



Thank you for the opportunity for Idaho PTA to meet with the Education Committee.

My name is Maria Lorcher & I have been elected the Legislative chair for the Idaho PTA. My role is to inform our members & advocate on current issues that affect our children including education, safety & nutrition. This is a 2 year appointment & I am grateful for the opportunity to represent our members in the State of Idaho.

So far this year we have over 6200 members in 121 schools throughout the State of Idaho. Everyone who works with Idaho PTA either at the State level or at the school level is a volunteer, we have no paid employees. Idaho PTA divides the State into 9 Regions & each area has its own Region Director. This way each of our unit Presidents & members have a local Idaho PTA State Board member to turn to with questions & guidance in their own area.

We would like to share with you some of the highlights of activities we have done this year with Idaho PTA.

The Pocatello School District is working with Melissa Nelson formally Mrs. Pocatello & founder of Community Kindness Movement also known as "Kindness Begins With Me", a bullying prevention program.

Our Pocatello Region Director partnered with Melissa to involve schools with PTA units. Local donations have helped the "Kindness Begins with Me Program" to provide T-shirts for over 8,000 elementary school students. Kindness Week was launched in the fall in 15 schools. This movement has helped ignite the Kindness flame throughout entire schools & unifies the student body. During this week students are encouraged to perform small acts of kindness in their schools, homes & communities. With the help of the Idaho PTA, word got out & the first school in Boise school district added the "Kindness Begins With Me Program" just yesterday making them the 18th school in 5 months to implement this program. Other events include Monthly Kindness Day celebrated the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month & a monthly Kindness award recognizing 1-student & 1-adult in their Community who exemplify genuine Kindness. Idaho PTA hopes to continue this partnership & spread the message of Kindness as a small but powerful tool against bullying.

Idaho PTA participated in the Evaluation Team for the review of the Idaho ELA/Literacy & Mathematics Content Standards. We helped to review & analyze ALL feedback from the Idaho Standards for Learning Challenge with the interest of improving the college & career readiness of all Idaho students. Any recommendations or changes to the standards will be evaluated by the State Department of Education, be presented to the Legislature at a future date to be considered for implementation for the 2016-2017 school year or later.

National PTA has an art program called Reflections & Idaho PTA participates in this art program throughout the state. Reflections welcome all grades & abilities to explore & be involved in the arts. In Region 8 which is the West-Ada & Kuna school districts over 1000 art pieces were created throughout 24 schools. To create more exposure for our student artists, Region 8 has collaborated with the City of Meridian Arts Commission. Idaho PTA is very proud to announce all of our award winning art from the Reflections program will be showcased in the Meridian city's gallery for the month of February. We have an open house scheduled for Feb 9<sup>th</sup> & our students are beyond thrilled to be able to display their art publicly for all to see. For those students who did performing arts in music and dance, a looping video & audio stream will be created in the art space so that their art can be presented as well.

Idaho PTA has added our name in support to proposed legislation to develop a do-not-contact registry for e-mail, fax, mobile phone & instant messenger technology belonging to children under the age of 18 years old. This proposed registry will block content marketed for adults including but not limited to tobacco, prescription drugs, & services geared toward adults. As the on-line technology continues to be made available to students in the State of Idaho, this is the time to put the filters in to make sure our children are safe from adult content on-line. For example, my daughter is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Meridian Middle in the West-Ada school district. Meridian Middle has been awarded a Digital Promise Innovative Learning School Grant from Verizon. Digital tablets have been made available for all 1000 students. Each student has their own email & a digital tablet to learn, create, innovate & explore information in the classroom & internet. The internet is a great tool but it also has an adult side, one in which we hope to limit the exposure to our children until they are adults.

Finally, Idaho PTA applauds the efforts of school districts that are reevaluating & eliminating school fees in the classroom. The goal is to make classes more accessible without the fear of costs associated with them. I can speak to West-Ada because my children are in this school district. With the elimination of the fees, this district expects a \$900,000 shortfall. Even with the fees, teachers still pay for supplies out of their own money & in many cases work with their school's PTA's to cover the costs of materials & field trips for our students. Idaho PTA does have concerns as school districts cut fees & do not have money in their budgets to rebuild them will cause an increase on the pressure to fundraise & put more financial burdens on PTA. The mission of our 501(c)3 organization is to serve our schools, teachers & students with volunteerism. Fundraising is something that we DO but does not represent who we are. We hope the legislature can recognize these shifts in fees within the school districts throughout the State of Idaho & continue to provide the appropriate support so that classroom which require fees are addressed & supplied. The easiest thing for school districts would be to eliminate these classes completely but that would not serve to the education of our students.

We look forward to a great year working with our students, teachers and parents. Idaho PTA quietly works throughout the state doing amazing things for our students & schools. Most parents prefer to work within their children's schools but those of us who serve on the Idaho PTA State Board feel we can offer more for not only for our children but for those in the State of Idaho. We thank the committee for the time & dedication to provide for our students & look forward to working with the legislature this year.

I will take any questions you may have.

Regards,

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