

May 7, 2022

Dear Voters of Idaho:

I am writing this letter in support of the reelection of Sherri Ybarra to serve as Idaho's Superintendent of Public Instruction. Superintendent Ybarra is a certified teacher who has a wealth of experience as a classroom teacher coupled with leadership positions as Vice Principal, Principal, Federal Programs Director, and Idaho State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

One might believe their educational background, prior professional positions, family, or even perhaps a toe dip into the classroom as a volunteer or substitute gives them sufficient credentials to serve as our Superintendent of Public Instruction. This notion is misguided, at best, and Idaho's children deserve a Superintendent with classroom experience.

While a bachelor's degree, two advanced degrees, my journey into education as a midcareer professional via an Idaho State Board approved alternative certification route, and one year as a permanent building substitute provided a well-rounded base. However, the moment I closed my classroom door for the first time with twenty-three 5 and 6 year olds looking at me - the full import of being an educator had not hit home.

Simply put, until the moment an individual is put in charge of their own classroom as a teacher, one cannot, and does not have an idea of what it takes to effectively manage a classroom, provide Idaho's children with the quality of education and experience each child so richly deserves, and be wholly responsible for and to each child. Superintendent Ybarra is the *only* candidate running for Idaho State Superintendent of Public Instruction that has the requisite experience and truly knows and understands what a classroom teacher faces each and every day.

I've had the privilege of seeing Superintendent Ybarra visit our school, substitute in a classroom, and stop by to congratulate our very own VFW National Educator of the Year. Her interactions with students, teachers and paraprofessionals is nothing less than heartfelt and supportive. Superintendent Ybarra travels the state visiting schools, listening and taking action. She created the first Student Advisory Council during the 2021-2022 school year, with 13 students from around the state to seek their insight and suggestions - brilliant.

Superintendent Ybarra and her team have reached out to top educational researchers and have brought their expertise to the teachers and students of Idaho. One example is the Idaho Striving to Meet Achievement in Reading Together ('SMART')

Cohort for K-3 educators bringing in the work of Dr. Louisa Moats, arguably the top reading researcher in the nation. This multi-year knowledge, collaboration and coaching professional development cohort is where K-3 educators learn about the science of reading, practical skills for the classroom, screeners, and interventions to serve all children, including children with dyslexia. Superintendent Ybarra had the first Idaho SMART Cohort in place prior to the recent Dyslexia Legislation.

Under Superintendent Ybarra's leadership, Education Week identifies Idaho as improving from 31<sup>st</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation for academic achievement. This achievement has been attained despite Idaho funding education at the lowest rate of all 50 states, even with the educational funding increases under Superintendent Ybarra's leadership

As an Idaho teacher, I would like to personally thank Superintendent Ybarra for top-notch professional development opportunities created for educators and for all she does to serve Idaho's students.

Regards,

Janice Lawson  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Mountain Home, Idaho