Concepts that provide critical fuel for professional educators; inspiring, educating and activating, were reinforced as the central theme of the 2016 Idaho Education Association Delegate Assembly and Annual Meeting. Held at the Boise Centre April 22-23, the 124th convening of this great event featured a spirited and productive group of 366 delegates making key decisions about the future of the association.

Inspiration is found in many places, both expected and unlikely, and it permeated the atmosphere of Delegate Assembly. IEA President Penni Cyr and Executive Director Robin Nettinga used their leadership address as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on a handful of IEA members who personify inspiration. Levi Cavener from the Vallivue Education Association, Kelly Aiken (Coeur d’Alene), Sherri Burke (Middleton), Jeni Fereday (Moscow), and Rob Orsini (Jefferson County) were all singled out for recognition and applauded by the assembled delegates.

Another highlight of the event was the rousing address delivered by the keynote speaker, Dr. Kevin Gilbert. Channeling his roots growing up in the deep south and his experiences as a member of the National Education Association’s Executive Council and the NEA’s school to prison pipeline task force, Gilbert’s up-tempo speech brought into focus the sensitive issues of institutional racism and social justice.

A popular and important part of the Delegate Assembly each year is the Children’s Fund auction, and 2016 was no exception. A multitude of items, large and small, were up for bid in the silent auction, and the generosity of IEA members was incredible. Becky Gibson’s cash contribution on behalf of her late father, former IEA President Bob Day, was one of several donations made in remembrance of family members or friends who have recently passed away. The final tabulation for funds raised at Delegate Assembly was $20,429, bringing the total Children’s Fund contributions for this year to an amazing $58,267. For more information on the IEA Children’s Fund, including how to donate, visit http://idahoea.org/parents-community/iea-childrens-fund/.

Befitting a large organization that places a high value on the democratic process, there was considerable debate and discussion about a number of issues and new business items. Three noteworthy developments were approved by the delegates and will be implemented by IEA leadership and staff.

- The 2019 Delegate Assembly will take place in Coeur d’Alene. This is a one-time relocation designed to bolster membership efforts and generate publicity for the IEA in North Idaho.
- An ESP-specific Sparks training for early career educators will be developed for 2016-17.
- The IEA will work to inform the NEA and other states about the importance of the Blaine amendments, which prohibit direct government aid to schools that have a religious affiliation.
Public Education is the Cornerstone of Our Democracy: Let’s Keep It That Way

As Americans, we collectively believe that where you start in life should not determine where you end up. That’s why one of the cornerstones of our American democratic way of life is the belief that every child, regardless of his or her race, socio-economic status, religion or ability, has the right to a tuition-free education. More than 60 years ago in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld that principle in their landmark Brown vs the Board of Education decision, which declared that in America, all children, regardless of their race, should have equal access to a quality education. Every state constitution declares that state’s commitment to provide a system of free public schools. At least 37 state constitutions contain an amendment named for former U.S. Speaker of the House James Blaine, who promoted an amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting the use of state funds at “sectarian” schools. These so-called “Blaine Amendments” place restrictions on the state government’s ability to aid private and religious schools. Idaho’s state constitution contains a similar provision.

Given our nation’s historical commitment to the promise of a free and equitable public education, one might ask why it is that we find ourselves engaging in more and more “school choice” discussions and battles. During the just-concluded 2016 legislative session, the IEA lobby team dealt with several problematic concepts and pieces of legislation.

- Calls for a change to Idaho’s state constitution to allow for public money to be used for private and parochial schools.
- Efforts to further weaken Idaho’s already less-than-stringent charter school laws.
- Legislation allowing individual schools to opt out of state laws, state board rules, and local school board policies, all in the name of “innovation.”

While we were able to stave off some of these ideas, others easily made their way through the legislative process and are now law. While touted as Idaho ideas, many school choice ideas can be traced back to the undue influence of one of the biggest opponents of our nation’s public education system: The American Legislative Exchange Council, also known as ALEC. This ultra-conservative, right-wing, privately-funded group is comprised of state legislators and policymakers from across the nation whose ultimate goal is to privatize public education. ALEC uses money from their wealthy donors to develop “model legislation” and encourage their lawmaker-members to introduce that legislation in their own states.

Several pieces of ALEC-inspired legislation have been introduced in Idaho in previous sessions, and this year was no exception. HB 570, Rep. Wendy Horman’s “Innovation Schools Act” is modeled on legislation introduced in Indiana and Colorado, where both states shaped their legislation on a piece of ALEC model legislation. The ideas embodied in Rep. Ronald Nate’s resolution asking voters to change Idaho’s constitution to allow the state to send public tax dollars to private and religious schools also came from the ALEC playbook.

Those of us dedicated to preserving our system of free, public education know that such attacks will continue in ensuing years. That’s why we must be forever vigilant to these attacks. However, to win the game, we must have both an offensive and a defensive strategy to counter these privatization efforts. That’s why over the course of the next few months, the IEA lobby team will be developing a number of concepts and proposals for introduction during the coming legislation session that hold all entities—public and private—to transparency. Additionally, we will continue our efforts to assure every child, regardless of where he or she lives or worships, or the financial status of his or her family, has an equal opportunity to a free, public education. We urge you to join us in those efforts.

Penni Cyr, IEA President
Robin Nettinga, IEA Executive Director

The 2016 legislative session lasted 75 days, but you can get a complete rundown on all of the education-related legislation in our IEA Reporter podcast. Listen as IEA President Penni Cyr, Executive Director Robin Nettinga, and Director of Public Policy Matt Compton share their insight and expertise in a recap of the session.

http://idahoea.org/news/iea-leaders-discuss-legislative-session/
With relatively little disagreement, the Idaho legislature moved forward with funding for the second year of the Career Ladder teacher salary allocation plan during the 2016 session. Discretionary funding also received a boost and a number of specific initiatives were targeted for line item monies. However, legislative action on leadership premiums and a looming threat of privatization efforts created cause for concern from the recently-completed session.

When legislative leaders collaborated with the IEA and other education groups a year ago to craft the Career Ladder, it was envisioned as a five-year plan that would need to be funded on a year-by-year basis by succeeding legislatures. Year two (FY17) has now been funded in the amount of $41.5 million, which represents a 6.7% increase in salary funding for teachers. Pupil services staff were also moved over to the Career Ladder. “We are glad to see that the legislature provided full funding for year two, which is a positive step forward in helping Idaho attract and retain quality teachers,” IEA President Penni Cyr says. “We hope that they will stay the course in year three, which is the most expensive year of the Career Ladder plan.”

The 2016 legislative session also included a 7.6% increase in discretionary funding (sometimes called operational funding). This action boosts allocation levels per support unit back to the high-water mark of 2009, but is not indexed for inflation. While this is a notable accomplishment, a number of education leaders, including Cyr and State Superintendent for Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra stressed that the mission has not been completed. “Comparable to 2009 was a target, but comparable is not synonymous with sufficient,” Ybarra noted.

Leadership premiums remain a piece of the puzzle for teacher compensation, but there were developments on that front as well. The minimum that individual teachers can receive in leadership premiums was increased from $850 to $900, but no additional money was added to the program. Inconsistencies in allocation and reporting have caused the legislature to take a longer look at the overall structure of leadership premiums.

Other specific programs or initiatives that received funding in the FY17 budget include:

- Professional development and mentoring for teachers. A 23% increase ($2.375 million) brings the total to $16.4 million to assist teachers with classroom skills.
- Early literacy/reading intervention. $9.1 million was earmarked to identify and assist kindergartners through third-graders who are not reading at grade level.
- College/career advising. To help move Idaho closer to the goal of having 60% of people age 25-34 holding a degree or certificate by the year 2020, $5 million was targeted to help students with their college and/or career planning.
- Classroom technology. An additional $5 million was added to this category, bringing the total to $18 million.

Good News on the Policy Front—and Cause for Concern

A number of policy developments related to education came out of the legislative session, most of them positive, or at least neutral, for professional educators. Among the notable changes that teachers should be aware of are:

- Sick leave transfer. New legislation removed the 90-day limit on transfer of sick leave by individuals. This provides more flexibility for teachers changing districts or moving to other state-affiliated positions.
- Teacher evaluations. Responsibility for oversight of the evaluators has been transferred from the State Department of Education to the State Board of Education, and the deadline for completion of evaluations has been extended from May 1 to June 1.
- School safety. The legislature created a new Office of School Safety within the current Division of Building Safety.

One troubling piece of legislation was passed late in the session. Senate Bill 1248 allows charter schools to issue contracts of their choice to teachers rather than using the standard contract approved by the State Superintendent. The IEA has significant concerns that this legislation will destabilize the employment relationship between teachers and schools, arbitrarily create multiple tiers of teachers, and undermine collective bargaining rights. You can read more about this issue, along with the negative consequences tied to further privatization of the public school system, in the leadership letter on page two.

IEA legislative team—Executive Director Robin Nettinga, President Penni Cyr and Director of Public Policy Matt Compton
Building a Better Blaine County
Visibility and Community Engagement Are Part of a Powerful Plan

A rustic mountain ranch deep in the heart of central Idaho may seem like an unlikely location for the renaissance of a local education association, but the pristine wilderness of Wildhorse Creek Ranch did serve as the springboard to a new future for the Blaine County Education Association. Co-presidents Maritt Wolfrom and Trintje Van Slyke gathered at the ranch with other members of the BCEA, along with colleagues from the Jerome Education Association, in August of 2015, to develop their strategic plan and forge a new path forward for their local.

Although neither one grew up in Idaho, Wolfrom and Van Slyke have now both lived and worked in the Wood River Valley for more than a decade, and the two have shared oversight of the BCEA and its eight school buildings for the last five years. Despite experiencing some bumps in the road during the era of the Luna Laws, the BCEA has historically been a stable local association. A generally positive working relationship with the Blaine County School District, along with the economic and philosophical advantages that come from the prestigious Sun Valley resort and community, have helped the BCEA to ride out the recent recession and put their best foot forward on behalf of the area’s teachers and students.

When an NEA grant provided an opportunity to give their local association a booster shot, Wolfrom and Van Slyke jumped at the chance. Then came the retreat at Wildhorse Creek Ranch, where IEA staffers Sue Widgorski and Linda Jones helped the BCEA come up with a strategic plan.

After some reflection and discussion, the BCEA was another big initiative. “Whenever we were mentioned in the local paper, we were tagged with a reference to ‘the Teachers Union’, which comes with some baggage and negativity,” Wolfrom says. So they tried to shine a spotlight on individual members to reinforce the idea that BCEA members are part of the community—not some ethereal, evil conglomerate intent on turning the county inside-out. Wolfrom herself became part of that effort when she was profiled in the March 16th edition of the Idaho Mountain Express as the “Woman of the Year”.

Working side-by-side with others in the community for the greater good was not a new phenomenon for the BCEA, but they geared up those efforts another notch and reinforced their participation in the public eye. “It wasn’t a difficult request because our members are so invested in the community and take a lot of pride in where they live and work,” says Wolfrom. Among the notable community service projects were:

- Adopting a stretch of highway 75 south of Hailey.
- Volunteering at the local food bank.
- Participating in the Bellevue Labor Day Parade.
- Helping out at the area’s animal shelter.
- Providing “Educator for a Day” opportunities for elected officials and other local leaders.

An emphasis on increasing professional development opportunities for members has included sessions on education law from IEA General Counsel Paul Stark and trainings on the Charlotte Danielson assessment from retired member Darlene Dyer. “The next
Visibility and Community Engagement Are Part of a Powerful Plan

Building a Better Blaine County

The BCEA has also enjoyed success in several other areas.

- Increased engagement in the political process, with more members attending school board meetings and negotiating sessions.
- Building association leadership through a team-based approach. Designated as “The A-Team”, these groups of members spread organizing responsibilities around, rather than relying only on the building representative.
- Growing membership. The BCEA’s outreach efforts have led to increased membership, despite the loss of several members due to retirement in recent years.

Strong, determined leadership at the local level makes a big difference, and Wolfrom and Van Slyke have provided just that. Their ability to work together is a big part of their success. “Having two presidents allows us to share the workload, bounce around ideas and share the stress,” Wolfrom says. “Tryntje tends to temper my hotheadedness with her wisdom and calmness.”

Not willing to rest on their laurels, the Blaine County Education Association is planning another retreat this summer, once again at the bucolic Wildhorse Creek Ranch. In light of the success enjoyed by the BCEA and other locals, the IEA is expanding its plans to help targeted local associations.

Contact your region director for ideas on how you can increase visibility, engagement and membership in your local.

Slowing the Summer Slide

Allen Hancock
6th Grade Teacher, Centennial Elementary School
@AHancock516

The loss of learning that students experience over summer vacation is a well-established phenomenon in education. So let’s take a look at some ways—beyond traditional summer programs, summer learning packets, and welcome letters—to slow the Summer Slide and gain valuable teaching time in the fall.

**Walk it, and Talk It** First, model ways that you continue to learn during the school year and throughout the summer if possible. Share a picture of your group in professional development. Post a video of you watching a YouTube video about how to build a fence, a fire pit or a picnic table. Just let them know that you are a learner, and learning does not have to be silent reading or math drills.

**Don’t Forget Tech** Make sure your students, and their parents, know about your online learning tools that are available for use through the summer.

**Think Social** Use established social media connections to send learning resources or problem-based learning projects to families. Just be sure the delivery system you choose is approved by your building administrator and never communicate privately online with a student.

**Appeal to the Students Interests** Some of the biggest Summer Slides come from students who are not interested in traditional subjects. Use what you know to get them hooked into doing, creating, and thus learning. Whether you send snail mail or electronic communication, personalize the two or three you need to in order to get those students thinking about their unique interest and wanting to know more.

**Create a Summer Challenge** Challenge your students to learn to do something new over the summer and report on it with photographs or video when they return in the fall. Students may learn to play an instrument, build a fort, make a movie, create a travelogue of summer trips, or write a story; the ideas are endless.

**Become a Summer Learning Coordinator** School districts are getting innovative and creating positions to reduce summer learning loss. These coordinators share information about summer learning programs and stay in touch with the most vulnerable families to encourage learning projects. Hopefully, by slowing the Summer Slide, we can regain the weeks of teaching time spent remediating each fall. As I tell my sixth grade students every fall, “I know you learned these things last year. We just have to dig deep down where they are buried under countless episodes of Spongebob Squarepants, endless hours of video games, and pounds of sores, and drag the math, language, and collaboration skills back to the surface. You know this!”

NEA Ed Communities: Connect, Collaborate, Share, & Engage

We are excited to introduce a new social media site for IEA members and professional educators. NEA Ed Communities is a great place to connect and engage with fellow educators on a wide variety of topics—from classroom management and pedagogy discussions to association organizing strategies to technology tips—and many, many more. The IEA is already using the NEA Ed Communities platform for document distribution related to Delegate Assembly, Local Association Presidents, and the Board of Directors. The sky is the limit to how we can use this amazing new site to communicate with each other, collaborate on education ideas and build stronger state and local associations. The site is free, open to anyone, and easy to navigate. Just type in www.mynea360.org and click on the orange “join now” button.
Debbie White. After nearly 30 years of service to IEA members, Debbie is retiring from her post as the Region Associate for the Eastern Idaho Region Organizing Center. “Debbie has been an extremely valuable asset to the IEA and has been a friend to members and professional educators throughout the state,” says IEA Executive Director Robin Nettinga. “We wish her all the best in the next phase of her life.” Debbie’s retirement plans include camping, yard work and spending more time with her family.

David Tjaden. David has joined the IEA as a Region Director in the Western Region Organizing Center, and will be based in the Boise headquarters. He worked most recently as the Volunteer Relations and Training Coordinator for the Council for Professional Educators and Training Coordinator for the Council for Exceptional Children. “Dave has done exemplary work in the extended resource room at Lakevue Elementary School in the Vallivue School District, where he works with moderate to severe special needs students in grades K-5. He has also taken on extra duties in classroom technology and has built plexiglass boards and other helpful items for the classroom.

IEA membership means a great deal to Dave. He has served as a building representative since 2012, and has overseen substantial growth at Lakevue Elementary. He has also added duties as the vice president of the VEA and Region 8. “We can be proud of the fact that we belong to an organization that advocates for all in education, from the students to the certified and the Education Support Professionals,” Dave says.

ESP Corner

Dave Lyman: Edythe Crowe Award Winner

After 20 years in the United States Coast Guard, Dave Lyman embarked on a new career as a professional educator, and brought the same dedication to students and the IEA that he did to his service on behalf of our country. That dedication was formally recognized at the 2016 Delegate Assembly, when Dave received the Edythe Crowe Award as the IEA’s ESP of the Year.

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ESP Conference Update

During the second week of March, six ESPs from Idaho ventured to Orlando for the 25th annual NEA ESP Conference. Pre-session workshops attended included: ESP Leadership, Bullying Prevention, and Para Power. Over the next few days the ESPs choose workshops that built around the foundation of “uniting, inspiring, and leading for the whole student.” The conference featured a premier professional development opportunity, with three world-renowned education and child development experts in an extensive panel discussion regarding ESPs and educating the whole student.

There will be a session strand specifically for ESPs at the IEA Summer Institute in July. Space is limited, so register today. Four of the ESPs who attended the national conference will be presenting at Summer Institute.

- Stacie Aspiazu-Johnson will have a session about ESP recruitment and rights
- Angie Arnette will have a session called Para Power
- Katie Weise and Bree Wildman will lead a session about bullying prevention

ESP Membership

IEA ESP membership has increased by more the 100 over the past seven months. A warm welcome to all of our new colleagues, and thanks to the hard working ESPs who have helped us grow. The best is yet to come.
Wherever you are in life, we’ve got what you need.

At NEA Member Benefits, we have member-only resources and product solutions to enrich every aspect of your personal and professional life. Whether it’s saving on everyday items, getting ready for a career change or buying a home—we’re here to help. Check out all the exclusive resources and special offers we’ve created just for you.

Visit neamb.com/myresources today.
Happy Trails: 2016 Summer Institute

Space is limited, so register now!

Sign up today for the IEA’s annual Summer Institute, this year featuring a wild west theme. This is a terrific opportunity for professional development and collaboration, so don’t miss out on the fun, learning and growth.

- The Summer Institute is FREE for IEA members.
- On the campus of Idaho State University in Pocatello.

- Exciting and interesting session strands, including
  - Young Guns: New Teachers
  - OK in your Corral: Classroom Strategies
  - The New Sherriff in Town: Mentoring and Leadership
  - Tall in Your Saddle: Survival for Teachers

Registration information and a video with highlights of last year’s Summer Institute are available at, http://idahoea.org/news/2016-summer-institute-register/