

COUNSELING IN CRISIS?

State of Idaho officials have been pounding the drum recently for their self-imposed target of 60% of students achieving some form of post-secondary degree by the year 2020. Improving the "go-on" rate and ensuring that Idaho children are prepared for college and/or career are admirable goals, but do we have the resources and infrastructure to get there? Counseling of students is an especially important piece of the puzzle in this endeavor, but budget cuts and a lack of prioritization have threatened to scuttle these well-intentioned plans to prepare Idaho students for life after high school. In this cover story, the IEA Reporter examines the past, present and future of counseling in Idaho schools.

A Double Whammy

A growing need and decreased funding have converged over the last five to eight years, putting further stress on the people and resources needed to address a pressing issue—preparing Idaho students for life after high school. The economic downturn starting in 2008 led to drastic budget and personnel cuts at both the state and local levels. At the same time, Idaho businesses and higher education institutions were clamoring for people with new and better skill sets, along with the education and training that would enable them to transition into the workplace or the classroom.

The West Ada (previously Meridian) school district is just one example of the extreme measures that were taken during the recession. "Funding for career counseling was cut completely," says IEA member and certified counselor **Erin Fischer**. "It is just being put back into the budget this year." Similar tales can be found all around the state, with small and rural districts where college and career resources are at a premium to begin with, having been especially hard hit.

Parents and students have had to scramble to find the resources and information they need to make important decisions about their futures. The state has created programs where students can use online and advanced classes, and dual credit courses with state colleges, to streamline the process of completing high school and moving on to college. But word about these programs has been slow to spread, and they have yet to reach their full potential for assisting students. Counselors and teachers are increasingly frustrated with large class sizes and dwindling staff as a result of budget cuts coinciding with growing enrollment.

Bandwidth Overload

While circumstances vary among districts, the common thread in recent years has been

heaping more and more responsibility on counselors, while resources have remained static or have been reduced. In many cases counselors have been asked to take on a wide range of duties in other areas, limiting their ability to utilize their professional training and work directly on helping students.



Professional counselors can help students plan for future success

"Counselors are charged with myriad tasks, and as I speak to them in the field I get the clear impression that they are overwhelmed," says Matt McCarter, Director of Student Engagement and Post-Secondary Readiness with the Idaho State Department of Education. There is a lot piled on them and counselors have become a catch-all in too many districts."

Instead of being able to devote their time and energy to college and career counseling, as well as "whole child" support, many counselors find themselves tasked with overseeing the new state-mandated ISAT by SBAC

tests and SAT for high school juniors, coordinating Advanced Placement tests, managing online education, lunch and recess monitoring, before and after school duties, and a variety of other roles. "With the implementation of Advanced Opportunities by the state, the number of online courses being taken by students in the middle and high school levels is rising at a significant rate," notes **Rick Jones**, now in his 10th year as a counselor at Coeur d'Alene High School. "The school counselor is typically tasked with assisting students in these programs."

COUNSELING IN CRISIS continued on page 6

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 2 | Leadership Letter | 4 | IEA People |
| 3 | Member Spotlight: Susan Mahoney | 5 | SPARKS Training |
| 3 | ESP Corner | 6 | Counseling in Crisis (cont) |
| 4 | Building Rep Basics | 8 | IEA Ad Campaign |

Here's What the IEA Has Done for You Lately

Former Pittsburgh Steelers coach, Chuck Noll is credited with saying, "Good things happen to those who hustle."

The past few years have been a whirlwind for educators: policymakers and others have made attempts to restructure education in Idaho; educators have continued to prepare for and implement new curricula connected to the Idaho Core Standards, and they have continued to take part in professional development so they can be even more effective with their students. All throughout the year, the great work done by IEA members has proven Coach Noll's words to be true.

Let's take a look at all we've accomplished over the past year...

Just a few short weeks ago, nearly 150 IEA members converged on the campus of the University of Idaho for IEA's third annual Summer Institute. Several days were devoted to providing high quality professional development, almost solely presented by IEA member educators... and all free of charge! Participants learned about how to differentiate instruction, teach Common Core math, address students with diverse needs, use iPads to improve instruction, and many, many more equally interesting and informative topics.

Throughout the school year, IEA offered a variety of training opportunities for members at the local, region and state level. Over the past year, more than 200 members took advantage of at least one for-credit IEA course. In every area of the state, IEA provided a special SPARKS training for some of those teachers who are newest to the profession. Not only did these new educators learn more about topics that interested them, but they were also introduced to the IEA and the great value that we add to all members. (See page 5 for more on the value of SPARKS training).

Local leaders who took part in IEA training and learned more about the work of the organization were able to share what they learned with new and returning colleagues. Their efforts to share all of the great work being done around the state helped to increase membership in many locals.

For example, the members of the Jerome Education Association helped increase their membership by 50% over the previous year alone!

Even before the November election results were finalized, members of the IEA lobby team had already begun the process of building a more positive, professional working relationship with the new Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Department of Education. After nearly a decade of contention and conflict with the former administration, these efforts paid off in great ways for IEA members by creating opportunities for educators and students, including a collaborative effort that helped to ensure one of Idaho's largest education funding increases in more than a decade. The IEA is also working with the State Department of Education on initiatives to reduce class sizes, and supports a proposal that would require candidates for State Superintendent to have a credible background in instruction and/or education administration.

IEA members have taken the bull by the horns and been active in school board and legislative races. Special thanks and congratulations go out to Travis Manning, who was elected to the school board in Caldwell and to Mandy Simpson, who won election to the school board in Nampa.

On the legal front, the IEA has continued to have success protecting the rights of members. Success stories from the last year include: preserving jobs for members facing elimination of positions, successfully fighting false criminal allegations, multiple favorable resolutions before the Professional Standards Commission, and winning a high-profile ESP grievance where the member was awarded several thousand



IEA Executive Director Robin Nettinga and President Penni Cyr

dollars in back wages and benefits.

And we won't soon forget the impact that IEA members had in developing a workable Career Ladder and neutralizing an onerous Tiered Certification proposal.

Last fall, a State Board of Education committee unveiled a proposal to revamp Idaho's teacher certification system. IEA members saw the folly in the plan, and hundreds of teachers rallied to attend public meetings in Pocatello, Lewiston, and Meridian to tell State Board members their concerns about the rule. Coupled with email messages from teachers who were unable to attend the meetings, the State Board heard from nearly 1,000 concerned educators and members of the public who repeatedly told State Board members that their tiered certification plan was reckless and would do nothing to improve teacher morale or increase local districts' ability to recruit and retain quality teachers. The State Board backed away from their tiered certification plan and rewrote the plan to more appropriately address the many concerns raised.

IEA members stayed in contact with lawmakers and offered their opinions about the Career Ladder bill put forth during the legislative session and traveled from all across the state to share their concerns during a public hearing at the capitol. Legislative leaders spent several hours at the IEA headquarters office listening to IEA members' concerns. The result was a career ladder law that addressed all of the issues raised by IEA members.

So, the next time someone asks you, "What has the IEA done for me lately?" remind them that IEA and its members have done a great deal.

Penni Cyr, IEA President
Robin Nettinga, IEA Executive Director

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Susan Mahoney

Building Relationships Pays Big Dividends

What makes **Susan Mahoney** effective as a classroom teacher and in her role as President of the Moscow Education Association? Finding ways to connect, bridge gaps, overcome differences and solve problems. In short, building relationships in order to achieve goals and find success.

It's easy to see that dynamic in play in the classroom, where Mahoney works as a Title 1 reading teacher at Lena Whitmore Elementary School in Moscow. She works with students from kindergarten through fifth grade, which opens up the potential for long-term relationships in which she can help them build confidence and self-esteem as a precursor to improved reading skills. "Once we get them to buy-in, some of these kids have incredible drive and determination," she says. "If they see that I am invested, they will work their tails off."

Enjoying the satisfaction of helping kids learn to read represents the culmination of a unique career path for Mahoney, who earned her degree in forestry (with a specialty in acid rain research) from the University of Maine—only to find that there were no jobs to be had in that field during an economic downturn. So she headed for Idaho; picking the Gem State because of fond memories of a summer spent working for the forest service in La Grande, OR, and a brother living in Spokane, WA.

After working as a private music teacher,

Mahoney was looking for a new challenge when her own children reached mid-elementary age. She found that challenge—along with incredible rewards—teaching reading to kids who needed extra help. "Teaching these struggling students to read, turning them on to the joys of reading—it is the most amazing and rewarding thing that I can imagine doing," she says.

Mahoney has transferred her dedication and relationship-building skills outside of the classroom as well, providing professional development to other teachers and diving in as the President of the Moscow Education Association. She has broadened communication channels with members and beefed up recruitment efforts. "We are looking at adding recruitment officers to complement our terrific building reps, as well as emphasizing an increase in ESP membership," she says.

The relationship between a local association and the school board can sometimes be problematic, but Mahoney has found ways to work collaboratively with both the board and the district administration. "I've tried to convince them that we can be an ally just as easily as we can be an adversary," she says. A barbecue hosted by MEA at a local city park in conjunction with back to school activities is one way to bridge the gap. More practically, she has been involved with discussions about how to implement Idaho's new Career Ladder salary schedule, which is structurally very different from the

current model. "We are working with the board to find something that works for everyone," Mahoney says.

While the Moscow district has historically enjoyed solid support from the local community and the MEA has been one of the strongest bargaining units in the state, there are challenges to their stability looming on the horizon. Nearby Washington is scheduled to implement a new class-size law that will require that state to hire large numbers of additional teachers, and Moscow is (and has been) a prime target. "Establishing manageable class sizes and providing competitive compensation will be even more important in light of the Washington law," Mahoney notes.

The ace-in-the-hole for MEA members is Mahoney's knack for building relationships and her determination to overcome challenges. The would-be forestry worker has carved out a niche as a difference-maker in the Association as well as with struggling readers in the classroom.



"If they see that I am invested, they will work their tails off."

ESP CORNER

Summer Institute and Back to School: Golden Opportunities for ESPs

ESPs and the IEA Summer Institute are like cookies and milk; they just go together. This year was a great turnout for ESPs attending the Summer Institute that was held in Moscow, Idaho, and we hope this trend will continue. With sessions that focus specifically on ESPs, such as "rESpect Inside and Out" and "ESP Rights", it's easy to see why this event was widely attended by ESPs.

One disappointment that was felt in the ESP community came when the pre-session ESP SPARKS needed to be cancelled. However, with more promoting and advance notice, this session will be offered again next year. This will create a great opportunity for ESPs to gather for two days of training, networking, team building, leadership training, and more—in a fun and casual environment. Be on the lookout for more information about Summer Institute ESP SPARKS 2016.

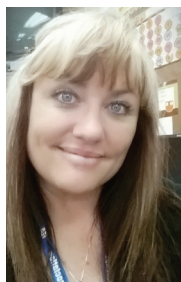
As summer comes to a close, and students start entering the school again, it's time to start planning ESP events in your school/district.

ESPs are too often left out of new staff orientations or welcome back parties/meetings. It is vital to your local association that ESPs are included or that a welcome back social specifically for ESPs is planned. These events can help people make connections and promote the association to ESPs, so speak with your building representative or local association president about the plans to incorporate ESPs in back to school functions.

November 18, 2015 is National ESP Day. This is a great time to start planning a fun, and informative event to acknowledge ESPs for of all their hard work and dedication to the field. It is also a great way to promote your local association. If you would like help planning, or if you would like ESP brochures, flyers, and other ESP recruitment materials, please email me and I will gladly share what I have.

Stacieaspiazu@gmail.com

Stacie Aspiazu
Chair-ESP Committee, ESP at Large-IEA Board of Directors



Building Representative Basics: or How I Became a Building Rep

By Sherry Belknap, Meridian Education Association

When I became a member of my local association, I was put in touch with Joslyn Bernhardt, the "Building Representative" at my school, almost immediately. Fortunately for me, she was able to answer my "newbee" questions about membership and help me to get my arms around the resources that were available. She also invited me to attend the monthly Meridian Education Association meetings with her, and became my friend and mentor.

By the next school year, I had been regularly attending the monthly EA meetings and wondering how I could begin to become more active, without overloading myself.

Coincidentally, Joslyn was

having a baby, so she asked me to be the representative for our building. I knew that it was a great step for me because I had seen that in addition to being the "go-to" person for getting questions answered about the dynamics of our building, she was also up to date on what was happening in education around the state and in our district. Through attending meetings and collaborating with other teachers and members within our district, she had developed quite a bit of expertise.

As our building representative, I became the liaison for communication with members through 10-minute meetings, face to face conversations and sharing information via email or flyers. I distributed and collected election ballots and helped find volunteers to chair events or coordinate our building's fund raising for the IEA Children's Fund.

Eventually, I stepped out according to what fit my schedule and abilities as opportunities presented themselves, but being a building rep was an ideal first step. I have gone on to become a delegate at the IEA's Delegate Assembly, served on the resolutions committee, and was recently elected as an Elementary Director for the Meridian Education Association—all at my own pace and discretion.

Building reps are an essential part of keeping our community of members on the same page and helping give a "face" to the association. As conduits between members and our state and local leaders, building reps are an integral part of what makes our association strong and vital. Veteran building reps can really help new and early-career teachers get their feet under them professionally. I would encourage members to follow my path of learning the ropes, and then taking on a more active role as a building representative.



2015 Summer Institute: Zen and the Art of Teaching

The IEA's 3rd annual Summer Institute was a huge success, as members from all around the state gathered on the University of Idaho campus in Moscow. Professional development sessions included trainings on topics such as Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Common Core, effective use of I-pads in the classroom, National Board Certification, social media and many more. Special guest speaker Princess Moss, Secretary-Treasurer of the National Education Association, gave an inspiring address about the importance of activism. Be on the lookout for information about next year's event—you won't want to miss it.

To view photos from the Summer Institute, visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/idahoea/>

IEA PEOPLE



Rob Nicholson. Longtime IEA leader Rob Nicholson passed away at his home in Flathead Lake, Montana on May 10th. His influence and passion were cornerstones of the

association for many years. Rob first joined the IEA in 1976 and had a significant role in the Association's accomplishments as the Director of Research and Bargaining, along with serving as a Region Director. Upon his retirement in 2004, he was honored for "28 years of courageous and visionary service to the members and staff of the IEA". A group of current and former IEA personnel met in June to remember and memorialize Rob.

Dorothy Hansen. Former president of the Idaho Education Association and the Boise Education Association, Dorothy B. Hansen passed way in June at the age of 85. Dorothy moved to Idaho from the Midwest in 1967

and she taught at West Junior High School in Boise for many years. She became BEA president in 1972-73 and was named BEA Teacher of the Year in 1973-74. Dorothy served as IEA president in 1975-76.



John Rumel. Former IEA General Counsel John Rumel was honored recently with the Idaho Bar Association's Distinguished Lawyer Award, recognizing attorneys

who have "distinguished themselves through exemplary conduct and many years of service". In his acceptance speech, Rumel said that his 16 years working with the IEA was his "dream job" and that representing Idaho teachers was the highlight of his career.

Melyssa Ferro. A seventh and eighth grade teacher at Syringa Middle School in Caldwell, Melyssa was honored as a recipient of the

prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Each of the 108 winners from around the country will receive a \$10,000 National Science Foundation award to use at their discretion.



Mary Lee Ruch. Mary Lee was named a recipient of the 2016 California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence by the NEA Foundation.

She will be honored at a gala in the nation's capital and receive a \$650 award for her school, Woodland Middle School in Coeur d'Alene. Mary Lee will also be traveling to Peru next June along with Teachers of the Year from each state, courtesy of the NEA Foundation's Global Learning Fellowship. "I am very honored to have been chosen for this award and grateful to accept on behalf of so many other deserving colleagues," she says.



SPARKS Training Can Light the Way for Young Teachers

*Sharing stories and experiences
is a big part of SPARKS training*

SPARKS trainings are designed to assist early-career teachers (five years or less experience) in building a solid base for a long career as professional educators. Participants are surveyed ahead of time about the issues and topics that are important to them, and veteran educators facilitate the discussions. SPARKS retreats are held at various locations around the state, and feature plenty of fun and fellowship as well as strategies for career advancement and personal growth. IEA Vice President **Layne McInnelly** has taken part in SPARKS retreats as both an attendee and as a facilitator, and he shares his experiences with the IEA Reporter. Contact your Region Director for information about how to attend or host a SPARKS retreat.

Spending a weekend learning about classroom management, technology, stress management, the Idaho Code of Ethics for educators, teacher contracts, and the Idaho Education Association is what SPARKS is all about—as well as building lifelong friendships with other education professionals. Having the opportunity to participate in SPARKS, an indispensable professional development opportunity for early-career educators, was an experience that I am glad I did not pass up.

In my third year of teaching I attended a SPARKS retreat—and it turned out to be one of the best things I did as a new educator. Learning about the ins and outs of teaching and being able to bounce ideas off of people who were going through the same things as me was very impactful. We started off with an icebreaker activity so that we could all get to know each other, which helped us to develop bonds that remain strong today. The SPARKS facilitators then led us through a variety of professional development concepts. I still use many of the materials, ideas, and advice that were shared during the training. Throughout the weekend we had great whole-group

discussions, interactive lessons and role-playing exercises to help us become better educators. Not only did we learn different professional development concepts, but we had great social activities, like a bonfire and roasting s'mores, which helped us further develop friendships.

One of the biggest things I got out of the SPARKS training was learning about the Idaho Education Association. During the session called "Putting the U in Union", I realized how important and valuable the IEA would be for me throughout my education career. The Idaho Education Association is the professional organization for educators, and it is clearly committed to making public education the best it can be for all students, teachers, and education support professionals in Idaho. I learned that we are the IEA, and that we can make a brighter future for the education profession across the state. It was during that SPARKS training that I decided to get more involved in the association. I became a building representative and was later elected as Vice President of the IEA.

After attending SPARKS I have had the opportunity to facilitate two other SPARKS retreats. Sitting with new professional educators and discussing the issues that they deem valuable is always enlightening. We always have amazing conversations around the professional development concepts that will help them in their classrooms. The one thing that is always the highlight, and generates the most enthusiastic conversations, is "Putting the U in Union".

Reflecting on my experience at SPARKS retreats, as a participant and as a facilitator, I realize that while the professional development is always outstanding, it is the relationships developed with my peers and the insight into the association that is the foundation of SPARKS!

SPARKing in Eastern Idaho

Regions 4, 5 and 6 in Eastern Idaho held a SPARKS retreat at Greystone Manor in Lava Hot Springs recently, with 18 participants from eight different local associations. Here are some of the superlatives that came from attendees following the training.

"SPARKS was a great way to collaborate and obtain ideas from fellow teachers. Comfortable environment and a great way to make new friends!"
—Erica Hernandez, Blackfoot EA

"I LOVED SPARKS! This was an amazing experience. I learned so much from other teachers. Thanks!"
—Julie Jenkins, Preston EA

"The knowledge and friendships from SPARKS will help me become a better teacher. I am excited to share and put into practice what I have learned."
—Cinniman Schwartz, Oneida EA



*Layne McInnelly, IEA Vice President
Morley Nelson Elementary School*

The American School Counselor Association provides guidelines for what activities are appropriate to be handled by counselors and what are not. (See their chart at <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/appropriate-activities-of-school-counselors.pdf>)

The raw numbers also tell a disturbing story. The ASCA recommends a counselor-to-student ratio of 1 to 250. "The reality in Idaho is that ratios run 1 to 400 or higher, depending on the school," says Jones. "It is very hard to get to know your students in that kind of a situation." At Desert Sage Elementary School in Meridian, Fischer is the only counselor for a school with more than 700 students, 60% of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Will New Legislation Help?

There may be some hope on the horizon for beleaguered counselors and students in need of guidance as they move through their junior high and high school years and take aim on college and/or career goals. The Idaho legislature passed House Bill 313 in 2015, with the intention of providing additional training and resources for schools and districts.

The new legislation was designed largely by Senator Dean Mortimer (R-Idaho Falls), Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, and was carried in the house by Representative Julie Van Orden (R-Pingree). The bill is geared toward helping students prepare for the workforce or for a variety of post-secondary education options.

HB 313 has the potential to provide much-needed college and career counseling for students throughout Idaho, and it has the support of the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education. "Both the bill and the process by which we reached agreement on the legislation were intended to provide strong college and career guidance for students," says Blake Youde, Chief Communications and Legislative Affairs officer for the State Board of Education.

However, the methodology of the new legislation has raised a few questions, as well as a few eyebrows. HB 313 clarifies that districts "may use either certificated counselors and teachers or non-certificated staff to serve as college or career advisors". That philosophy opens the door for teachers and social workers to take on more of the responsibilities that have traditionally been handled by professional trained and certifi-



Rick Jones – Counselor,
Coeur d'Alene High School

"People that take on a counseling role without the proper training run the risk of missing things, particularly as relates to a big picture evaluation."

cated counselors. So all parties are trying to navigate the appropriate balance between providing additional support to overloaded counselors, and putting critical advising functions in the hands of people who lack the appropriate training and expertise.

"The education and professional development that counselors receive is invaluable," notes Jones, who is taking a wait and see attitude on the new legislation. "People that take on a counseling role without the proper training run the risk of missing things, particularly as relates to a big picture evaluation."

"In order to implore students to see post-secondary education as viable, it needs to be far more than the counseling office that pushes," says McCarter. "That element of the legislation is a recognition that this needs to be an all-hands-on-deck approach."

Not an unusual sticking point in the state of Idaho is the fact that HB 313 is currently an unfunded mandate. Although \$2.5 million was recommended to get the counseling initiative off the ground, the legislature did not appropriate any funding during the 2015 session. However, Van Orden and others are optimistic that getting the bill passed is a significant first step. "We were able to add counseling as a line item in the budget, so we don't have to pass a new bill in the next session," she says. "My number one goal is to keep the bill in the forefront and make sure that it is funded in 2016."

A Paradigm Shift?

There is substantial agreement that in addition to funding and legislation, a change in mindset is critical to improving the counseling and guidance that Idaho students receive.

Bob Lokken is an accomplished businessman, CEO of WhiteCloud Analytics and Chair of the subcommittee on structural change that morphed out of the Governor's Task Force on Improving Education. "A critical part of this, particularly in rural Idaho, is that there isn't a cognitive sense of the importance of post-secondary education for the future," he says. "Somebody needs to be talking to kids early in their high school years about what their aspirations are."

Jones and McCarter both advocate for a philosophy of working backward from students' goals and objectives, and getting an early start on planning to reach them. "We need to work with kids to identify where they want to be after high school, and then help them to figure out what kind of education and training they need to get there, what schools might be a good fit, and what it takes to get into those schools," Jones says.

"Building road maps for our students' futures is very important," notes McCarter. "There is a certain amount of reverse engineering involved, where we have to figure out what the hot jobs are and then move students down the pathway where they have the skills and education for those jobs."

The growing realization that counseling plays a pivotal role in the academic achievement and life success of students is encouraging, but follow through will be required to bring about real progress. "The Idaho Education Association urges the legislature to fund HB 313 as quickly as possible," says IEA President Penni Cyr. "Just as importantly, we hope that everyone involved will continue to recognize how valuable our highly-trained school counselors are and the tremendous benefit that their expertise provides for Idaho students."

By Dave Harbison

For links to resources and more information about college and career counseling in Idaho, as well as professional counseling organizations go to: <http://idahoea.org/reporter/counseling-in-crisis/>

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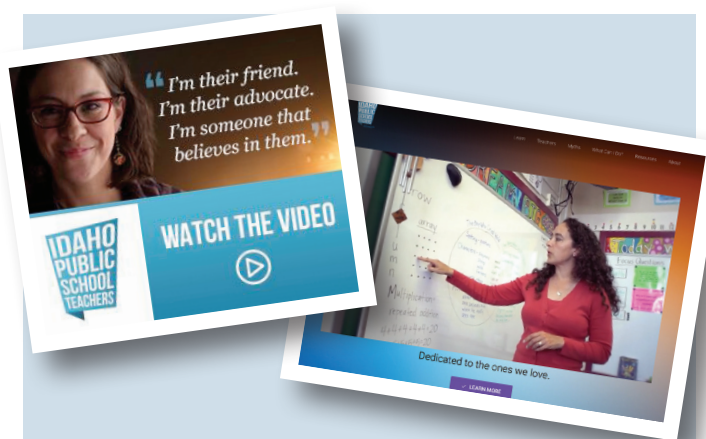
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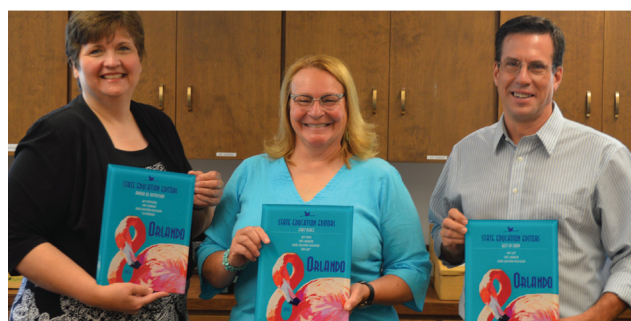
Idaho Public Teachers: *Dedicated to the Ones We Love*

IEA members are featured prominently in an ongoing advertising campaign, which includes television, radio and online spots distributed all around the state. Idaho Public Teachers: *Dedicated to the Ones We Love* showcases several members talking about why they became professional educators, the value of public education, and the many roles that they play on a daily basis.

To see all of the videos and find out more,
visit <http://idahopublicteachers.org>

IEA Brings Home the Hardware

The Idaho Education Association captured five awards at the recent NEA PR Council/State Education Editors conference. The membership video *Why IEA?* was recognized as "Best in Show", indicative of the best multi-media or printed material project from any state in any category. The *IEA REPORTER* and the membership brochure, *Your IEA*, were also honored. The IEA's efforts to thwart the dangerous Tiered Certification proposal were also recognized in the "Against All Odds" category.



Holding IEA awards are (from left): Executive Director Robin Nettinga, Membership Director Sue Scott, and Communications Director Dave Harbison

Counseling in Crisis
Page 1

Representative Basics
Page 3

SPARKS Training
Page 4