



IDAHO PTA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2004-05

Charter Schools

Idaho PTA continues to support charter schools that function within the public education system that maintain accountability and use innovative education practices. Idaho PTA will seek legislation that ensures charter schools must be accessible to all students, follow all provisions defined in the "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2002, involve parents in meaningful ways, provide students with an education at least equal to public schools, have a mechanism for routine independent evaluation.

Property Tax Replacement Fund Cap

The Idaho PTA Opposes the continuance of the property tax replacement fund cap enacted by the 2003 Idaho Legislature and calls for the Legislature to repeal that cap in order to ensure important educational programs and opportunities will not be lost to Idaho's Students

Education Funding

The Idaho PTA will pursue the full funding needed to provide a quality public education system for the children of Idaho and to implement mandated programs and policies. The Idaho PTA opposes any attempts to divert public funding to private or sectarian schools. Idaho PTA believes this would promote division without diversity, and create division and separation within the community. Idaho PTA supports providing school choice within the public education system while maintaining accountability.

The Idaho PTA recognizes the need for sound and appropriate testing and assessment policies that will identify ways instruction can be improved and learning increased. Therefore, we support adequately funding Idaho's public schools to implement these policies.

While Idaho PTA pursues appropriate levels of funding to provide a quality public education system, we also pursue reasonable spending of public education funding. Programs and initiatives should be research based and targeted at improving student achievement and their ability to succeed in today's society

Parent Involvement and Responsibility

Idaho PTA recognizes parents are a child's first and foremost teacher. Idaho PTA recognizes the research that demonstrates that when parents are involved, students achieve more regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents' education level. Therefore, the Idaho PTA seeks: 1. the protection of the rights of parental involvement in site based decision making; 2. to ensure schools communicate with and involve parents in meaningful ways; and 3. to include parental involvement as a component of the School Accountability Report Card.

The Idaho PTA also recognizes that it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children are in school on a consistent basis or have a proper way of educating their children. That Idaho PTA will work to educate parents about the importance of an on-going education for all minor children. The Idaho PTA will support legislation that makes it an infraction enforceable and punishable by law for parents or guardians, to knowingly withhold education from minor children in their care.

State Achievement Standards and Accountability

Idaho PTA supports all efforts of public schools to provide every child with an education that prepares him/her for a future as a successful adult and citizen. We support the State Achievement Standards as educational goals for students. We also believe other skills and values are taught in our public schools that are beyond the scope of Achievement Standards but are just as critical for future success. The Idaho PTA opposes the use of a standardized test as the sole criteria for measuring progress. Idaho PTA is concerned about high stakes testing. We believe multiple measures of student performance to be a more valid assessment of a student's overall ability than a high stakes test or other one-size-fits-all assessment. Multiple measures may include ISAT scores, grades, portfolios, public presentations of projects, interviews, speeches, and multimedia presentations. The use of multiple measures will ensure that schools do not neglect some vital areas of instruction while concentrating on those areas measured in a high stakes test. Student assessment and testing programs should identify ways instruction can be improved and learning increased.

Idaho PTA calls for developing school report cards that report the schools performance in providing a quality education. These report cards should be presented in a format, which allows parents to easily interpret the data and make valid evaluations of their schools.

The Idaho PTA also encourages the adoption of minimum criteria for the evaluation of educators, which includes adherence to district curriculum, parent involvement and communication, teacher effectiveness as evidenced by student progress and professional conduct and classroom management.

Safe School Facilities

Idaho Schools face the enormous challenge of increasing enrollments, the need for modernization, and the health and safety hazards of deteriorating facilities. The overwhelming state need to improve the condition of Idaho's schools demands a strong and sustained investment by the state government. Local school districts cannot address these problems alone. Establishing and maintaining adequate school facilities must be a priority of state government. Modern, safe and healthy schools for all students will result in a better-educated, more informed, and more productive population in the State of Idaho in the future.

The Idaho PTA requests the Idaho Legislature to remove the supermajority requirement for passing bond levies for the building and maintenance of school facilities. The Idaho PTA also request the Idaho Legislature to repeal the Constitutionally Based Educational Claims Act (CBECA), Idaho Code §§ 6-2201 through 2216, in its entirety, including the amendments made to it by House Bill 403aa, now codified in part as Idaho Code § § 6-2213, 2214, and 2215.

Adolescent Tobacco Use and Exposure

Idaho PTA supports efforts to secure tobacco settlement funds to be used for public health concerns, especially for the health and welfare of children, with emphasis on the prevention and control of tobacco use among minors. The Idaho PTA supports regulations that limit the access of tobacco products to minors and that limit their exposure to second hand smoke.