

## Educators & Legislators: A More Visible Alliance

### Introduction

*I have been in Idaho classrooms for the last 24 years. I graduated from Eagle High School and have attended the University of Idaho and Boise State University. I accepted my first teaching position in a Title I school right here in Boise. I currently teach pre-service and in-service teachers from all over southern Idaho. I volunteer in my own kids' classrooms and help the neighborhood kids with their homework. I **am** a teacher, and I have been blessed with countless educational opportunities, professional development, and mentor relationships that have helped me to learn more and be better for my students and my community every day. Public education is my passion, and **I wouldn't be who I am without the incredible efforts by the Idaho Legislature to support our K-16 public school system.***

### Reasons for Celebration

- ✓ Starting teacher pay has increased from approximately \$26,000 to \$40,000 in the span of my career, and the average Idaho teacher salary in 2019 was \$50,757
- ✓ 67% of Idaho teachers have 6 or more years of experience in the classroom
- ✓ 40% of Idaho teachers hold a master's degree or higher
- ✓ Despite ranking 51st nationally in per-pupil spending, Idaho is ranked 26th in PreK-12 education quality
- ✓ The Idaho Legislature and State Department of Education have consistently provided funding for high-impact professional development to Idaho teachers (RMCs, ICN, MoDAL, STEM AC, REACH to name a few)
- ✓ There are educators like Jorge Pulleiro in every district and school in Idaho, who are relentlessly devoted to their students' growth, well-being, and academic success

### Reasons for Concern

- ❑ Idaho is experiencing a teacher shortage, and many districts across Idaho have had to hire uncertified teachers to fill vacant positions
- ❑ Idaho ranks 40th in the nation for average instructional staff salaries, which is significantly lower than 5 of 6 neighboring states
- ❑ 80% of Idaho school districts are operating with critical funding from voter-approved bonds and levies
- ❑ Teachers, educational leaders, and the public school system are being publicly and needlessly villainized by influential people and organizations in our state
- ❑ Many proposed pieces of legislation in the current 2021 session have the potential to negatively impact Idaho's students and its public education system.
  - HB62 has the potential to divert funding, teachers, and students from public schools to private schools
  - HB66 has the potential to negatively impact voters' understanding and support of proposed bonds and levies

### Call to Action

*Idaho's students, families, educators, and public school system desperately need more visible support from and allegiance with the Idaho Legislature. Great things are happening inside Idaho's public schools because of the efforts of educators and legislators. Students are learning at high levels, teachers and instructional staff are growing rapidly and deeply in their content and pedagogical knowledge, and local districts know and aim to meet the complex needs and desires of their students and communities. **I urge the members of the Idaho Legislature to more publicly and consistently acknowledge the expertise and professionalism of Idaho educators, intentionally seek perspectives and insight from educators regarding policies that will impact Idaho students and public schools, and partner closely with educators to continue to serve all of Idaho's children in our powerful public education system.** It is imperative that educators and legislators work together to build an unwavering trust in each other and restore stakeholder confidence in this critical institution.*

**"We can do more *together* than we can do individually to improve teaching and learning."**

(City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2016, p.3)

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