BACKGROUND
The Idaho State Department of Education partnered with Idaho’s Institutions of Higher Education to create the Idaho Regional Mathematics Centers to continue and advance the work of the Idaho Math Initiative. Created in 2007, the Idaho Math Initiative has helped to support the implementation of Idaho Core college- and career- ready standards. The goal of this collaborative and comprehensive statewide effort is to ensure teachers are highly trained and effective professionals prepared for the increased rigor of the Idaho Core Standards.

Regional Mathematic Centers are housed within each of the four-year state institutions of higher education: Idaho State University, University of Idaho, Lewis-Clark State College, and Boise State University. The Regional Mathematic Center members (made up of regional specialists, K-16 mathematics experts, and trained teacher fellows) operate as support centers and address the needs for regionally focused, school- specific and quality professional development for all K-12 public schools.

WHY PARTNER WITH HIGHER EDUCATION?
There was an intentional move to partner with the four state universities to ensure teachers would be connected to their institutions of higher education; the Regional Mathematical Centers recognized the benefit of staying connected to research and take actions based on research. The Department recruited one professor from each of the four state universities to create the Idaho Math Steering Committee. With the right relationships at the table, this committee came together to address regional differences and created a shared vision.

IDAHO REGIONAL MATHEMATICS CENTERS
Regional Mathematics Centers hosted a face-to-face academy on mathematics where regional specialists (collaborative and supervisory leaders) met and worked together. Each of the universities on the Idaho Math Steering Committee attended and contributed their unique strengths and expertise. Regional academies were also available to provide assistance throughout the year. The summer and regional academies helped promote awareness of the types of support offered by the Regional Mathematics Centers.

CHALLENGES
The creation of a partnership with higher education institutions resulted in a new way of supporting teachers, administrators and providing professional development. One of the biggest lessons learned was how difficult it was to break down old institutional structures. Forming the right team with a shared vision from the beginning is vital to creating relationships and building trust with all stakeholders. The Department broke down structures and built relationships with institutions of higher education which to promote effective mathematics teaching and over time, gave way to innovative ideas supported by evidence.

GOING FORWARD
The Department will continue to support teachers by providing rich, job-embedded, meaningful professional development through the Regional Mathematics Centers. With the partnership with the Institutions of Higher Education, Idaho hopes to jointly support educators with long-term impacts reflected in higher levels of student success. With a solid foundation and commitment to students, the Idaho State Department of Education and the Institutes of Higher Education will help all educators understand the Idaho Core Standards more thoroughly, support quality mathematics teaching, and improve teacher quality through the Idaho Regional Mathematics Centers.

For more information, visit the Idaho Math Initiative