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Supt. Ybarra’s Student Advisory Council holds spring meeting; applications now being accepted for 2022-23 advisory council

(BOISE) – Monday was a day of transition and emotion for Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherrri Ybarra as she welcomed her 13 Student Advisory Council members for their final quarterly meeting.

“You will always remain with me. You are the reason I do this job,” Superintendent Ybarra told the 13 students, grades 4-12, from across Idaho. “No matter what group comes after you, you were the first. You set the precedent.”

Also on Monday, the application period for next year’s Student Advisory Council opened, launching the process of finding the next statewide group of students to advise the superintendent. The application period begins May 2 and continues through June 24. Get more information and apply online at <https://form.jotform.com/IdahoSDE/22-23StudentAdvisoryCouncilApp>.

About 60 students, all with great energy and ideas, applied for the council in its inaugural year, and it was very difficult to narrow it down – so hard that the planned 12 members became 13.

“The results have far exceeded my hopes and expectations – and I had pretty high hopes and expectations,” Superintendent Ybarra said during a speech for her department’s K-3 Summit. She spoke to several hundred reading teachers midway through Monday’s council meeting, via zoom, with the advisory council members gathered behind her.

“In the council’s first year, these 13 students behind me have suggested and examined key issues, met with the governor, attended education committee meetings and conducted mock legislative sessions,” the superintendent said. “Two of them testified at actual legislative hearings, advocating for bills that are now law.”

“These young council members exemplify what we do for a living,” she said. “These are the amazing human beings we are going to be sending to our colleges and universities and out into the public to secure jobs.”

Mock legislative debate was part of the council’s final meeting, as students proposed legislation to make it legal for school districts to impose impact fees on new development and another bill to reduce the required majority to pass a school bond from two-thirds (66.66 percent) to three-fifths (60 percent).

The meeting also featured discussions with Idaho’s attorney general and controller, and lively exchanges with State Department of Education experts on mastery-based education and special education. The latter included demonstrations of various assistive technology devices.

Three advisory council members made presentations to their peers – about a student-designed computer game, STEM education (specifically calculus and data science) and “how special it can be to be autistic.”

Near the end of the meeting, Superintendent Ybarra told the council, “I’m really struggling” with having to say goodbye. She said she is excited for the next group of students, but “I want to keep you all. Keep in touch and let me know what you’re doing once in a while.”

She gave each member a Student Advisory Council photo album and a letter of appreciation. She told the students to encourage their peers to apply for next year’s Student Advisory Council and, if they choose, attend next year’s first meeting as mentors.

“Idaho’s students drive everything my department does, and everything we advocated for this legislative session, from increased compensation for teachers and school staff to enhanced civics standards,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “It is essential to hear the feedback from students about their ideas and about the needs in our schools.”

“My only regret about the Student Advisory Council is that I didn’t start it earlier in my tenure as superintendent.”

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Attached: Photo of Superintendent Ybarra delivering a speech via zoom with her Student Advisory Council. (SDE photo)