

THE IEA VOICE

A PUBLICATION OF THE IDA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Teachers' Perspective of Ida Education

Volume 1 Issue 1

June 1, 2013

OUR PURPOSE

The Ida Education Association (IEA) is the self-governing group of teachers employed by Ida Public Schools. We are dedicated to the development, achievement, and success of every Ida student. The IEA is proud of the high quality of education we have always provided our students, and we are honored to play an instrumental part in their lives.

This official IEA publication will bring readers candid information about

- how teachers serve Ida's kids
- the various challenges teachers and kids face together
- the state of public education in Michigan and in the district of Ida

While there are other publications about Ida Schools, none capture the voices of the teachers—the people who work most closely and directly with your children. We look forward to serving the Ida community by supplying factual information from the teachers' point of view.

"The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize."

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

MEAA LEGISLATION

By Joseph M. Rathke, IEA President

Earlier in the school year you probably received a letter from the Superintendent of Ida Public Schools, Mr. Carsten, talking about legislation to expand the Michigan Education Achievement Authority (MEAA). The MEAA legislation has many elements to it, and I am not sure where I stand on the plan as a whole.

One part of this legislation that gives me pause is that every year it places the bottom 5% of schools, based on achievement, under jurisdiction of the MEAA. Once that happens, there is neither a mechanism nor criteria for a school to leave the MEAA after it improves. For example, in the first year of implementation 38 schools could fall under the MEAA. Each year there will be a new bottom 5% of schools, with more schools added to their jurisdiction each time. My concern is that the MEAA could then systematically take control of almost all schools in Michigan, and in the process, individual schools will be removed from districts as they become a part of the new bottom 5%.

Other concerns subsequently arise: If a community loses one of its schools to the MEAA, who busses the kids from that school? Will every building in a district be on the same calendar except for the one removed school? Will the State decide to interpret "school" to mean entire districts?

At this point, I have questions but no answers about the Michigan Education Achievement Authority. What do you think? Let me know at ieavoice@gmail.com.

Seniors Compete for \$20,000

For several weeks this past winter, High School teacher Melanie Nowak shared her Saturdays with a group of determined Senior math students. Five of her most ambitious students trained to compete in *Moody's Mega Math Challenge* on March 2. The prize for the first place team is \$20,000 in scholarships. The competition required the students to analyze a math/physics based question and formulate a 20-page written response with mathematical justification. The team had one day to read and answer the question and submit its response.

Ms. Nowak held five-hour practices on Saturdays to prepare her Seniors for the battle against students from all over the nation. In addition to the gift of her time and instruction, Ms. Nowak provided her team with meals on practice days and at the competition.

Thanks to her enthusiasm and dedication, Ms. Nowak's team was well prepared to represent Ida High School on March 2. The winning team of the competition has not yet been chosen by judges.

"This year's *Moody's Math Challenge* team was comprised of exceptionally gifted students," says Ms. Nowak. "In addition to excelling in mathematics and science, each team member offered the group their special skill in areas such as research, writing, and problem solving. The team worked from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. to produce an impressive math modeling project. I expect to hear great things from the judges."

Kids Teaching Kids

Since last October, Jeremy Potter's eighth grade Backyard History Class (BHC) has been teaching the elementary school second graders about Ida's history. This is the third year of the collaboration between the two grade levels.

The 24 students in Mr. Potter's class spend about two weeks prepping their lessons before they head over to the elementary school to try them out on the second graders.

The students must pick an Ida history topic they want to teach, research the topic, then design a lesson plan around that topic that is fun, educational, and hands-on. Eighth graders visit each classroom about once a month on a rotating basis. They teach the same lesson four different times, each in a different classroom.

"They're a lot smarter than we thought they'd be, said one eighth grader in the class. "At first, we thought we sounded condescending, but we found out that they were a lot more intelligent than we thought second graders would be."

Mr. Potter has lived in the school district his entire life and has become the unofficial town historian. He started the BHC in 2001 as an afterschool group. The BHC became a part of the curriculum in 2004.

"The idea of teaching our second graders about Ida history came up a few years ago when the state changed the second grade curriculum to include local history," said Potter. "The second grade teachers contacted me to help us fill in some of the gaps they had. It's been a great fit."

"The class has been so much fun to create and teach," continued Potter. "We've had challenges, though. My current students didn't get to go through the seventh grade program that we had because budget cuts killed the class two years ago. My current students were severely lacking in knowledge compared to our previous students, but we've managed the best we can."

The BHC also produces the middle school yearbook, the varsity football program, *The Tailgater*, the varsity basketball program, *In the Paint*, and works on various community service projects.

COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM

In the Elementary School, several teachers have initiated the development of a new program called the *Ida Volunteer Program*. The program's main objective is to improve the school's learning environment by providing volunteer assistants for teachers. Other goals include improved school safety and organization.

The need for a volunteer program became apparent when classroom aides were eliminated from the staff due to budget cuts. This created a difficult teacher-to-student ratio, increasing the challenge of meeting student needs.

The program has been slow starting. Although many volunteers have stepped up, most are only available for special events. Few are able to participate on a regular basis, but the teachers are appreciative of any time a volunteer is able to spend helping in the classroom.

Very special thanks to dedicated teachers Peggy Bon-nough, Carolyn Mills, and Andy Green for generously giving of their time to train volunteers from the community.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: KIM BENTLEY

At the beginning of the school year, teachers and students welcomed a new Spanish teacher to the district. Mrs. Kim Bentley teaches Spanish I in the Middle School and High School.

Kim is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University. She had been working for Ford Motor Company for fifteen years and decided to change careers. After earning her teaching certificate she worked as a Reading Specialist in Lincoln Park. What she really wanted to do, however, was teach Spanish.

When asked why she chose to focus on Spanish, Kim explains emphatically, “Spanish, I just love! I love the language, and I love the people.”

She lived in Mexico and Spain for two months and even visited the Ukraine for two weeks as part of an exchange program. “I love to travel. As Americans we need exposure to other languages and cultures,” she says.

Because Spanish is the mother tongue in twenty-one countries, Kim tells students it’s wise for them to study the language. It can help them travel, get a job, and even understand their own language better. When students are resistant to learning, she often uses games and music to make the experience fun for them and to encourage them to keep trying.

When she’s not teaching, Kim’s favorite thing to do is spend time at the lake with her two daughters, Holly and Abbey.



Did You Know...?



**Ida teachers offer a \$500 scholarship to the
graduating class every year.**

Ida students have the highest ACT scores in Monroe County.

**Ida Elementary is rated in the top 5% of Michigan schools
for improvement.**

**Ida Middle School placed 1st in Monroe County in
three MEAP content areas in 2012.**

Ida Education Association

3145 Prairie Street

Ida, Michigan 48140