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A Letter to Future Educators from Idaho's 2026 Teacher of the Year

From 2026 CapEd Credit Union Idaho Teacher of the Year Laron Johnson

Dear Future Educator,

Congratulations on the spark you've discovered within yourself. Perhaps it was ignited by a teacher's kindness or the passion they showed for their subject. Maybe it was a quiet realization that you want to make a difference in the lives of students who will one day walk through your classroom door. However it happened, you now sense that this calling is meant for you.

There are few career paths where you can influence an entire community. Speakers will come and go, architects will design and move on — but teachers plant seeds and nurture them day after day. You will build relationships strong enough that, in a child's hardest moments, they remember your lessons and the care you showed them. You help shape resilience. You help shape character. You help shape what comes next.

Now that you have the spark, build your fire. Start on day one. Seek out the optimistic. Learn to work with the pessimistic. Protect the joy you felt the first time you imagined yourself in front of a classroom. Collaborate with those who lift your spirit — order pizza, stay late, share ideas. Together, you'll build something students are drawn to.

Pursue meaningful professional development. Stretch yourself. Apply for opportunities that expand your perspective, whether that means studying ecosystems in Costa Rica or visiting historical sites in Poland to deepen lessons about humanity and responsibility. Experiences like these will enrich your classroom and your students.

You will encounter negativity. There will be frustrated colleagues and shifting public perceptions, but don't let that extinguish your purpose. Instead, lean into your commitment and invite others to remember why they chose this profession.

Is it hard? Yes — harder than you can imagine.
Is it worth it? Absolutely.

Whether you teach a classroom of energetic elementary students or thousands of teenagers over the course of your career, know this: your decision to become a teacher matters. You will help shape engineers, artists, doctors, educators, and community leaders. You will influence families and futures.

You will change lives.
Indeed — teach!

With genuine sincerity,

Laron Johnson
2026 CapEd Credit Union Idaho Teacher of the Year
Rigby High School

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