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Teacher Evaluations: a Time for Collaboration, Partnership, and Teamwork

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

(BOISE) - Picture this: it's September 8th, and you're off to a great start on another amazing year. The planets have aligned: you've been given the best students, the best curriculum, and you're just grateful to be a teacher.

But then, you open your email to a notification that it's time to begin your evaluation process. Your heart sinks. They even had the audacity to make the memo cheerful! "Looking forward to a great year! Remember to fill out the pre-evaluation form and submit it with your goals. Have a great day!"

Although many of us dread this rite of passage, I promise that this is one of the best opportunities to magnify your professional abilities. When done well, it can become a multi-year commitment in which you'll both discover areas of teaching and administrative excellence that will benefit your teaching practice, and most importantly, your students.

So how do we build this kind of partnership? How do we see the evaluation process as an opportunity rather than a dreaded experience? And, how do we leverage this system to increase student success?

First, I invite you to build a robust and ambitious classroom goal. It could be an ongoing interdisciplinary lesson that touches on major learning areas. It could be tied to a historical milestone, like learning activities that highlight the ideas and ideals of the America 250 celebration. Whatever you decide on, don't shy away from taking the time to incorporate multiple forms of learning through numerous content areas.

After you've put the work in and the evaluation cycle concludes, you can approach your post-evaluation conference with earned confidence. This is another chance to do meaningful work as you establish a relationship centered on success and growth.

This is also a time to center yourself as a partner in your dedication to development. Maybe you'll be asked to collaborate with another teacher to create a professional learning team. Maybe you'll be positioned as a mentor teacher, helping colleagues on their growth journey. This is an opportunity to become a valuable component of your school's overall commitment to student success.

In my nearly thirty years of teaching, I can remember conversations with my evaluator that led to major improvement plans for our school as well as strategic implementation and team planning to help fellow educators on their development journey. To this day, my evaluator and I have a constructive and ongoing peer relationship that has allowed me to bring ideas to life that I would not have believed possible in the first half of my career.

So, as you look toward your next evaluation cycle, I encourage you to consider the opportunity that comes with forging this type of alliance. As we all strive to grow into educators who can consistently step up for the needs of students and the educational community, the teamwork and partnership that comes with a constructive teacher-evaluator relationship is an essential part of reaching this admirable goal.

Sincerely,

Mr. Laron Johnson
2026 Idaho Teacher of the Year

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