



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2025
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Maintaining Our Focus as Educators Amid Change

From Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield

(BOISE) – Leaders have the responsibility – and the opportunity – to make decisions. In fact, it’s an essential function of the role. In my experience, most decisions in leadership roles aren’t easy, but some are easier than others. “Back in the day,” as a newly elected school board member for the Cassia County School District, I was making regular decisions on things that I had limited to no experience in.

Leaders are always in the process of learning and adapting to change and the coming weeks will be no different. Ongoing discussions around the federal role in education will require us to make decisions in real time, learning and understanding things we don’t have experience in *yet*.

An example is the talk around dissolving the U.S. Department of Education and how it will impact Idaho education. The short answer is: We’re going to be okay. We don’t have many specifics now, but I’m not panicking. As I have said before, the more control we as states have over education, the better off our students will be.

As we react to rapid change in real time, the Idaho Department of Education will refrain from commenting on every social media post and report about potential federal changes. Instead, our guidance will be informed by official documentation sent directly to us from our federal partners.

This means that you may hear and see speculation but not hear from us. Instead, we will wait to provide our guidance when we have *confirmed* information from official government sources. Our goal is always to distribute information responsibly so you can look to us for accuracy and dependability.

During periods of change, school leaders can set the tone by being steady hands for their educational communities. They can assure their stakeholders that we know how to work together

to solve problems and that whatever change is coming, we can all continue focusing on our work that benefits Idaho students.

Our communities, teachers and administrators will look to our responses to inform their reaction to proposed changes. In turn, we can emphasize that our basic obligation to educate our students will not change and that we will continue to build upon our successes.

Idaho is fortunate in that we have not depended on the federal government to solve our local problems. We haven't looked to the federal government to provide solutions for our day-to-day operations. We haven't looked to the federal government to provide the bulk of funding. We're fortunate because in Idaho, we do these things for ourselves.

Change will always come. Let's continue to do the business that we do - educating kids - while we wait to see what shape that change will take. And let's make sure our educational communities know that our deep commitment to student success in Idaho doesn't change.

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