

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE (Applies to candidates running for IEA President, Vice President, NEA Director, IEA Representative on the NEA Resolutions Committee, At Large Member(s) on the IEA Board of Directors – this questionnaire is to appear on the reverse of the “Nomination Form for IEA Office” provided to potential candidates.)

Lori Steiniker, NEA Director

1. Provide a brief overview of your experience in education

I have taught in Idaho for 24 years. During that time, I have taught children from 2nd to 12th grade. For 14 years, I was a high school special education teacher and focused my efforts on preparing my students to be successful individuals upon graduation. For the past five years, I have taught students at McCain Middle School. I am currently teaching US History to some incredible 8th graders who daily make me appreciate my career choice.

2. What positions of leadership have you held (elected, appointed or voluntary) at the local, region, state or national level?

National—

NEA Director for Idaho
NEA Program and Budget Committee
NEA Legislative Committee

State—

IEA Executive Committee
Personnel Committee Chairperson
The Northern Tier Caucus Leadership Committee
GR/PACE
Representative to NEA Representative Assembly

Region--

Board of Directors representing Region 3
IEA Budget Committee
GR/PACE

Payette Education Association—

President 2007-2018
Current Past-President
Building Representative
Representative to Delegate Assembly

Other—

Trainer for Summer Institute
Women's Caucus
Education Support Professionals Caucus
LGBT Caucus

3. What do you believe are the three primary responsibilities of this office?

Advocate

Being Idaho's advocate at the national level is at the top of my responsibilities. Bringing our needs and concerns to the decision-making body of the NEA is crucial to ensuring our small state is not overshadowed by the demands of larger states. An easy example is from RA 2017 in Boston. Our state is normally at the back of the auditorium and in Boston there weren't any risers. When we reviewed RA at the next Board meeting, I brought forth the complaint that we couldn't see or be seen without the risers. They were returned for RA 2018. A tougher ask is ensuring that budget cuts don't hurt Idaho. I continually put Idaho's need for the small state's grant in the room when budget decisions are being discussed. Ensuring our funding is protected is why I ran for and won election to the NEA Budget Committee.

Communicate

As your NEA Director, I have attempted to create an open dialogue between the national and state organizations. I am Idaho to the NEA. I am the NEA to Idaho. It is my responsibility to effectively communicate Idaho's needs and successes to the NEA. Inversely, I am tasked to carry the information and goals of the NEA to Idaho.

Lobby

The third priority of this position is to lobby our Congressional Delegation on issues that matter to our students and educators. Three times a year, the NEA Board lobbies our Congressional Delegations in Washington DC, but lobbying is a year-round activity. I have spent many hours building strong ties with our Congressional Delegation and their staff members. The relationship we have developed provides Idaho educators a strong voice to advance our goal of quality public education.

In February, I asked the Congressmen to support a National ESP award and they all replied 'Of course'! Other asks aren't that easy, such as the request for more funding for special education students, but due to our relationship, we are able to have honest conversations that help us understand each other's point of view.

4. What do you see as the greatest challenge IEA members will face in the next five years? What ideas do you have to address that challenge?

Reducing our budget deficit and fighting privatization efforts are our greatest challenges.

In upcoming years, due to the JANUS decision, national membership is expected to drop drastically. This will result in less funding for critical NEA grants the IEA receives to maintain operations. Bringing the Idaho blueprint of growth and engagement to the national level will help decrease that membership drop and thus eliminate the loss of funds to the IEA.

At the state level, fighting efforts to take funding away from public education through privatization efforts such as vouchers will be a continuing fight. Continuing to grow relationships with legislators and stakeholders who are pro-public education is key to fighting this battle. As a member of the GR/PACE Committee, I regularly reach out to legislators and build connections that help to combat the forces against us.

5. What is your plan for increasing membership and member engagement?

When I became president of my local, the membership had dropped to a dismal 28. Over the coming years, I helped create a team of building leaders and together we created a pro-association atmosphere. Our membership has now doubled, and the growth is continuing.

When I was a new IEA Board member, we revised the IEA Mission and Vision statements. Before doing that, the word 'student' had not been a part of the Mission. By changing the focus of our Association, we have set forth on a new path that includes recruitment of new educators and retention of current members through increased professional development. Increasing outreach to Aspiring Educators and showing them the importance of our Union is key to our growth. Providing opportunities to grow as an educator through programs such as IGNITE, SPARKS, and Summer Institute are essential to retaining members.

6. How do you intend to communicate with members in order to keep them informed and to find out their concerns?

I report to the IEA Board at every meeting. I send my NEA Director Newsletter to all Region and Local Presidents after each NEA Board meeting, and I also post it to my NEA Director Facebook page. As much as time allows, I attend Region meetings. I am regularly in contact with state and local leaders to get their input on upcoming NEA decisions and lobby topics. I also use my NEA Director Facebook page to gain input from members. Since becoming NEA Director, I have made a point to try to visit each Region Caucus during DA. I use these visits to expand on what the NEA Director does and to answer member questions.

7. Provide other information you would like members to know:

Serving as your NEA Director for the past three years has been an amazing honor! I have been able to grow as a leader and advocate for you at the highest level of our government. As a member of the NEA Budget Committee, I am one of five NEA Board members who makes decisions about your dues dollars and bring the unique, small state needs to the forefront of all decisions. I ask for your vote so that I can continue to be your voice on the NEA Board.