on the old building and currently have a loan for about ½ of the former loan's amount. We will pay off this space quicker and no longer have a mortgage payment.

All-in-all, this was a good move for ISBA both financially and location wise.

Staff at ISBA

As you all know, staff is always the biggest asset of any organization – public or private. That is certainly true for ISBA.

As I previously discussed, we have increased our services dramatically over the last few years. Like all of you, our ability to provide any service is dependent on the revenue we receive each year. Also like all of you, the biggest part of our budget is salaries and benefits – although our salaries and benefits run in the 60% range, much lower than districts and charters.

When I came on board in 2007, we had six employees. We currently have nine. One of those employees has been here longer than I have and several others have been here nearly as long as me. Our newest employee worked for us as an intern and is now back with us full-time. So, we have a mix of longevity.

We also have a mix of personalities and expertise. I am a detail oriented task manager. I am NOT creative. As such, I have tried to surround myself with creative people to make up for my lack of such. With that said, we also have a couple other detail oriented people in the office as well.

I am incredibly proud of the team we have created here at ISBA and even more proud of the work they do.

Change

As I noted at the beginning of the article, many things have changed over the years. We feel confident that services we provide are an incredible value to districts and charters and that the bylaw amendments that have occurred make ISBA a stronger and more stable association.

I don't know what changes will come in the years after I retire. ISBA will undoubtedly continue to reexamine the services it provides and its structure, making changes to meet the evolving needs of our members. During my time at ISBA, I have been proud to oversee and help bring about many big changes that leave us in a better position to serve the interests of public schools and their students.



WEDNESDAY WEBINAR



Did you know that we offer a free one-hour webinar each month? Join us for our Wednesday Webinars, which usually occur on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 1:00 PM Mountain Time / 12:00 PM Pacific Time. More information about each month's topic can be found on our website at:

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