



Idahoans for Choice in Education

Creating a Brighter Future for Idaho Families

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Home School

Harbor School

Traditional School

Charter School

Virtual School



Darrell Deide,
Chairman



Holland Johnson,
Treasurer

Does Class Size Matter

Darrel Deide, Idahoans for Choice in Education

For the next few weeks, we'll hear a lot about class sizes in Idaho's public schools. The teachers' union, long an advocate for status quo mediocrity in education, will tell people that Superintendent Luna's plan to increase class size in grades 4-8 by 1.25 students while leaving grades k-3 untouched is bad public policy. Why would the teachers' union, which derives income from the number of employed dues-paying teachers, make such a statement? Perhaps I have answered my own question. The union leadership is interested in protecting its revenue stream, not Idaho schoolchildren. In fact, research shows smaller class sizes only matters in grades K-3. Elsewhere, class size is not a factor. What matters most is the quality of the teacher. A poor teacher with few students still produces poor results. Conversely, a good or great teacher with a heavy class load still generates high student achievement. It is very clear, and I will repeat it often, what really matters is the quality of the teacher in the classroom!

Drawing from my own 30-year experience as a school administrator, I know firsthand that the quality of the classroom teacher is really what matters. In the school district that I served we approved the (radical by union standards) practice of allowing parents to request the teacher of their choice. This, obviously, resulted in some of the best teachers having the highest number of students. The world didn't come to an end. Even with bigger classes, student achievement in those classrooms remained high. It is not uncommon for our charter schools employing the "Harbor Method" of instruction to have classes exceeding 30 students. But because of the quality of the teacher, student achievement far exceeds their traditional school counterparts with much smaller class sizes. The quality of the teacher in the classroom matters most!

That conclusion is obvious, yet as we continue to debate this issue, we lose focus on the real concern: How do we get the best possible teachers in every classroom in Idaho? It is not rocket science! We do what Superintendent Luna was elected to do — change the system from an adult-centered enterprise to one that put kids first. We cannot continue to conduct business as usual. We must enact policies that give schools the "tools" they need to attract and retain the best and we need to give teachers the "tools" to do their best.

Superintendent Luna's reform agenda addresses those policies and provides the necessary tools to make that happen. Specifically his agenda calls for creating technologically-relevant

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Freedom to choose a school that meets your student's needs... not someone else's!

Freedom to choose a school that meets your expectations... not someone else's!

Freedom to choose a school based upon its performance... not where you live!

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Directors

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Julie Yamamoto,
Leslie Mauldin,
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Jack Barraclough

Past Directors

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classrooms, providing all 9th graders with laptop computers, eliminating tenure (continuing contract) for new hires, connecting student achievement with teacher and principal evaluations and rewarding teachers and principals with a pay for performance plan.

Continuing to do "business as usual" in these economic times is not possible nor is it in the best interest of kids. Our legislators have a one-time opportunity to deliver what the vast majority of Idahoans expect, a restructured and high performing school system. We owe Idaho's parents, taxpayers, and students no less!

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