

Senate Education Committee Remarks 01/15/2018

My name is Maria Lorcher & this is my 3rd year as Advocacy Chair with the Idaho PTA. Along with me today are Erin McCandless our President Elect and Leslie Anderson our Secretary with Idaho PTA.

Thank you for the opportunity to Address & answer the 2 questions put forth by the committee:

First: What are we doing differently to enhance student growth & achievement?

For the 2018 school year, we are growing: we have added 4 new units in eastern Idaho which shows the importance of organized parental involvement in schools.

Our PTA Board Members continue to be involved with Superintendents Education Parents Advisory Council & the School Safety & Security Advisory Board to give a parent perspective to the Superintendent and the DOE on issues important in education.

New this year, Idaho PTA is part of the DOE Task Force on Assessments which is addressing concerns about the testing of our students in the State of Idaho.

On our annual Legislative Day on January 25th, here at the Capitol, we have invited our parents to be part of a focus group with the DOE to get valuable feedback from families on assessments as well as making report cards for schools. This will help parents make better decisions for their children, place them in the right learning environment & make sure they are aware of all the educational resources available to them to help their student succeed in school.

Also new this year, Idaho PTA is collaborating with the IDLA and the DOE to develop a parent portal as a 1 stop shop of resources for parents to help their kids & hopefully improve student achievement.

Idaho PTA members shine the most in our schools all day, everyday making a difference in the classroom & our school community. Our PTA units help build infrastructures for school whether is it new playground equipment, sound systems for gymnasiums as well as make available creative ways for learning through math nights, awards in reading programs, volunteer art parents and intervention tutors in the classroom. We make available money so that no student is denied breakfast or lunch.

A well nourished student is one that can concentrate on learning and not worry about their next meal.

The Second question:

What we would like to do to help student growth and achievement:

In many of our units we are starting to communicate with bi-lingual notifications to parents to help them understand first- hand what is happening in school.

In our middle schools, we have started to volunteer with educational interventions to help students master a subject and succeed.

We would like to continue to work with the DOE & help parents understand ESSA implementation in Idaho & how the new federal guidelines will help student achievement & accountability.

In our school communities, we work with our school counselors to provide them with whatever tools & resources we can, but as a 501(c)3 we are limited on funds. We would like to advocate to the Idaho Legislature for more resources available for school counselors at all grade levels. It is important now more than ever because students are dealing with more adult issues at every age including poverty, hunger, homelessness, depression, anger and bullying to name a few which all limit the ability to learn.

We will continue to support the proposed legislation Keep Idaho Safe (KIDS) Act. This do-not-contact registry for e-mail, fax, mobile phone and instant messenger technology belonging to children under the age of 18 will block content marketed for adults which may include but not limited to tobacco, alcohol, pornography and other products and services geared toward adults. As on-line learning continues to be made available to the students in Idaho, making sure filters are in place is more important than ever to keep our children away from inappropriate adult content on-line.

Idaho PTA invites children of all ages to participate in our programs & activities in schools but there is only so much we can do for Pre-K kids. Idaho PTA supports more resources to go to Pre-K education.

A significant body of research shows that high-quality preschools produce long-term academic and social benefits for children. The best thing we can do for our families in Idaho is give our families options. By funding, subsidizing or offering affordable Pre-K programs give working families, single parent, financially challenged OR families who do not have the emotional, educational resources or support to help their children at home. It is not for everyone but giving families options will help student achievement because these little ones will be better prepared for school. If these programs are available, our membership is prepared to dedicate the volunteer time & resources to help these children enjoy and succeed.

Thank you for your time to listen about the important issues concerning Idaho PTA and what contribution we are making to student growth and achievement.