

IDAHO STATESMAN

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Teacher Choice Improves Schools

Dear Editor,

Choice is a powerful motivator for students. It enhances students' performance and their sense of control, according to Stephen Barkley, keynote speaker at the Idaho Middle Level Association conference.

Choice can be a powerful motivator for teachers as well. As the legislature grapples with how to provide teachers with more pay choices so they receive the respect, recognition, and reward that they deserve, they will benefit from consultation with teachers characterized by innovative thinking, openness to change, and flexibility.

Too often, talented, independent-minded education professionals are routinely shut out and shut up by union contracts that prohibit nonunion teachers from participating in the development of sound school policy. Respect for the power of teacher choice must replace an environment characterized by intimidation, groupthink, and the status quo if teachers are ever to become true professionals.

Every educator deserves the opportunity to develop and advocate for policies focused on student achievement and professional integrity. All teachers who have great ideas and passion for improving education, union and nonunion, should be respected and valued for what they can contribute to the betterment of Idaho's schools.

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