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Critchfield: The Value of Training

By Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield

(BOISE) – When I became a school trustee in Cassia County in 2001, I knew I wanted to serve my community by being part of important educational decisions. I knew I wanted to help provide an environment for our students to gain the skills and knowledge they would need to be productive citizens. I had worked as a substitute teacher for six years prior to running for my local board and I felt as though I had a pretty decent working knowledge of our school system. Looking back, there was so much more for me to understand.

The transition from willing community member to effective school leader doesn't happen overnight. Chances are good that most new trustees are not well versed in the complexities of school budgets, student achievement goals and open meeting laws. In fact, many trustees running for a second term often share that it took them the first term to know what they were doing!

Thankfully, trustees grow into these roles. The same goes for superintendents, principals, educators and district staff. We learn on the job, but exposure to training can flatten the learning curve and shorten the timeline it takes to become effective. In education, I would argue that training is *critical* for success. Fortunately, the Idaho education community is blessed with great organizations that support school administrators, trustees, teachers and others. Their workshops and seminars help us become the leaders we all want to be.

With that in mind, I want to highlight two upcoming trainings hosted by Idahoans for Openness in Government (IDOG). On October 25, IDOG will hold a training on the Idaho Open Meeting Law. A similar session on Idaho's Public Records Act is scheduled for November 28. Both begin at 10:00 a.m. MT. They are free and will be streamed statewide through Idaho Public Television's Idaho in Session service. The trainings will originate from the Capitol's Lincoln Auditorium and in-person seating will be available. Recordings of the events will be archived at the IDOG website. More details are available at OpenIdaho.org.

Attendees will learn – or re-learn – the ins and outs of these two important Idaho laws to ensure future adherence and, ultimately, increase transparency. And in our work in the public sector, transparency is essential. It provides accountability to the public and fosters trust amongst the people we serve.

When opportunities like these present themselves, it's important that we as an education community take advantage. If your schedule allows, I encourage you to attend or tune in online. If it doesn't, I hope you can find time later to watch the recordings.

Open meetings and public records requests are part of our day-to-day in public education, so it's crucial that we're following the law. Your engagement with these trainings will help promote quality leadership for Idaho's districts, schools and communities.

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