

Let's Recognize the Role Idaho Teachers Play in Creating Career Awareness

November may be featured as National Career Awareness Month, but every month is career development month for several Idaho teachers who integrate innovative career development into their daily activities.

Using innovative technologies, Stephani Childress, regional coordinator with Advanced Opportunities in Post Falls engages her students in virtual field trips to colleges and universities. Students come to her class before school starts so they can connect online and learn about colleges and post-secondary schools across the country.

Cory Fortin and the Parma High School education team are creating a continuous “go on” culture through a variety of activities. Morning announcements are leveraged by congratulating students when they are accepted to a college or post-secondary training institution. Teachers dress in attire from their colleges, decorate classroom doors based on their alma mater and students vote for their favorite. Extra credit is earned for dressing in interview clothing on test day. Every class must do a career development activity of their choice. Even the band teacher gets into the act and brings in professional musicians.

Mountain Home Junior High school counselor Jennifer Zaika has eighth grade students create vision boards which they eventually share with their peers. Students research a career they want to pursue and paste things on their boards that answer questions like: What are the requirements? Does my chosen career include college? Will it involve on-the-job training or a technical program?

Sugar Salem High School counselor Fred Woolley encourages students to create a [raise.me](https://www.raise.me) account. [Raise.me](https://www.raise.me) is a website where students enter activities and achievements and receive micro scholarships from over 60 colleges and universities nationwide. Students enter in AP test scores, club memberships and community service among other subjects and see their scholarship amount grow.

Shoshone High School requires all students to complete 60 hours of job shadowing with a local business. Students must also attend 40 hours of school games, plays, concerts, pep rallies or other activities and complete 40 hours of community service before they graduate. Instructors help students identify a business, provide a set of questions to ask during the initial phone call, and if necessary, coach them through the conversation.

Jenni Kimball, a counselor at Columbia High in Nampa, worked with staff at her school to plan its first career fair last year. She and her staff reached out to local businesses and agencies, such as the Idaho Department of Labor, to host workshops in the morning for her students and participate in an open fair in the afternoon.

Identifying a need for hands-on training and learning, Canyon Springs' Heather Ramos worked with a local chef to create a culinary arts program. After earning a Professional Technical Education certification to teach culinary arts, the chef and students whipped up a barbecue where

parents were invited to learn more about post-secondary education opportunities. The program is in its first year.

Lori Lodge, formerly at Timberline in the Boise School District, was one counselor trying to work with 700 students. Knowing she couldn't make a strong impact with each student, she reached out to parents to see if they would be interested in volunteering in her career lab. As parents showed an interest, she trained them on the Idaho Career Information System, FAFSA, college applications and placement tests so they felt comfortable helping students. Parents signed up for a time to volunteer in the lab and sat down one-on-one with students to answer questions and mentor. As a result, students gained more personal attention and assistance and parents felt more involved.

These are just a few of the many creative ways Idaho teachers throughout the state are using to engage students in planning for their future, which can be a tough challenge. Between deciding on a career that fits a child's skill sets and interests, understanding the process of preparing and applying to higher education and figuring out how to budget for the future, things get complicated.

The Idaho Department of Labor's [Career Information System](#) offers comprehensive career information, resources and services to help parents and students make wise career and education decisions. For more information on how students, parents and educators can better prepare for their future – not just during the month of November, but every month – visit idahocis.org.

-Sara Scudder is the administrator of Idaho's Career Information System, hosted by the Idaho Department of Labor