



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 29, 2016

[www.sde.idaho.gov](http://www.sde.idaho.gov)

## Media Contacts:

Jeff Church

Chief Communications Officer

(208) 332-6934

[jchurch@sde.idaho.gov](mailto:jchurch@sde.idaho.gov)

**SHERRI YBARRA**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

## **OPINION: WE NEED MULTIPLE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS IDAHO'S SERIOUS TEACHER SHORTAGE**

650 W. STATE STREET  
P.O. BOX 83720  
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

OFFICE: 208-332-6800  
FAX: 208-334-2228  
SPEECH/HEARING  
IMPAIRED: 1-800-377-3529  
WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV

*by Superintendent Sherri Ybarra*

Idaho is seeing an increased demand for teachers, but the supply is hitting a critical low and school districts across our state are struggling to fill teaching positions. Given the importance of a high-quality teacher in the classroom and how it relates to achievement, it's time we begin to find strategies and realistic solutions to an issue that is also getting national attention—the very evident teacher shortage.

There are fewer students entering teacher preparation programs. According to the most recent Idaho Educator Pipeline Report, released by the Office of the State Board of Education in July, headcount enrollment in Idaho's teacher preparation programs last year was about 3,000 teacher candidates, less than half of what it was in 2009.

Based on national trends and research, there are several other key points that are also affecting the supply and demand of our teachers, right here in Idaho:

- Increases in enrollment statewide
- Retirement attrition (this varies by district, but it is a contributing factor that will continue to impact the issue)
- Non-retirement attrition (people leaving the field, based on compensation or lack of mentoring)
- The rural nature of our great state
- Negative culture or perception to the profession of education

In a collaborative effort two years ago, there was an attempt to address this very serious issue by the legislature with the development of the career ladder. The intent was to help provide some direction on this issue, while providing better pay for current certificated Idaho teachers. However, it was also intended to attract great teachers and leaders, but only two years into this strategy, it has not been in place long enough to determine the impact it will have on this shortage.

We need many more solutions and strategies that can be enacted now, and one of those strategies is already working right in front of us—it's called classified staff. These hard working individuals can be seen throughout our districts and schools, dedicated people who know their communities, parents, schools and their students, along with the process by which a school functions. We have instructional aids, office support staff, and technical staff alike, who are dedicated people and deeply care about kids. These folks are passionate about education, yet they cannot teach in Idaho simply because they are not properly credentialed.



**SHERRI YBARRA**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

650 W. STATE STREET  
P.O. BOX 83720  
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

OFFICE: 208-332-6800  
FAX: 208-334-2228  
SPEECH/HEARING  
IMPAIRED: 1-800-377-3529  
WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV

With the submission of my 2018 (FY18) public schools budget proposal, I have increased the classified staff salary and benefit dollars to better support these very hard working people. In my budget proposal, you will see a line item for Rural Education Support Center Initiative. This request, if funded, could provide a realistic and manageable solution for district leaders. The Rural Education Support Center could assist a “grow your own” program strategy, providing financial support and incentives to classified staff who would like to pursue teaching in Idaho. The Rural Education Support Center could assist by advertising positions and job sharing. This is an effort to remove the barriers to becoming a teacher and provide another strategy that can assist with the teacher shortage in our rural communities. Given that 45 states have rural education centers; Idaho’s Rural Education Support Center will have a positive impact considering the rural nature of our great state.

This is an effort to allow district leaders the opportunity to fill positions now. This is not a long-term solution and I don’t fail to recognize that this is a band aid approach to a very serious issue that nationally, has been cited to become critical in the years to come. We need to begin growing the number of future teachers enrolling in our colleges of education. We will need to work with higher education institutions on ways to recruit more individuals into those programs, as well.

Other strategies do exist for individuals already working in our Idaho school districts. One example is Teach for America (TFA). This is an opportunity to teach in schools which serve low income students. Currently, there currently 28 TFA teachers in Idaho, and we would like to increase that number in the years to come. TFA isn’t intended to solve the long-term teacher shortage, but it is a realistic, short-term strategy to the shortage that Idaho’s districts are faced with today.

Troops to Teachers (TTT) is another great organization that can assist in our short-term efforts. This program is through the Department of Defense and is designed to provide our great service men and women an opportunity to become a teacher, as well as develop a second career following their service in the military. There are currently 73 TTT teachers serving in the state of Idaho.

We have already begun to work on one of the most evident contributing factors to the teacher shortage, and that is the culture and climate of public education in Idaho. Since taking office in January of 2015, it was evident that our educators needed to be included in conversations, and to be recognized for the great work that they do every day, the behind the scenes work that occurs and that most people will never see. I have said many times, that there are things teachers do to support and protect the wellbeing of students that may never be recognized, things that are outside of their job description. This is what teachers do, they work hard in supporting schools and students to achieve because it is the right thing to do—they are tireless supporters of Idaho’s children, and by recognizing this, is in part how we can address this critical teacher shortage in Idaho.

With all this being said, our work is never done and we will continue to seek out solutions to the teacher shortage. With districts growing their own, awareness of teaching programs, and a collaborative effort in changing the culture and climate of education, we will attract and retain those great teachers and leaders our children deserve. We will continue to work with stakeholder groups, the business community,



and other state leaders to explore and pursue other options to help solve the teacher shortage, as our children of Idaho depend on it!

###

**SHERRI YBARRA**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

650 W. STATE STREET  
P.O. BOX 83720  
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

OFFICE: 208-332-6800  
FAX: 208-334-2228  
SPEECH/HEARING  
IMPAIRED: 1-800-377-3529  
[WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV](http://WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV)