Who we are

Idaho Education News is a nonprofit news source that provides statewide awareness of critical issues that affect Idaho’s children and their future.

We are independent. We take no positions on how to achieve better schools. And our funders have no influence on our editorial decisions.

We are award-winning journalists. We dig into the data and shine a light on the truth.

We demand transparency. We hold leaders and educators accountable for taxpayer dollars and student achievement.

— Jennifer Swindell, managing editor of Idaho Education News

Why this matters

Idahoans need accurate news and data about education more than ever before because:

Idaho spends $2 billion in taxpayer dollars per year on public education, equal to half of all the taxes collected.

Idahoans rank education as their No. 1 priority, ahead of the economy and the environment, according to recent surveys.

Still, Idaho student achievement has stagnated and lags behind national indicators of performance and success.

This is the second edition of Idaho EdTrends. This book contains the most recent, publicly available data on all Idaho public schools. For more stories, go to IdahoEdNews.org. For more in-depth and comparable data, go to IdahoEdTrends.org. Some school results are redacted in compliance with Idaho's student privacy law.

We created this book to help readers better understand how Idaho educates 307,416 kids and spends $2 billion in taxpayer dollars per year.
What’s inside

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Enrollment and Demographics
**INVESTIGATION**

**Idaho’s enrollment reaches record number**

Enrollment in Idaho’s K-12 public schools continues on a steady climb upward. According to the 2019 winter tally, 307,416 children attend Idaho’s public schools. This was the steepest year-over-year enrollment jump since 2012. About 5,000 new students joined Idaho schools and about 40 percent of them enrolled in Idaho’s growing public charter school population.

Idaho currently uses a complicated average-daily-attendance calculation to fund schools. But leaders believe the 25-year-old model is outdated. A legislative interim committee recommended the state switch to an enrollment-based funding model, but the 2019 Legislature couldn’t agree. Lawmakers said one obstacle was a lack of valid enrollment data so they instead approved a plan that will require school officials to submit new financial and enrollment reports to the state. The data will help legislators in 2020 again attempt to change the way Idaho funds schools, moving from average-daily-attendance calculations to an enrollment model.

**Some highlights:**

**Most growth** — Oneida School District grew by 66 percent from 1,490 students last year to 2,445 this year. It’s the second year of unprecedented growth from the once-tiny district. Oneida reported growth of 31.4 percent last year. The two years of growth has been fueled by its online-learning program.

**Close second** — West Ada School District, Idaho’s largest, grew by 2.3 percent. West Ada has nearly 40,000 students enrolled, which accounts for 13 percent of all Idaho public school students.

**Going down** — Boise School District dropped more students than any other district, declining by about 200 or about 1 percent.

Average annual enrollment growth in Idaho’s public schools over the past 15 years.

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**ENROLLMENT**

Student population over time

- 300K
- 290K
- 280K
- 270K
- 260K
- 250K

Year | Enrollment | Growth Rate |
--- | --- | --- |
'04 | 250K | 1.6% |
'05 | 257K | 1.2% |
'06 | 262K | 1.5% |
'07 | 268K | 1.7% |
'08 | 274K | 1.1% |
'09 | 280K | 1.3% |
'10 | 286K | .6% |
'11 | 292K | .7% |
'12 | 298K | 1.2% |
'13 | 304K | 1.5% |
'14 | 309K | 1.1% |
'15 | 315K | 1.2% |
'16 | 321K | 1.7% |
'17 | 327K | 2.1% |
'18 | 333K | 1.9% |

- Average annual enrollment growth in Idaho’s public schools over the past 15 years.
Idaho’s public charter school population continues to grow

More than 2,000 students joined charters in 2018 and there are about 11,000 names on wait lists. (Entry into a charter typically requires a lottery selection).

And more seats are coming. The federal charter school program recently awarded $17.1 million to a consortium headed by Bluum Inc., a Boise nonprofit that promotes school choice. The consortium includes the State Department of Education, Idaho’s Charter School Commission, the J.A. and Kathryn Alberston Family Foundation and Building Hope, a nonprofit school finance group.

Bluum plans to use the $17.1 million to create 8,200 new charter school seats over five years. The federal dollars would go toward launching, expanding and replicating charter schools that would eventually receive a share of state tax dollars. Bluum’s overarching goal is to serve rural and at-risk groups.

Two third-party groups will review applicants to decide which new charter schools will get a share of the $17.1 million. And Boise State University’s Idaho Policy Institute has been hired to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and the new schools it funds. The institute’s report is due in 2024.

Districts and schools

- West Ada is Idaho’s largest district with nearly 40,000 students — 13 percent of the state’s K-12 population.
- 24,000 attend charter schools in Idaho — 9 percent of the state’s K-12 population.

Idaho’s largest minority is Hispanic or Latino.
Budgets and Salaries
Teacher pay has been on a five-year rise

Idaho’s teachers will receive a fifth consecutive year of raises in the fall of 2019.

And that’s not all. Veteran teachers are eligible for $12,000 each in bonuses (called master teacher premiums) and the minimum teacher salary will increase to $40,000.

The Idaho Legislature fulfilled its five-year promise to boost teacher pay by more than $250 million with the “career ladder” salary law approved in 2015.

- The minimum starting teacher salary increased by 12.8 percent.
- The average teacher salary increased by 12.5 percent.
- The average administrator salary increased by 13 percent.

Plus, the 2019 Legislature approved $7.2 million for master teacher premiums. The State Board is projecting 2,500 applications for the premiums, which would provide $4,000 a year for three consecutive years to high-performing veteran teachers.

Here’s The 2019-2020 School-Year Investment:

- $49.7 million to pay for the fifth consecutive year of educator raises.
- $7.3 million to give school administrators a 3 percent raise.
- $7.2 million to pay for master teacher premiums.

Idaho administrators (superintendents and principals) typically work throughout the summer when teachers are off. Teachers are contracted to work, on average, 180 days in Idaho. Students are in class about 160 days. The difference (20 days) is typically for teacher training, sick days, personal days and teacher work days.

Teachers will have received five consecutive years of raises by Fall of 2019. These salaries do not include benefits.
**INVESTIGATION**

**Principals and teachers receive high performance marks**

Idaho’s latest round of principal evaluations look strikingly similar to the teacher evaluations data that has sparked a firestorm of controversy over recent years.

More than 97 percent of Idaho school district principals evaluated in 2017-18 received one of the highest two possible marks, “proficient” or “distinguished,” according to numbers released by the State Department of Education. Very few principals were labeled “basic” and no principal in the 41 districts examined for this report received a score of “unsatisfactory.”

These numbers bear strong resemblance to Idaho teacher evaluations. Nearly all of Idaho’s teachers earned top scores on their annual evaluations over the past four years.

Every single principal received a “proficient” score in 2017-18 in these districts: Blaine County, Boise, Bonneville, Boundary County, Cassia County, Emmett, Filer, Fremont County, Jerome, Lakeland, Madison, Middleton, Minidoka County, Nampa, Payette, Pocatello-Chubbuck, Preston, Shelley, Snake River, Teton County, Weiser and West Bonner County.

### Top administrators (2018-2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contract salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boise</td>
<td>Don Coberly</td>
<td>$178,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaine County</td>
<td>GwenCarol Holmes</td>
<td>$175,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Ada</td>
<td>Mary Ann Ranells</td>
<td>$171,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Pend Oreille</td>
<td>Shawn Woodward</td>
<td>$167,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeur d’Alene</td>
<td>Steven Cook</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville</td>
<td>Scott Woolstenhulme</td>
<td>$155,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell</td>
<td>N. Shalene French</td>
<td>$153,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville</td>
<td>Marjean McConnell</td>
<td>$149,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Becky Meyer</td>
<td>$149,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boise</td>
<td>Coby Dennis</td>
<td>$148,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nampa</td>
<td>Paula Kellerer</td>
<td>$147,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallivue</td>
<td>Pat Charlton</td>
<td>$145,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Falls</td>
<td>George Boland</td>
<td>$145,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor Brad Little</td>
<td></td>
<td>$138,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Superintendent Sherri Ybarra</td>
<td></td>
<td>$117,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho’s average teacher salary</td>
<td></td>
<td>$49,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest average teacher salary: Liberty Charter</td>
<td></td>
<td>$76,687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The national average salary for school superintendents and administrators is $154,000. The national average salary for school principals is about $100,000.

When observing, what teaching strategies does your principal look for to measure teacher effectiveness?
Idaho’s 2018 General Fund Budget

- All Other Agencies
- Public Safety
- Health and Human Services
- Other Education
- College and Universities
- Public Education

Total: $4 billion

Public education receives 49 percent—or half—of state tax collections. The amount jumps to 63 percent when higher education is included.

About 64 percent of public school's budget is for salaries and benefits.

Idaho’s 2018 Public Schools Budget

- Remediation, Advancement and Testing
- Discretionary
- School facilities
- Transportation
- Professional Development
- Salaries and Benefits

Total: $2 billion

General Fund Budget over time

- The state budget grew by 19 percent and the public schools budget grew by 26 percent during the last four-year period.
Budgets and Salaries

Local voters continue to support their schools

In March of 2019, voters approved $86.3 million in bond issues and $178.5 million in school levies. But this most recent election wasn’t a slam dunk. From Bear Lake County to Payette, several big bond issues failed — some narrowly, some by a lopsided margin. And in North Idaho, a handful of supplemental levies fell short of the simple majority needed to pass. All told, 48 districts sought more than $485 million in bonds and levies.

Idaho school districts will collect a record $202 million in voter-approved supplemental property tax levies this year.

Districts can and do use supplemental levies for a variety of purposes — including teacher salaries and benefits, classroom technology and textbooks. And many school officials say the one-to two-year levies are no longer supplemental, but instead help pay for essentials.

Idaho’s supplemental tax bill has nearly doubled over the past decade. All told, 95 of Idaho’s 115 school districts have a supplemental levy on the books, a number that has remained virtually unchanged for the past five years.

Charter schools do not have taxing authority, so cannot collect local property taxes and rely on state and federal funding.

INVESTIGATION

How does your school determine priorities for spending and saving?

A fund balance is a savings account. Districts are not required to spend fund balances before asking taxpayers to support supplemental levies. These savings accounts add up to more than Idahoans contribute to supplemental levies.
Student Achievement
Student Achievement

Reading scores from fall school year 2018-2019

About half of Idaho’s kindergarten through third-grade students were behind in their reading skills, according to the fall 2018 reading exam. And these scores dropped from the year before. Education leaders attribute the drop to a new, more comprehensive test. But still, thousands are behind. The numbers vary:

- **Kindergarten:** 45 percent of students read at grade level.
- **First grade:** 42.9 percent read at grade level
- **Second grade:** 60.3 percent read at grade level
- **Third grade:** 61.2 percent read at grade level
- **K-3:** 52.5 percent read at grade level

The 2018 fall scores also revealed some demographic gaps. While 57.2 percent of white students read at grade level, 34.7 percent of Hispanic students and 30.4 percent of American Indian and Alaskan native students read at grade level.

Meanwhile, 41.2 percent of economically disadvantaged students read at grade level.

The new reading test was given to 89,000 students and comes as Idaho is stepping up a multiyear and multimillion-dollar effort to improve reading skills. The state dedicated $13 million for literacy in 2018 and doubled the amount to $26 million for the 2019-20 school year.

Idaho’s best third-grade reading scores (percent reading at grade level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Reading at Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Hills Elementary (Bonneville)</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Star Charter</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside Elementary (Boise)</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galileo Magnet School (West Ada)</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side Elementary (Idaho Falls)</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) is a test given to all kindergarten through third-grade students to assess their reading skills.
IDAHO’S STANDARDIZED TEST

Here’s good news on Idaho’s standardized test scores

Scores improved — almost across the board. The Idaho Standards Achievement Test, or ISAT, tests students in grades 3-8 and 10th grade against the state’s Common Core standards.

The 2018 test results improved in nearly every grade level, and both in math and English language arts.

The biggest improvement of the bunch: 44 percent of sixth-graders scored proficient or advanced in math, up from 40 percent a year ago. Elsewhere, proficiency rates held steady, or improved by one to three percentage points.

Significantly, these proficiency rates didn’t drop in any grade level, in either discipline.

While the numbers trended upward, some familiar gaps lingered.

Students score better on the ELA (English and Language Arts) section of the test — and their performance improves through grade school and into high school. Nearly 60 percent of 10th graders scored proficient or better on the ELA section.

In math, scores continue to drop steadily from third grade through high school. Only 33 percent of 10th graders scored proficient or better in math, a slight improvement from 2017.

Idaho missed 33 of 34 yearly academic benchmarks

Idaho failed to meet 33 of 34 interim targets outlined in a plan to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The interim targets called for increasing test scores and closing achievement gaps.

Idaho’s ESSA plan outlines achievement goals for 2022. In order to reach those goals, Idaho’s plan has yearly interim targets. Idaho Education News cross-referenced the 2018 targets with state data and discovered that Idaho fell short in all but one category.

What is your school’s proficiency in math and reading?

Find out at IdahoEdTrends.org.
Here’s bad news on Idaho’s college entrance exam

Scores dropped on Idaho’s college entrance exam of choice, and the lackluster numbers come as the state is spending tens of millions of dollars to try to encourage high school graduates to continue their education.

State officials admitted they were disappointed, and confused, by the 2018 scores.

High school juniors scored an average of 989 on the SAT, which has a perfect score of 1600. A year ago, the average came in at 998.

The split between verbal and math skills was considerable:

• Juniors averaged 503 on the SAT’s evidence-based reading and writing section. And 58 percent of juniors scored higher than 480 — the SAT’s college-readiness benchmark that suggests a student is ready for first-year coursework.

• Juniors averaged 486 in math, and only a third of them hit the SAT’s college-readiness benchmark.

The state takes the SAT seriously, hoping it will serve as a springboard to college. Idaho spends about $1 million a year to allow juniors to take the test at taxpayer expense, and as a result, nearly 20,000 juniors took the SAT for free in April. This also means the SAT scores provide a broad cross-section of student performance.

Students are considered college- and career-ready when their SAT scores meet both the math (530) and the evidence-based reading and writing (480) benchmarks. Most Idaho students fail to meet both benchmarks.
In the above comparison, at least 90 percent of the juniors in these states took the SAT. The key metrics here are the college-readiness benchmarks: 480 on the reading and writing section and 530 on the math section. Students who hit these benchmarks are more likely to earn at least a C in introductory-level college classes.
Student Achievement

**INVESTIGATION**

Idaho’s high school graduation rate made solid gains

The graduation rate from 2018 comes in at 80.6 percent, up from 79.7 percent a year ago.

But Idaho is not keeping pace with the rest of the nation. Though Idaho’s rate has improved, it fell in the national ranking from No. 40 to No. 43.

The State Department of Education said it is taking an additional step to measure graduation rates. The department will track students who did not graduate within the four-year window, and see if they graduate in a fifth year. Factoring in that fifth year, the 2017 graduation rate improved to 82 percent.

Here are a few other key graduation numbers:

- **18,429:** The number of students who graduated on time in 2018.
- **4,422:** The number of students who did not graduate on time in 2018.
- **82.3 percent:** The graduation rate for white students.
- **75.9 percent:** The graduation rate for Hispanic students.
- **60.7 percent:** The graduation rate for American Indian or Alaskan native students.
- **90:** The number of high schools with graduation rates of 90 percent or more. Idaho has 210 high schools.
- **18:** The number of high schools with a 100 percent graduation rate.

Graduation rates are determined by the number of students who graduate in four years divided by the number of students who started ninth grade. Students who transfer and enroll in another school are not counted.

**What are your school’s greatest accomplishments?**
**GO-ON RATES**

The go-on rate is the percentage of students entering a post-secondary education program within 12 months of high school graduation. Young adults who do not go on to some form of higher education, and instead go on religious missions or join the military, are not counted.

**INVESTIGATION**

Idaho’s go-on rate shows no improvement

Idaho’s newest “go-on” numbers came up flat — again.

Only 45 percent of the state’s high school graduates went straight from high school to college last fall. That’s essentially unchanged from the go-on rate the State Board of Education reported a year ago, and it’s a shade lower than the 2016 rate.

And the numbers have remained flat, despite the state’s ongoing, multimillion-dollar push to encourage high school graduates to continue their education.

The go-on rate tracks high school graduates who enroll in a two- or four-year college.

Since it is strictly a college enrollment measure, it doesn’t take into account the high school graduates who decide to pursue a professional certificate. And the fall go-on rate doesn’t account for high school grads who put college on hold to enlist in the military, serve a church mission or take a “gap year” to earn money for tuition.

This year’s raw numbers: Close to 8,200 high school grads went straight to college. More than 10,100 graduates did something else.

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**How does your school prepare teens for life after high school?**
National Lumina report puts Idaho near the bottom

The Lumina Foundation, an Indianapolis, Ind.-based foundation, is pushing a national 60 percent goal, with a 2025 target date that mirrors Idaho’s goal. Lumina tracks Idaho’s college attainment rate at 40.7 percent because it considers adults from 25 to 64 years old. Idaho’s goal is focused only on 25- to 34-year-olds.

Nationally, Lumina’s postsecondary completion rate comes in at 47.6 percent. Idaho’s 40.7 percent rate is good enough to beat only three other states: Alabama, Nevada and West Virginia.

INVESTIGATION

Degree or certificate attainment data is unchanged

Only 40.7 percent of Idaho’s young adults hold a college degree or professional certificate, according to newly released U.S. Census Bureau numbers.

The 2017 numbers mean Idaho’s postsecondary completion rate has been stagnant for three straight years.

The numbers haven’t moved — despite two gubernatorial task forces, more than $133 million in new state spending and an ongoing drive from education, political and business leaders.

Idaho leaders want 60 percent of the state’s 25- to 34-year-olds to obtain a degree or certificate. They say high school graduates need to continue their education in order to prepare for a modern job market, and help Idaho compete in a changing economy.
Accountability
INVESTIGATIONS

Accountability

Student survey gauges classroom engagement

About 65 percent of Idaho’s students in grades 3-8 are considered to be engaged in school, according to results of a first-year survey conducted by the State Department of Education.

Elementary students are the most engaged. When you narrow the group to just middle school students, engagement drops to about 58 percent.

Student engagement is a new metric that Idaho education officials are tracking. It’s important because education leaders chose to build it into the state’s new accountability plan.

Student engagement refers to the degree of attention and interest children show when they are learning or being taught. Engaged students are more likely to perform well on standardized tests and are less likely to drop out of school.

More survey results coming soon: This year, schools surveyed students in grades 3-12, parents and teachers for accountability purposes.

What is your school’s approach to student discipline and safety?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Idaho Student Engagement Survey (2018)

Students in grades 3-8

- Percent of students who report being engaged: 35%
- Percent of students who report being NOT engaged: 65%
Accountability

Where does your school rank?

The State Department of Education released online report cards for every public school and charter in the state this school year. The digital report cards are a part of Idaho’s new school accountability system and are available for public review.

The report card data includes student achievement, demographics, enrollment, teacher retention, as well as non-academic indicators, such as student engagement surveys.

As part of the accountability plan, which is required by the feds, state officials identified the lowest performing schools in Idaho and recognized schools that met or exceeded goals and identified hundreds of schools for targeted support and improvement.

The report cards allow the public to access information such as standardized test results and high school graduation rates. The report cards also show whether schools were flagged for improvement under the new accountability system.

Idaho’s top accountability scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K-8</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paramount Elementary (West Ada)</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Elementary</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcon Ridge Public Charter</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensberry Elementary (Post Falls)</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnelly Elementary (McCall-Donnelly)</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands Elementary</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edahow Elementary (Boise)</td>
<td>95.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Siena Elementary (West Ada)</td>
<td>94.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roosevelt Elementary (Boise)</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorensen Elementary (CDA)</td>
<td>93.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palouse Prairie Charter</td>
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<td>Eagle Hills Elementary (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillsdale Elementary (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery Elementary (Bonneville)</td>
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<td>Longellow Elementary (Boise)</td>
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<td>Lava Elementary (Boise)</td>
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<td>Cecil D Andrus Elementary (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Joseph Elementary (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper Carmen Public Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rulon M Ellis Elem (Pocatello)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lena Whitmore Elementary (Moscow)</td>
<td>89.3</td>
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### HIGH SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>School Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>Coeur d’Alene Charter Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>Meridian Medical Arts Charter (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>Victory Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>Meridian Technical Charter (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>Renaissance (West Ada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>Compass Public Charter</td>
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<td>88.6</td>
<td>Liberty Charter</td>
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<td>88.5</td>
<td>Troy</td>
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<td>88.0</td>
<td>Grace</td>
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<td>86.0</td>
<td>West Side</td>
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<tr>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>McCall-Donnelly</td>
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<td>83.0</td>
<td>Genese</td>
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<tr>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>Murtaugh</td>
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<td>81.0</td>
<td>Vision Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>Taylors Crossing Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>Century (Pocatello)</td>
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<td>80.5</td>
<td>Carey</td>
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<tr>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>Eagle (West Ada)</td>
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<td>78.5</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson Charter (Vallivue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>Idaho Fine Arts Academy (West Ada)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INVESTIGATIONS

**Top 40 Composite Scores**

The State Department of Education determined accountability indicators for three categories of schools — K-8, high school and alternative. This was a requirement of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. These composite scores were determined by a calculation using a school’s percentile rank in each indicator.

**Idaho’s top accountability scores:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K-8</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lena Whitmore Elementary (Moscow)</td>
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Definitions and Questions
Emergency levy
If a school district’s enrollment increases by just one student, the district can impose a levy on taxpayers without an election. The amount of the levy is based on a formula in Idaho Code. The emergency levy must be certified by the local board of trustees by the second Monday in September.

ESSA
Passed in December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act covers a plethora of topics — from testing and student achievement to teacher quality indexes to school accountability metrics. The successor to the No Child Left Behind federal mandate is widely seen as a shift toward federalism.

Idaho’s ESSA compliance plan is important because it outlines Idaho’s goals for education and describes how local education leaders will implement nine federal programs and represents Idaho’s application for some $83 million in annual federal funding.

Fund balance
School districts can budget up to 5 percent of their general fund budget into a contingency fund reserve. These savings accounts have grown very large in the past few years. Some districts have as much in their fund balance as they spend each year.

General obligation bond
When school districts plan on building new schools they hold a General Obligation Bond Levy election for the amount they will need to build the new school(s). The measure must pass with 67 percent majority vote.

Go-on rates
These national calculations are determined by the young adults who go on to some form of higher education within 12 months of graduating high school. About 45 percent of Idaho’s 2017 graduates continued their education. The 45 percent figure does not include military or church service and might not include all career-technical programs.

Idaho Public Charter School Commission
The Public Charter School Commission’s mission is to ensure PCSC-authorized public charter schools’ compliance with Idaho statute, protecting student and public interests with high standards of accountability and implementing best authorizing practices to ensure the excellence of public charter school options available to Idaho families.
**Definitions**

**IDAPA Code**
Sets of administrative rules adopted and approved by the legislature and that govern State Agencies.

**IRI**
Idaho measures reading ability with the Idaho Reading Indicator, a short test designed to measure a student's reading fluency. The state has used the IRI, or some version of it, since the late 1990s. But the state shifted to a new reading exam in 2018-19.

The IRI is given to students at least twice a year—in the fall and in the spring—and in grades K-3.

**ISAT**
Idaho Standards Achievement Test. All Idaho students in grades 3–8 and grade 10 are required to take the ISAT in math and English Language Arts. Students in Idaho are no longer required to pass the test for graduation.

**Language Immersion**
Students learn through an international lens and work part of the day using a second language.

**Levy rate**
The tax liability imposed on homeowners for owning real estate. A school district's levy rate is on yearly tax bill or on the State Department of Education's financial web page.

**Montessori**
A child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood.

**NAEP**
The National Assessment of Educational Progress provides nationwide testing. Schools and districts are randomly selected each year to take these tests. The scores can be compared from state to state.

**Traditional public school**
These are the neighborhood schools. They are funded with state and federal money plus local tax levies. Attendance zones are normally set by the local board of trustees.

**Public charter school**
A public-funded independent school established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter with a local or state authority. Attendance in charters is normally set up through a lottery system.

**Schools of Choice**
Schools with specialized courses and curricula (formerly known as magnet schools) that are supported by a district.

**Private school**
Schools funded specifically through tuition payments, grants and other private funding.

**Parochial**
A private school affiliated with a religious organization.

**STEM Schools**
These schools are recognized for using and implementing researched-based programs in science, technology, engineering and math.

**Supplemental levy**
When districts are in need of extra money for the general fund maintenance and operation of the district, they hold a supplemental levy election. These are usually spread over two years and can be spent on anything. Most districts will designate the money for a specific purpose such as technology, books or staff. Supplemental levies require a simple majority to pass.

**Professional Standards Commission**
The PSC was established as an advisory commission by The Idaho Legislature in 1972. The PSC makes recommendations to the State Board of Education in teacher education, certifications, standards and can take action on teacher licensure up to and including revocation for violations of the Professional Educator Code of Ethics.
QUESTIONS TO ASK

To learn more about your school and district, ask these questions of school leaders:

School Philosophy
• Does this school have an educational philosophy or mission?
• How often do you consider student learning when making schoolwide decisions?
• What credible evidence do you look for that assures students are learning?
• What are some of the school’s greatest accomplishments?
• What are some of the biggest challenges?

Teacher Quality
• How will you measure my child’s learning progress?
• How do you measure the learning progress of all kids?
• When you observe teachers in a classroom, what teaching strategies do you look for to measure teacher effectiveness?

Student Resources
• What is the school’s approach to homework?
• What library resources are available to my child?
• How is technology used to support teaching and learning at this school?
• How do the arts fit into the curriculum?
• What extracurricular opportunities are available? Is there a gifted student program?
• How does this school support students who have academic or social difficulties?
• What strategies are used to teach students who are not fluent in English?

Safety
• What is this school’s approach to student discipline and safety?
• Is bullying a problem at the school? Does the school have an anti-bullying policy?

Taxpayer Dollars
• What percent of the district budget is in a savings account and how was that amount determined?
• How do you determine priorities for spending?
• When do you ask for and how do you spend taxpayer dollars collected from supplemental levies?

Leadership
• What is the district’s strategic plan and what measurable goals within the strategy do you use to measure progress?
• What are your personal goals as a school leader and how do you measure your success?
• How do you engage the community and what is your strategy for involving patrons in district-wide decisions?
• How do you evaluate principals?
• How often do you consider student learning when making district-wide decisions?

Achievement
• What is the graduation rate?
• What is the district go-on rate?
• What is the proficiency in elementary math and reading?
• What are the average scores on college entrance exams?
• How does the data compare to other districts, the state and nation?
• What are student and teacher attendance rates?
• What are student enrollment and discipline trends?

Transparency
• How are board minutes made available to the public?
• Do you comply with Idaho’s transparency requirements (posting expenditures, teacher/vendor contracts, budgets, master agreements and strategic plans to the district website)?
• How often do you survey parents and how do you use their feedback to make district-wide decisions?
Information in this report is from the IdahoEdNews.org and IdahoEdTrends.org websites managed by the staff of Idaho Education News.

Data for this book was collected from districts and charters, the State Department of Education, State Board of Education and the National Clearing House. Idaho Education News staff mined the data and reported on the findings. Complete news stories can be found at IdahoEdNews.org. More data can be explored at IdahoEdTrends.org. Both websites are free of paywalls and advertising thanks to generous funding provided by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation.

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