

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Guest Opinion for “Voices”
Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2022
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Idaho’s five-year graduation rate hits highest-ever mark

By Sherri Ybarra
Superintendent of Public Instruction

(BOISE) – This week, my department issued our annual news release about Idaho’s graduation rates, and now I want to share with Idaho Ed News readers an important part of the story.

You’ve probably read that the traditional four-year rate for the Class of 2021 went down a little for the first time since 2014 -- not surprising, considering that COVID-19 disrupted both the junior and senior years for these students.

But the five-year rate, which is proving to be a accurate indicator of a student’s ability to succeed in high school and beyond, continued to rise and hit its highest level yet.

This latest five-year rate, 84.1 percent, includes students who didn’t quite complete their high school education in time to graduate with their classmates in 2020, but needed an extra semester or an extra year to meet requirements. We know that extra academic time, tutoring and intervention are essential to addressing unfinished learning and helping our students succeed despite disruptions to in-person learning during this long-running pandemic.

This is particularly true for demographic groups that face special challenges, including English language learners, migratory students, homeless students, students with disabilities, and the economically disadvantaged. Five-year graduation rates for each of those groups were at least 3 percentage points higher than their four-year rates.

This is the fourth year Idaho has calculated a five-year rate to include the number of graduates who didn’t quite complete high school during the traditional freshman-to-senior time frame. The five-year rate for the Class of 2021 cohort won’t be known until after graduation season.

Here are the graduation rate statistics we do have:

Cohort Class	Four-year	Five-year
2017	79.7%	82%
2018	80.6%	82.8%
2019	80.7%	83.3%
2020	82.1%	84.1%
2021	80.1%	Not available

The past two years have been challenging, and we will continue to see the impacts of the pandemic moving forward. But Idaho’s schools and educators are going all-out to identify learning gaps and help students succeed, with high doses of tutoring, targeted interventions and extended academic time such as summer programs and afterschool programs.

And we will continue to move forward in measures of student success – including graduation rates.

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