HP NETA
National Education Technology Assessment

Building a clear & consistent statewide vision for education in a state on the frontier of the fourth industrial revolution

STATEWIDE STUDY ON EDUCATION & THE ECONOMY

IDAHO

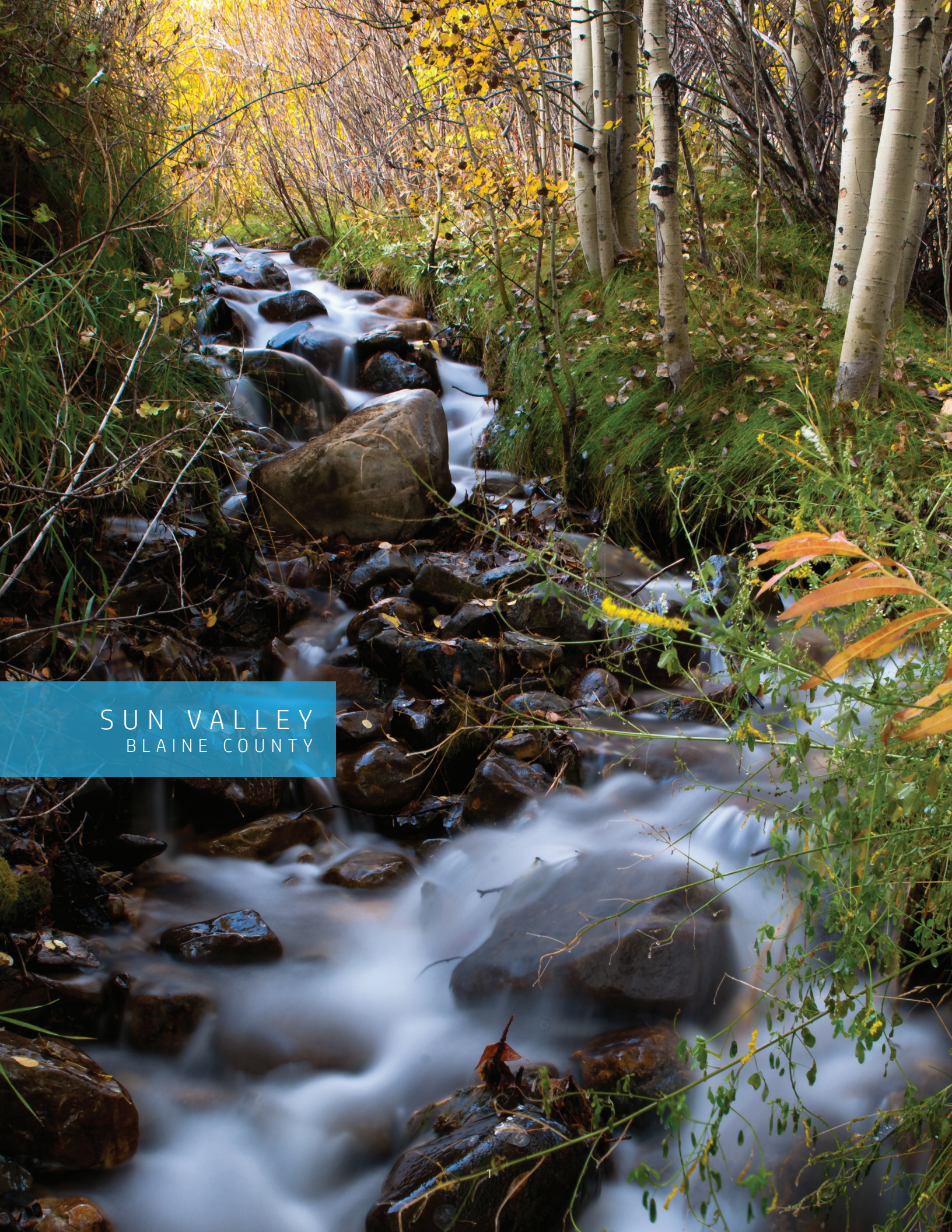




EAGLE DAYS RODEO

ADA COUNTY





SUN VALLEY
BLAINE COUNTY

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Defining a shared vision for education in Idaho

On behalf of Idaho Business for Education, we would like to thank our partner and IBE member HP for conducting this study of Idaho's education system. HP's leaders and employees dedicated countless hours to conducting this study which recommends several ways that we can strengthen the education system in our great state.

We especially want to thank Bill Avey, HP's Boise-based vice president, without whom the study would not have happened. We want to also thank Gus Schmedlen, HP's vice president of worldwide education, for ably leading the study team. For six months this year, HP interviewed in person or surveyed nearly 2,000 Idaho citizens, ranging from Governor Brad Little to teachers, parents, business leaders, and policymakers. These interviews were conducted in every region of our state. The HP study likely represents the largest and broadest survey of Idahoans ever conducted for a single education study. It is also noteworthy that HP conducted this study at no cost to IBE or the taxpayers of Idaho.

The study reinforces some things we believed to be true about education in Idaho: Idahoans want the best education for their children; educators often feel under-valued and discouraged; making sure all students can read should be a priority; and families play a crucial role in their children's educational success.

One surprising finding was not on the researchers' radar when the study started: The mental health challenges that our students are facing. Many Idahoans identified bullying, depression, anxiety, and pressure to excel as just some of the reasons for this growing mental health problem.

HP proposed four key recommendations to strengthen educational outcomes in Idaho: Establish a statewide vision for education; ensure students read proficiently; create postsecondary and career pathways; and elevate the teaching profession. HP has done its work in handing us an excellent report, with many important findings and recommendations.

It's now up to us – every Idaho citizen – to take the report and improve our educational outcomes and set our students up for success in school, work and life.



Rod Gramer
President & CEO
Idaho Business for Education



Andy Scoggin
Board Chair
Idaho Business for Education

IDAHO Business for Education

Idaho Business for Education (IBE) is a group of more than 200 business leaders from across the state who are committed to transforming Idaho's education system. IBE members are committed to creating a highly educated and skilled workforce that is able to strengthen the business climate and fuel a prosperous Idaho economy.







Photographs on this page © mjs 2019



Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we thank the people and institutions of Idaho who opened their doors and shared their viewpoints on education and workforce issues. This study would not have been possible without the open, engaged communities across sectors and across wide geographic and demographic contexts.

We are also grateful to Idaho Business for Education (IBE) for their unwaivering support during the study, particularly IBE President and CEO, Rod Gramer, Vice President for Development, Carolyn Holly, and Communications Director, Brady Moore. Current IBE board chair, Andy Scoggin, and founding IBE chair, Skip Oppenheimer, also provided vital support to our research efforts. Thank you.

STATEWIDE STUDY ON
EDUCATION & THE ECONOMY

IDAHO

HP Worldwide Education

Over the course of five months, HP Education experts traveled to Idaho to conduct interviews and focus groups across the five regions of Idaho from Idaho Falls to Boise to Sandpoint.

Lead Author
Gus Schmedlen, Ed.D.

Field Research Staff
Blanca Avery
Caryn Leppert
Matias Matias
Joshua Pann
Charles Radman

Independent Observer Team

HP is grateful to the talented independent observer team, missioned to mitigate conflicts of interest in both the methodology and analysis.

Observers
Marcela Escobari
Michael Meaney, Ph.D.
Ian Seyal

SAP/Qualtrics Research Staff

The Utah-based Qualtrics team provided invaluable support to our research design and implementation.

SAP/Qualtrics Staff
Steven Snell, Ph.D.
Nancy Le

HP Boise

Each of these Idahoans generously volunteered their time and energy to ensure this report represented the entirety of the state, while providing vital local context for the field research staff.

Executive Sponsor
& Senior Location Executive
Bill Avey

Project Leader
Adriana DalSoglio

HP Boise Volunteers
Diane Avalos
Jarrett Bell
Kyron Bonner, Jr.
Casey Brinton
Brent Crumley
Joshua Groesz
Edie Jones
Miguel Nunez
Jim Nelson
Cynthia Ann Polenske
Christi Putz
Jenn Singer
Kenny Stephens
Cory Voegele

HP public sector team
for the State of Idaho
Joseph Fascilla
Andrew Falk

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- Analysis
- Recommendations

Important note on further research using data collected during the study

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

The large scope and scale of the study produced gigabytes of audio data, hundreds of pages of transcriptions, and over 78,000 responses to individual survey questions. This report summarizes the data collected and offers insights and recommendations, but more study is required to unlock deeper understanding of Idaho's key education stakeholders, including: bi-variate and multi-variate analysis of quantitative data; identifying patterns, connections, and emergent themes from transcripts; and sorting data by region, SES, and other groupings to identify issues and opportunities facing specific communities.

By special arrangement, data collected during the study will be donated and conveyed to the **Idaho Policy Institute at Boise State University** for further analysis. Data will be anonymized, and no personally identifiable information (PII) will be conveyed to protect the privacy of those generous Idahoans who responded to our surveys or participated in interviews and focus groups.



COPPER BASIN
CUSTER COUNTY



Independent Observer: Marcela Escobari

Marcela Escobari is a senior fellow in the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution, where she is leading the Workforce of the Future Initiative. She was Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean in President Obama's administration. Escobari was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and led the bureau and its initiatives on poverty, inequality, citizen security, and governance. Throughout the region, USAID has 13 bilateral missions, three regional missions, and U.S.-based programs focusing on democracy, humanitarian assistance, and the environment. The bureau manages an annual budget of approximately $1 billion.

Since 2007, Escobari served as executive director at the Center for International Development at Harvard University, a research center working to generate breakthrough ideas that bring stable, shared, and sustainable prosperity to developing countries. During her tenure, the Center achieved tremendous impact, tripling in size with projects in 17 countries across five continents.

She has also worked as head of the Americas region at the OTF Group (a spin-off of Monitor Group), where she advised governments on how to increase export competitiveness and harness the private sector to eradicate poverty. She began her career as a Mergers & Acquisitions banker at JP Morgan in New York. The World Economic Forum named her a Young Global Leader in 2013. She co-authored the book "In the River They Swim: Essays from around the World on Enterprise Solutions to Poverty," She holds a B.A. in economics from Swarthmore College and an M.A. in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School.

What is an independent observer?
For each NETA study, HP appoints an independent observer to augment insights, validate research methods, and mitigate potential conflicts of interest in the study's methodology and findings.

Independent observer's forward

The advent of new technologies such as automation and artificial intelligence are transforming our economic ecosystem, bringing opportunity for dramatic productivity gains for companies and places but also many social challenges.

Automation in particular is leading to the bifurcation of labor markets between those with highly skilled jobs and those without, creating increased inequality and a need for broad based re-skilling for the adult population. An education system that fosters 21st century skills, such as creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and an overall ability to engage in a journey of lifelong learning will also be an indispensable part of the equation.

Adapting to these changes that have been exerting pressure on the labor force for decades, involves a willingness to honestly face the trends and actively think about the industrial policy and social scaffolding necessary for cities to thrive. The engagement of leaders in Idaho on these issues is a sign of their willingness to embrace these challenges head on.

The opportunity to participate as an independent advisor to HP's Idaho education study allowed me to meet with leaders from throughout the state and engage in a thorough survey of the education landscape. Heads of foundations, school districts, business associations, and some of the largest and most innovative companies in Idaho shared the economic and social challenges they saw given the shifting economy, and their willingness to participate actively in finding solutions.

The survey instrument deployed by HP reached hundreds of Idahoans, taking the pulse of the education ecosystem and beyond, on issues that covered perception of the education system, day to day challenges, and areas of unmet needs. I did not observe any bias in HP's management of the study, including any leading questions regarding the use of technology in schools, nor any stemming from the fact that HP is a company with invested interests in Idaho.

The survey and interviews show a broad-based consensus. Boosting the education system to provide quality pedagogy and modern curricula in an equitable way is a prerequisite for the continuous prosperity of Idaho and its citizens. The survey reveals areas of consensus, some surprising common challenges, such as mental health issues that cross regional and socioeconomic boundaries, and reinforces some of the skills gaps faced by businesses. Potentially most valuable into the future, HP will make the data and methodology available to Idaho State, allowing students and scholars to ask different questions with the data, reveal regional and socioeconomic differences in perceptions and outcomes, and even replicate parts of the survey in the future.

When asked to participate in HP's education study, I had recently completed a network analysis mapping the connectedness of more than 250 industries in nearly 1000 cities across the United States. This analysis measures the complexity of cities, and can reveal industries prone to grow and contract. The unique access to Idaho's eminent educators and business leaders to understand the dynamics behind these results, allowed us to do a deeper dive of Boise, which was eventually included in our recent Brookings publication: "Growing Cities that Work for All".

In the case study, the data revealed that under the hood of the Boise's top-line economic statistics, an unsupported tech sector suggested a need for strategic investment in order to maintain the city's breakneck growth rate, and to make that growth both sustainable and inclusive. Our analysis reinforces the findings of HP's study, concluding that an underinvestment in building and sourcing talent is at the core of the growth challenges in the city, and likely shared throughout Idaho.

We witnessed world class companies reinventing themselves, school districts changing the trajectory of the poorest kids through targeted programs, and firms committed to their communities. We hope that this work, and the insights about needs and priorities will inform decisive action to keep Idaho competitive, and a place where everyone can share in its prosperity.

Marcela Escobari
Washington, D.C.
2019

Idaho in Context

The authors of this study share a common goal with the government and people of the state: creating a more prosperous Idaho. The new administration and the **Our Kids, Idaho's Future** task force have many choices to make. We hope the data, evidence, and analysis herein will help make more effective education policies for all Idahoans. Idaho's future workforce and the organizations who will employ them depend on it.

This section reviews general contemporary education and economic indicators which frame our recommendations. As noted to the right, the authors strongly recommend referring to the recently published **Idaho EdTrends** book for a comprehensive overview of Idaho education indicators.

*Note: The study's authors found **Idaho Ed News (www.idahoednews.org) to be** a welcome source of contemporary information regarding the identification and explanation of education data relevant to Idaho. In most states, data cited from IPEDS, NCES, BLS, and other databases are often over-simplified or presented out of context. The authors especially recommend the organization's latest **Idaho EdTrends** book (May, 2019) as an indispensable companion to the primary research and recommendations described in this study.*

Idaho's population continues to grow while its economy prospers

According to the U.S. Census (2019), Idaho added almost 500,000 residents between 2000 and 2018. That is equal to almost 40% of the entire population of Idaho in 2000. The Treasure Valley, alone, is expected to add another 400,000+ residents by 2040 (Compass, 2018). Meanwhile, Idaho's economy has been booming while unemployment has all but vanished. Idaho exited July 2019 with a 2.9% unemployment rate (BLS, 2019) and the state's real GDP rate continues to move up and to the right.

While the economic growth and employment indicators reflect a healthy business climate, it is important to note that all growth is not equal. The 2017 American Community Survey shows that Idahoans are more likely to hold lower-wage jobs than the rest of the United States on average. To ensure sustainable growth, the right mix of jobs and industries are required. The next chapter explores this dilemma further.

Growth can create challenges. For example, home prices in Boise have historically been quite affordable. The median price in January 2012 was $148,000 for a single-family home. However, Zillow's *Home Value Index* forecasts median prices to exceed $311,000 by January 2020 - the price of a home in Boise has doubled in less than ten years. When populations and economies grow, so do their demand for expanded infrastructure, zoning reforms, and, of course, hiring. Governor Little recently noted that most of Idaho's Chambers of Commerce cite "coping with growth" as a much more pressing issue than "creating growth" in the state.

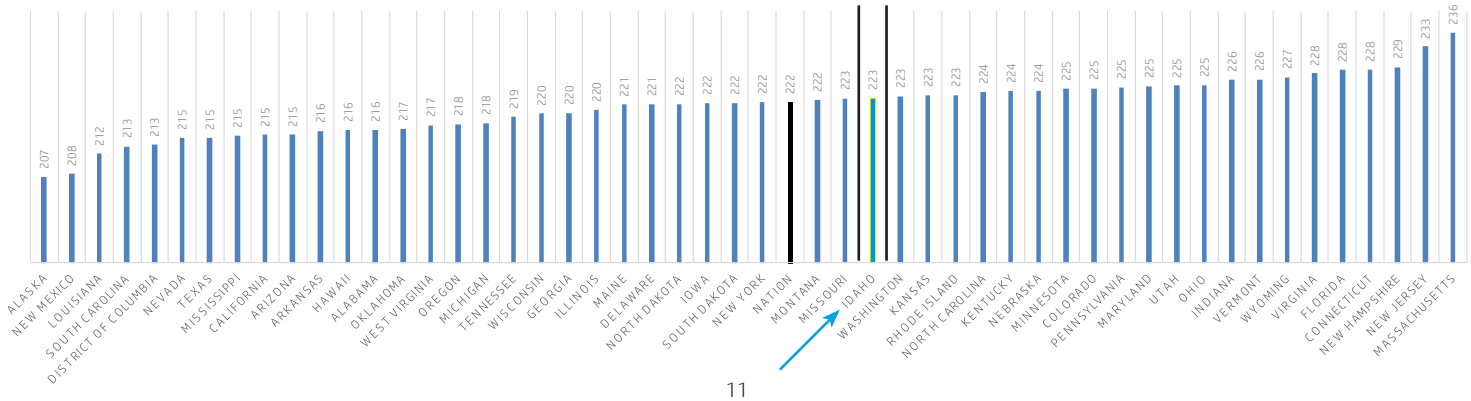
Notable achievement gaps in education

Compounding the demographic changes are persistent achievement gaps. Recent data (September 2019) from the College Board show that while White students' 2018-2019 academic year SAT scores generally conform to national averages [Idaho = 1033; National = 1066], but Hispanic/Latino students averaged 912 (College Board, 2019). The gap persists across several assessments.

The achievement gap exists long before students take the SAT: in the 2017 4th Grade NAEP reading assessment, White Idahoans scored and average of 228, over 10% higher than Hispanic/Latino students scoring 205. The gap slightly narrows to 6% by 8th Grade. With the Hispanic/Latino population in Idaho having grown over 23% since 2010 (IDL, 2019), the state should address the gap urgently. Improving Hispanic/Latinos test performance to be on par with Whites' performance would significantly increase Idaho's standing in national assessments.

Another gap was identified between rural and suburban/urban schools. Across reading, science, and math, students in rural schools performed consistently worse than students attending urban and suburban schools.

Grade 4: Reading | Idaho mean score: 223
2017 NAEP National Assessment of Educational Progress (NCES, 2019)





We also saw a large gap between males and females in post-secondary completion. In 2016, over 13,000 degrees were conferred to women in Idaho, but only 9,500 were conferred to men. In fact, at BYU Idaho, women earned 33% more degrees than men during the same year.

Education funding in Idaho

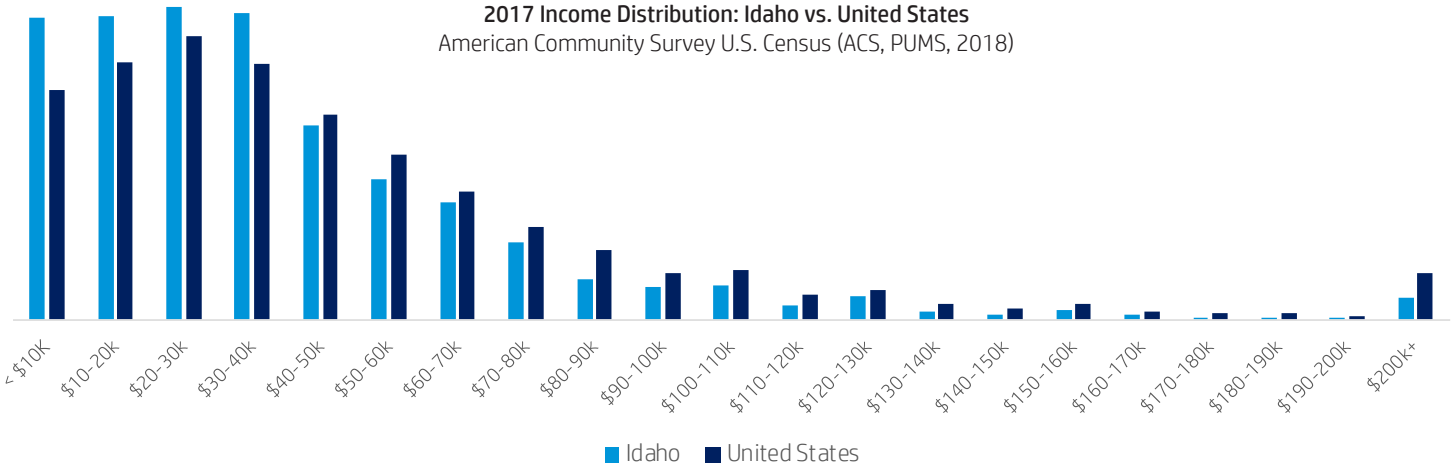
It is well known to Idahoans that education is the single largest investment made annually by the state. In 2018, 48.8% ($1.685B) of Idaho's budget expenditures were on primary and secondary education. 8.3% ($287M) of Idaho's budget expenditures were spent on tertiary education. 5.8% ($199M) of Idaho's budget expenditures were directed to "other education." State government already invests a substantial amount of the state's resources into education.

At a local level, many communities have resorted to passing local bonds and/or levies to supplement education budgets, primarily to fund salaries and facilities projects. In 2019, 47 of the 115 school districts sought one of these two options to the tune of $485M (Richert, 2018). Levies and bond issues must be approved by local voters, and we heard, unsurprisingly, that many of these ballot measures became heated and political. Financial uncertainty and lower-than-average teacher salaries put many schools at risk.

One of the largest opportunities for increased funding centers on tertiary research. In 2018, Idaho ranked 49th in NIH funding; 41st in NSF funding; and 43rd in CDC funding.

The future of work

According to the World Economic Forum, Deloitte, McKinsey, Accenture, and many of the Idaho businesses we spoke with, the very nature of work is changing as the world shifts from the information age towards the fourth industrial revolution. Advances in technology have created a global marketplace for talent, and innovation happens at a more rapid pace than ever in human history. How Idaho's employers, students, teachers, government leaders, and school leaders viewed this shift in the context of the five regions of Idaho was central to our research design.



Idaho's economy & the need for talent

Analysis by Marcela Escobari, the study's independent observer

Since 2008, Idaho has added jobs at a higher rate than the national average. The top-line economic statistics such as a 2.8% unemployment rate reflect this breakneck growth rate. But like the rest of the country, these new jobs have come at the high and low ends of the wage scale (see figures below), squeezing the state's middle class. Each region in Idaho has their own specific dynamics, but each is seeing this risk of bifurcation and rising inequality. Complexity, which measures the sophistication of a city's industries, has been high in Idaho, but is under threat and decreased in each of the major metropolitan areas from 2007 to 2017. Thoughtful and coordinated policy can build and attract those complex industries, and also those industries that provide good quality jobs. Talent plays a large role in this process, and this report finds a number of consensus areas which support building those human capital capabilities.

Growth of median wages in Idaho lagged that of the rest of country from 2008 to 2017, increasing 11 versus 16 percent. Adjusted for changes in the cost of living, however, median wages in Idaho barely budged, increasing only 1.5 percent over the same time period versus the nation's similarly lackluster 3 percent. To add more high paying jobs, Idaho can focus on fostering more complex industries.

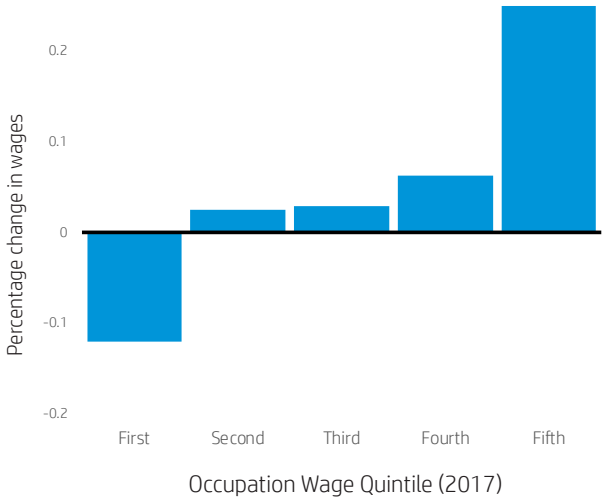
To understand the possible pathways toward inclusive growth in Idaho, we employed the methodology used in a Brookings report, *Growing Cities that Work for All: A complexity based approach to regional economic competitiveness*. There, the authors detail the derivation, meaning, and implications of economic complexity in four case study cities, including Boise.

Here, examining the industrial landscape of the Gem State, including the complexity of the state's six major metropolitan areas shows that, though complexity is under threat, Idaho's regions still maintain a relatively high level. Most complex is Coeur D'Alene, which hosts advanced and sophisticated industries such as ship building, computer manufacturing, and other varied scientific and technical services.



Uneven real wage growth in Idaho 2007 - 2017

SOURCE: Author's analysis of Emsi data



Uneven employment growth in Idaho 2007 - 2017

SOURCE: Author's analysis of Emsi data

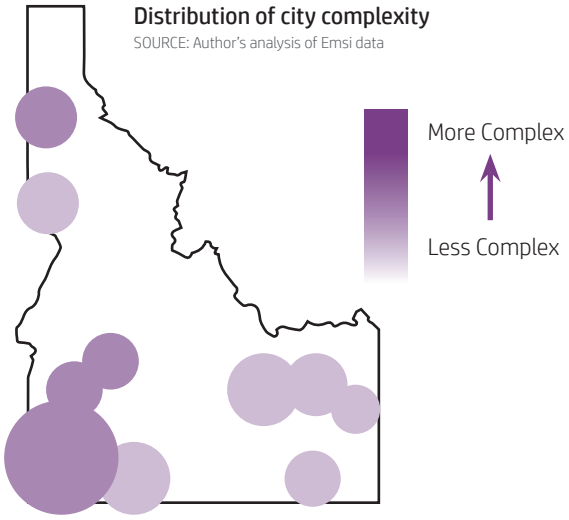


Grouping Idaho's workers into 5 buckets, ordered by the wages they earn, shows the economy's jobs grew mostly in occupations that pay either high or low wages, shrinking the state's middle class. Furthermore, the lowest paid workers actually saw their real wages decline, while the highest wage earners received the largest pay increase.

Boise, however, possess the state's highest strategic index, which implies that its current industrial makeup poises the city for strong growth. That is, the industries which Boise hosts, such as semi-conductor manufacturing and information services, require capabilities like high speed telecommunications, reliable energy and freight infrastructure for its supply chain that are also required by other advanced industries that are not yet robustly present in Boise. In this way, Boise's historical path situates the city well for future growth – the city is well positioned to attract and build a number of advanced industries if public and private leaders can focus on the specific new capabilities these require.

Distribution of city complexity

SOURCE: Author's analysis of Emsi data

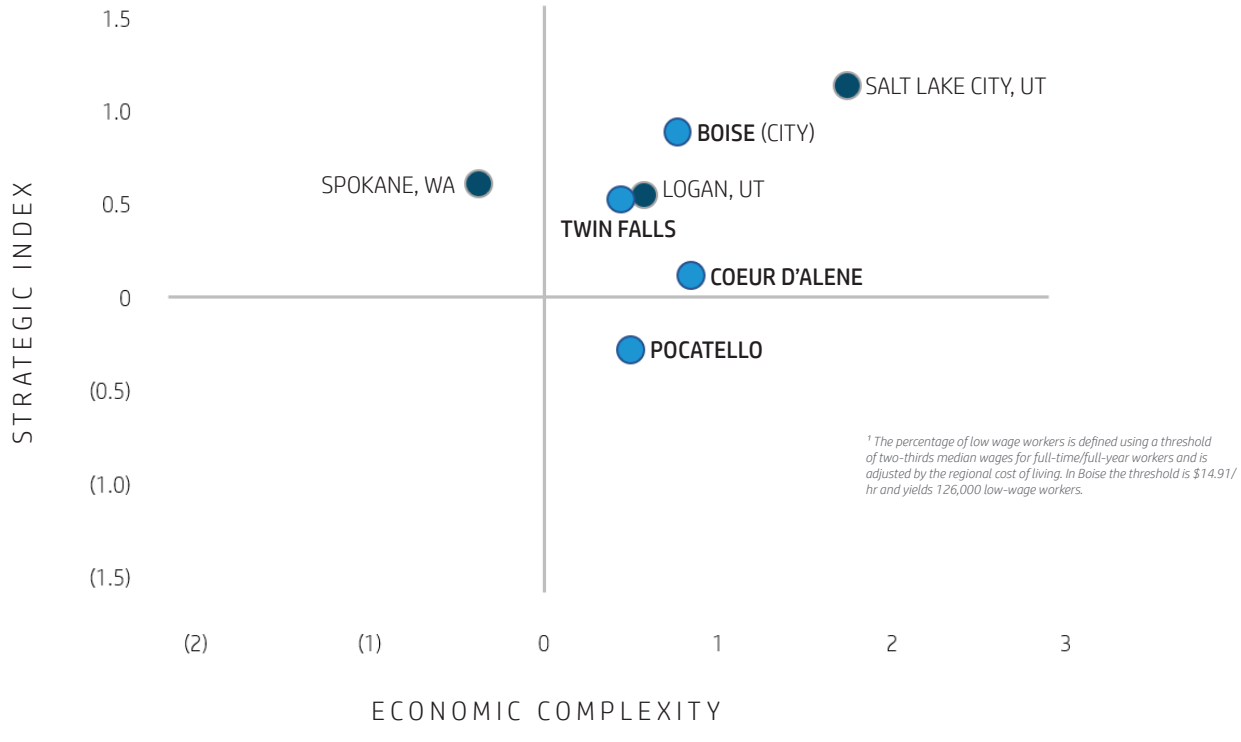


In fact, most of the major cities in Idaho have a relatively high strategic gain. This implies that Coeur d' Alene, Boise, and Idaho's other metropolitan areas each have a number of opportunities and pathways towards economic growth through strategic industrial development.

Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, however, is a more nuanced challenge. In Boise, 49%[1] of the workforce are low-wage workers, and the city's median income, adjusted for the rising cost of living, actually fell from 2008-2017, which implies that many workers in the capital city are struggling. This trend is a product, among other things, of the fact that from around the country, an aging population and tourists increasingly choose the Gem state as a place to retire or visit. These demographic changes have driven the bulk of the region's economic and population growth. The result is mostly seen in healthcare and hospitality industries, employing workers in occupations such as personal care aides and customer service representatives, which tend to pay less than the average.

Complexity & strategic index of Idaho & nearby cities

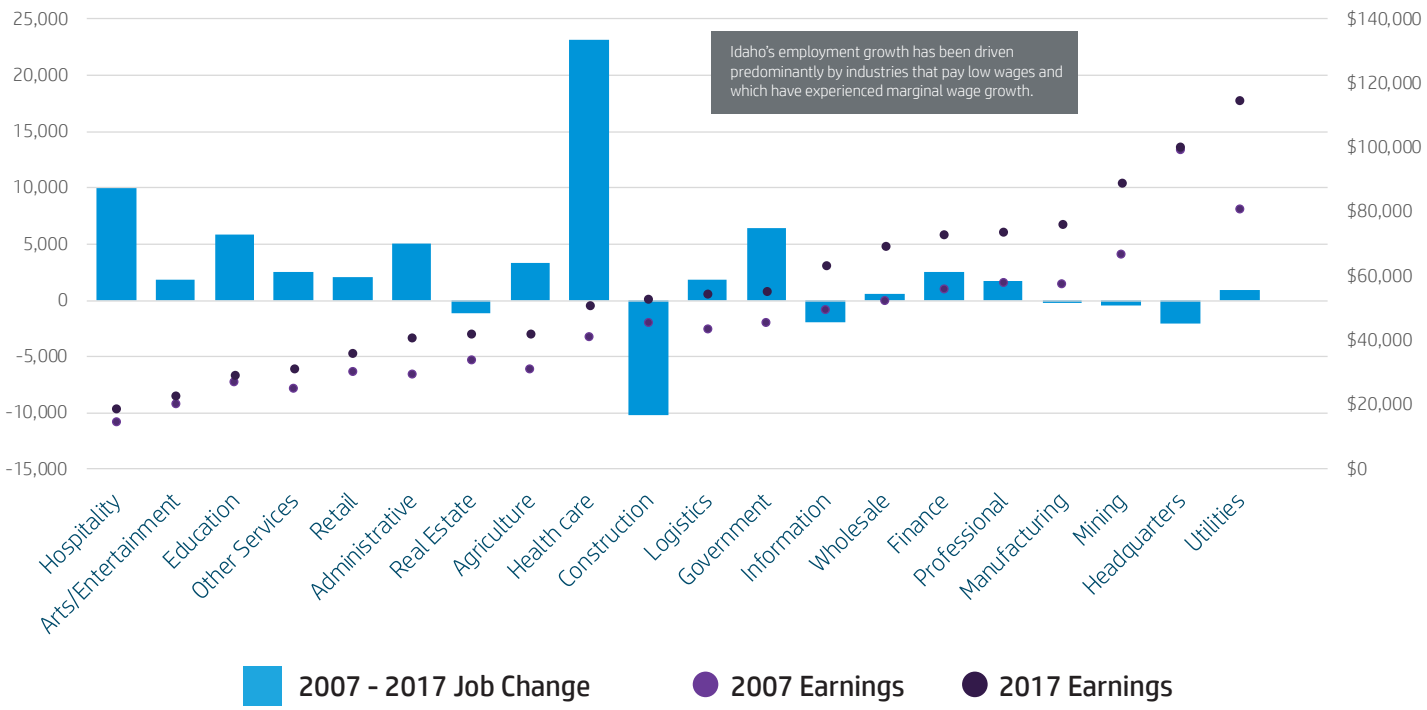
SOURCE: Author's analysis of Emsi data



[1] *The percentage of low wage workers is defined using a threshold of two-thirds median wages for full-time/full-year workers and is adjusted by the regional cost of living. In Boise the threshold is $14.91/hr and yields 126,000 low-wage workers.*

Job & wage change by sector in Idaho | 2007 - 2017

SOURCE: Author's analysis of Emsi data



Our recent work showed that Boise's most complex industries were relatively unsupported by the density of industry and talent typically found in places that host high-tech clusters. As a consequence, many of the most advanced firms are either expanding elsewhere or leaving the state. Concurrently, Idaho's other cities, including Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Falls, Pocatello, and Twin Falls, also lost complexity. This implies job losses in tradable industries that drive sustained growth, similar to the trends detailed in Boise.

Taken all together, these facts tell us that despite a low unemployment rate and robust production growth, incremental real wage growth and declining complexity portend clouds on the horizon. However, the state's recent economic growth presents the business and education communities with a unique opportunity to seize recent momentum and take action to build on the areas of consensus identified by the education study.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Recent economic growth in Idaho has not supported the middle class, and there has been a shift to lower-paying service sector jobs
- While high complexity industries have contributed to growth of good, high paying jobs, Idaho is currently losing competitiveness in these markets due in part to limited pools of skilled workers, suggesting that without investment this growth may not continue
- Idaho needs to improve access to quality education and supporting infrastructure, creating more pathways for people in the lower and middle class to increase their skills and share in the growing economy

A path toward inclusive growth

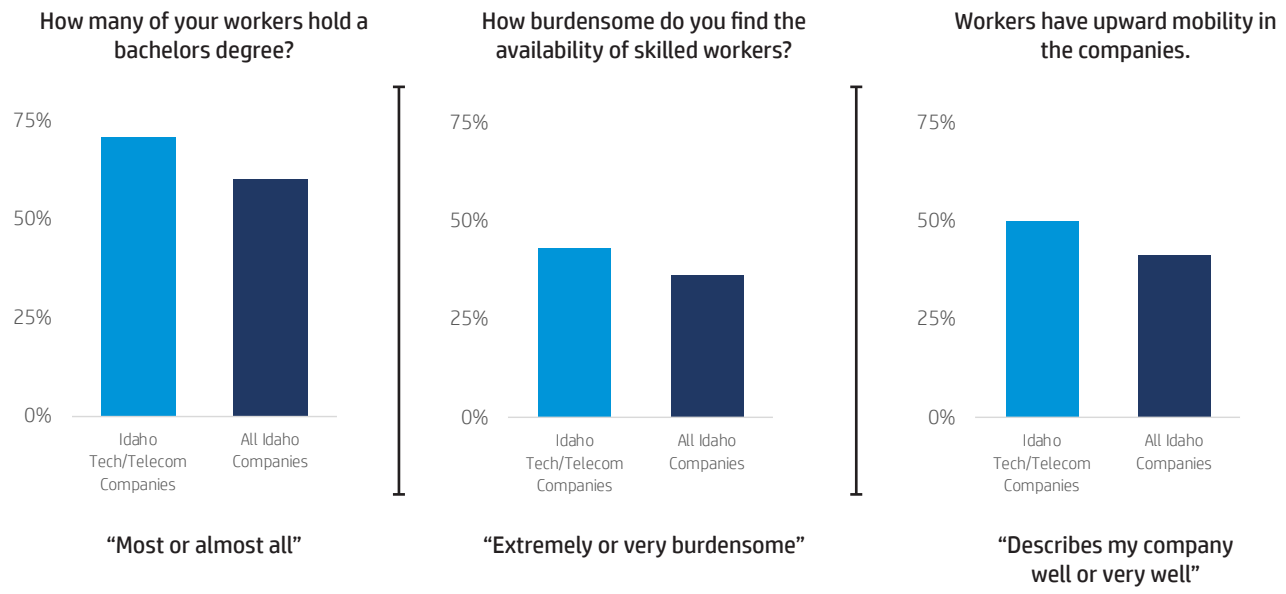
Whether driven by demographic changes or by the production of tradable goods and services, complex growth also brings along a share of low paying jobs as high wage earners demand local services such as restaurants and hair salons. Thus, further growth in complex industries, while important to sustain overall prosperity, will not necessarily ameliorate the low standard of living and stagnated wages faced by many low wage workers. For this challenge, education can provide a pathway to upward mobility for low-wage earners. Similarly, cities should include other services that integrate migrant communities and upgrade their skills. Leaders should focus on poverty indicators which are intimately tied to education outcomes and focus on building those pathways so that people can move upwards. Otherwise cities risk entrenching pockets of poverty that separate the rich from the poor. Access to quality education will not only maintain complex growth but also facilitate economic mobility.

Pent-up demand for talent

One of the most important factors sought by firms when identifying new locations for expansion or relocation is human capital or talent. So much so that one of the Brookings study's major predictors of an industry's expansion is occupational similarity with other present industries. The survey confirms (see graphs below) that Idaho's high-tech companies disproportionately rely on workers with college degrees and unsurprisingly are the most burdened by the deficit of talent in the state. Future opportunities for Idaho's young people will depend on state leaders building capabilities to host a more diverse set of tradable and high-tech industries. For the state to insulate itself and its residents against the economic change, however disruptive it may be, education will rightly take center stage.

As leaders delve into the results of the study and ask how best to act, it will be important to note that the new economy will be built on the information sector, financial and professional services, and advanced manufacturing sectors. The study also confirms that it is these very same companies that offer the greatest degree of mobility to its workers. These advanced companies are the good jobs industries. A well-educated workforce sets that foundation.

SOURCE: Author's analysis of HP survey data



The HP survey results show that Idaho's advanced companies which employ the most skilled workers have the toughest time finding talent, but also offer their employees the most opportunity for advancement and upward mobility.

Importantly, the study reveals that this need for talent is not about specific industry skills or credentials. Often, the firm-specific knowledge workers need will be learned and taught on the job. Indeed, the survey showed that a specific credential or industry knowledge were among the least important characteristics sought by hiring managers. Among the most important were adaptability.

Employers seek workers that are adaptable, ready to learn new skills, and capable of consistent high achievement. Our own research echoes these findings. Tomorrow's workers will have unconventional careers bouncing from job to job and even city to city. They will have to reskill and upskill multiple times throughout their lives. And the workers who develop this flexibility and adaptability at a young age will thrive. If Idaho can develop these skills in their young population, the entire state will reap benefits for years to come.


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TRADE MARK
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SHOSHONE
LINCOLN COUNTY

Methodology

During the first half of 2019, HP education experts and employee volunteers traveled to all five regions of Idaho, visiting schools, businesses, higher education institutions, chambers of commerce, and a host of governmental and non-governmental agencies. In parallel, we launched statewide surveys of parents, business leaders, teachers, and school board members. Over 1,750 Idahoans responded to the surveys. In total, we engaged well over 2,000 Idahoans in this substantial primary research effort.

- Study logistics and planning were managed from HP's offices located at 11311 West Chinden Boulevard in Boise
- HP performed this study on a purely pro bono basis
- All field work was performed in Idaho across all five regions of the state

No part of this study, its execution, or analysis constitute and recommendation for how the state or other governmental agencies ought to allocate resources. Rather, the purpose of this study was to contribute new knowledge to the government and people of Idaho to inform their self-determined policies and practices.

Qualitative

80+ Interviews & Focus Groups
5 Regions of Idaho

Quantitative

1,743 Responses
4 Surveys

HP NETA Methodology

HP's National Education Technology Assessment [NETA] methodology blends quantitative and qualitative methods to unlock deeper insights and increase the validity of our research.

The mixed methods, parallel, convergent study was executed and analyzed with a practical world view. Both inductive and deductive codes were used to analyze data.

Survey instruments, data collection practices, and analysis were all monitored by a third-party observer to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest.

List of site visits, interviews & focus groups*

Boise Area

Albertsons Companies, Inc.
Bishop Kelly High School
Boise School District
Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce
Boise State University College of Education
Dennis Technical Education Center
Education Northwest
Governor Brad Little
HP Inc.
Idaho Association of School Administrators
Idaho Community Foundation
Idaho Education Association
Idaho School Boards Association
Idaho Workforce Development Council
LP Learning Center
Micron
Nampa School District
Oppenheimer Companies
SBS Associates, LLC
Simplot
St. Luke's
State Board of Education
State Superintendent Sherri Ybarra
West Ada School District Superintendent
West Junior High School
Zamzows

East Idaho

American Falls High School
College of Eastern Idaho
Firth Middle School
Highland High School
Idaho Central Credit Union
Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce
Idaho National Laboratory (INL)
Idaho State University
Melaluca Inc
South Freemont Middle School
Teton School District 401
Teton Valley Education Foundation

**Research also included conversations and engagement with local community members not listed above.*

Research Questions

Several research questions informed the study's implementation plan, survey instrumentation, and interview protocols:

- How is education in the state of Idaho viewed by its main constituent groups?
- What challenges to businesses and schools face in modern Idaho?
- What skills are seen as the most important for students to learn?
- What factors impede or accelerate business success in Idaho?
- How do stakeholder views agree or disagree?

Given the above and what's already known about education in the state, we focused a final research question on action: what ought Idaho's stakeholders consider doing to maximize the performance of the state's human capital development apparatus to create sustainable, "good" growth?

Politically sensitive topics

Before, during, and even after the research was conducted, the team encountered several divisive issues: charter schools vs. public schools; compulsory early childhood education; teacher pay; Common Core adoption; and others. Throughout the process, the team endeavored to remain steadfastly neutral, despite any vitriol we encountered. Regardless of affiliation and other factors, we found one constant: Where there were dedicated, qualified teachers, thoughtful school leaders, relevant curricula, and support from communities, we observed success.



Magic Valley

Blaine County Education Foundation
Chobani, LLC
College of Southern Idaho
Jerome Middle School
N2 Packaging Systems, LLC
The Hunger Coalition
Valley High School

North Central Idaho

Cascade High School
Gritman Medical Center
Lewiston High School
Lewiston School Board
Nez Perce Tribe
Orofino Chamber of Commerce
University of Idaho

Panhandle

Board of Trustees, CdA Schools
Canfield Middle School
Coeur d'Alene High School
Coeur d'Alene School District
Coeur d'Alene Education Partnership
Continuous Composites
Innovia Foundation
Kootenai Technical Education Campus
Litehouse Inc.
North Idaho College
Northwest Expedition Academy
RISE Education Partnership
Sandpoint High School

Southwest Idaho

College of Idaho
College of Western Idaho
Fruitland School District
Fruitland Middle School
Homedale High School
Homedale School District
Kuna High School
Kuna School District
Lonestar Middle School
Middleton School District
Skyview High School
Vallivue School District
Weiser Middle School
Weiser School District
Wilder High School
Wilder School District

Key Themes & Survey Introduction

Several themes emerged from both the qualitative and quantitative findings, some of which may surprise readers. Idaho's key stakeholders mostly agree on the main issues surrounding education in the state. Much more consensus exists than any group believes. We found consensus on the changing landscape for work and the most valuable skills among key stakeholder groups in Idaho: Teachers, Businesses, Parents, and School Leaders. Respondents held a common view that workforce and higher education needs are evolving quickly, and that non-cognitive skills like personal responsibility, communication, and perseverance are essential ingredients for college and career readiness.

Areas of agreement across roles and organizations:

- **The purpose of education is to create well-rounded students prepared for life, not just workforce skills**
- **Regardless of position (geographic, demographic, otherwise), people are enthusiastic about living in Idaho and view the culture and natural resources as key points of competitive advantage vs. other states**
- **Personal responsibility and adaptability are key to students' future success**

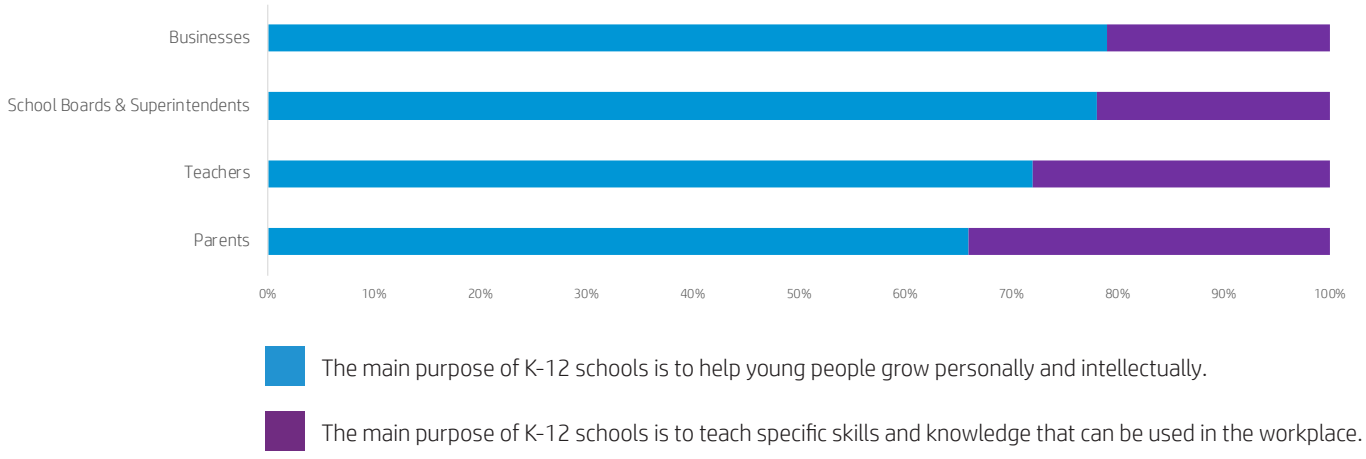
There is also broad agreement that Idaho out to improve education outcomes for key reasons: 1) to attract investment; 2) to empower the growth of entrepreneurial ventures; and 3) to encourage personal self-sufficiency and engagement. Early literacy and reading skill were cited as essential ingredients to improving student outcomes over the long term. How these strong areas of alignment might catalyze a shared statewide vision for education is discussed in the recommendations chapter.

On the negative side, many people we interviewed engaged in a "blame game" where "everyone else" was responsible for lackluster movement on go-on rate and other key education indicators. Recent events spanning from 2011 to present have sown mistrust and anxiety across groups that persists today. However, interviewees cited more recent government actions such as the Idaho Teacher Career Ladder and House Bill 153 as "moving in the right direction" to not only improve teachers' compensation, but also to unite groups and build trust. Teacher pay remains a major issue, especially in areas boarding other states, but the state's acknowledgment and actions to address the issue demonstrate a commitment that is clearly appreciated by many we spoke with.

Idaho's businesses see Idaho as a very business-friendly state whose few weaknesses seemed to center on education and workforce issues. Business leaders called for personal responsibility and professionalism, but also perseverance and adaptability. Many we spoke with said that they were willing to train employees on job specific skills if employees showed up on time, willing to learn, and willing to accept and act on feedback.

Mental health emerged as a major issue both for those students suffering from it, and for the impact on resources required to provision aid to those who need it. For rural areas, interviewees and focus group participants cited a negative view of the future and feelings of helplessness or irrelevance. For urban areas, mental health issues were more competition-oriented, especially at institutions where college matriculation was a source of intense interest and even social standing. Where mental health issues were the most pressing, schools lost valuable resources for college and career counseling, as the counselors often filled both roles.

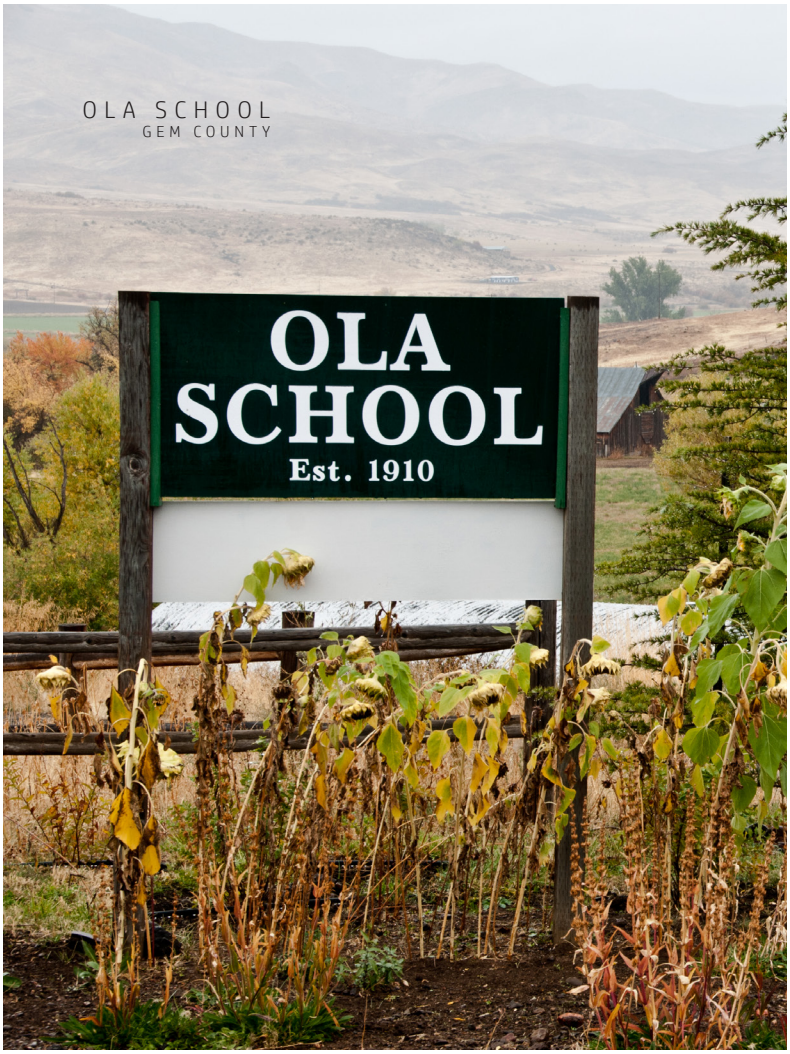
Qx | Thinking about local schools (K-12), which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



1 THE VOICE OF IDAHO'S BUSINESSES

2 THE VOICE OF IDAHO'S TEACHERS

3 THE VOICE OF IDAHO'S PARENTS



The surveys were fielded between March, 2019 and June, 2019. A fourth survey of **school leaders and superintendents**, while not covered in detail in the survey section, informed the findings and recommendations. Like all of the survey data, this survey will also be conveyed to Boise State's Idaho Policy Institute for further study.

Business surveys were distributed via Idaho Business for Education and several chambers of commerce throughout the state. Special thanks to Rod Gramer for making sure we got solid response rates.

Teacher surveys were distributed via districts, but also with the kind assistance of the Idaho Education Association (IEA). Once IEA sent the survey to their membership, we received hundreds of additional responses so that we could honor and highlight the voice of Idaho's teachers.

Parent surveys were sent via school PTAs and via the Qualtrics panel process which consists of phone and questionnaire vetting using polling best practices. This approach led to over 900 survey responded from over 100 zip codes in Idaho.

Survey responses were collected an analyzed on the Qualtrics XM (Experience Management) platform. We remain thankful to Dr. Steve Snell and Nancy Le for their leadership throughout the research design and implementation process.





BRUNDAGE MOUNTAIN
VALLEY COUNTY

The Voice of Idaho's Businesses

Perhaps the most surprising finding from the quantitative portion of the study was the strong value businesses attributed to non-cognitive skills and views about the very purpose of education. The survey also uncovered a mighty mismatch between skills sought by the responding businesses and their recent hires: personal responsibility was listed dead last in practice, despite it being the #1 most sought-after skill.

Survey Information

"Idaho NETA Business"
n = 147 Idaho business entities
45 Questions
Survey conducted 1H 2019

Survey Highlights

91%
rated the State of Idaho as a "good" or "excellent" place to do business

74%
reported plans to increase their workforce in Idaho over the next 5 years

59%
recruited talent from other states like California and Washington to fill talent gaps

Description of the respondent population: Business

Job Roles

68% of respondents reported executive roles; 20% identified themselves as people managers or human resources professionals.

Demographics

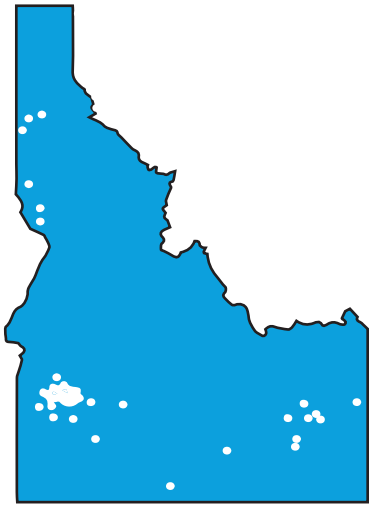
76% of the respondents identified as male
84% identified as "White"; 5% identified as "Hispanic"
11% identified as other races

Education

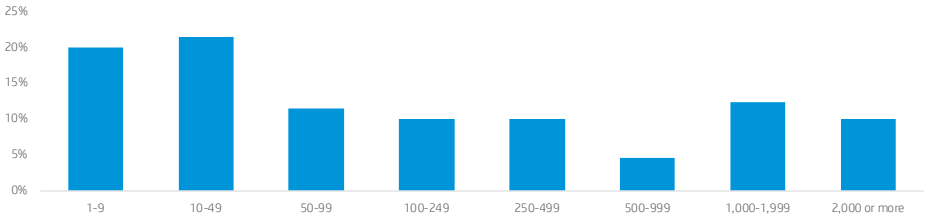
95% reported holding a 4-year degree or higher
87% reported having an "immediate family member" who attends or attended a public K-12 school in Idaho

Businesses

20% of respondents reported having 1 - 9 employees
10% of respondents reporting having 2,000 or more employees
44% reported having additional employees outside of Idaho



Respondent Map
by zip code (Q5.7)

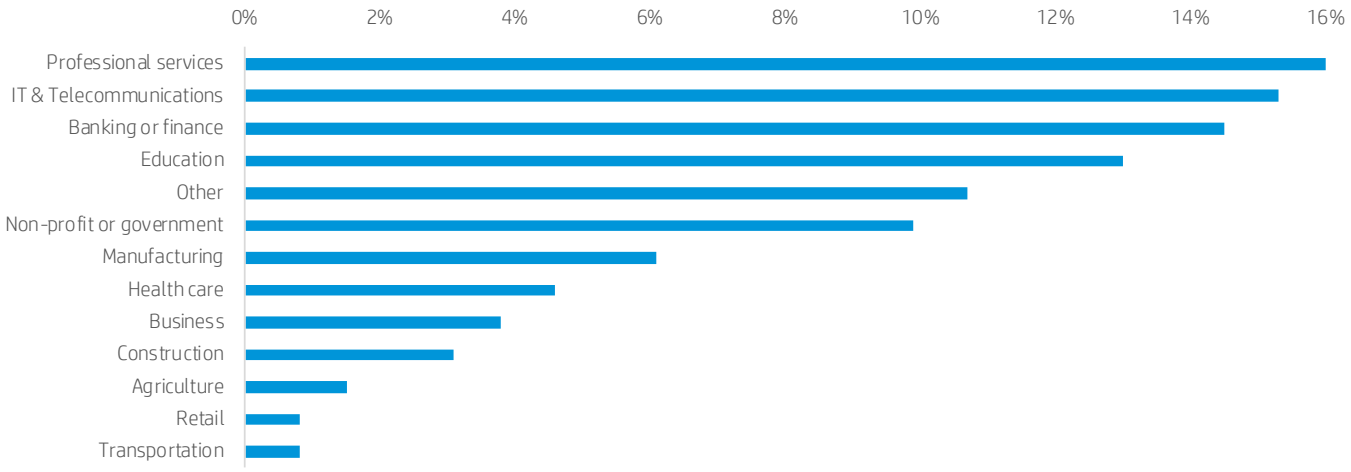


Responding Firm Employee Size
as reported (Q1.3)

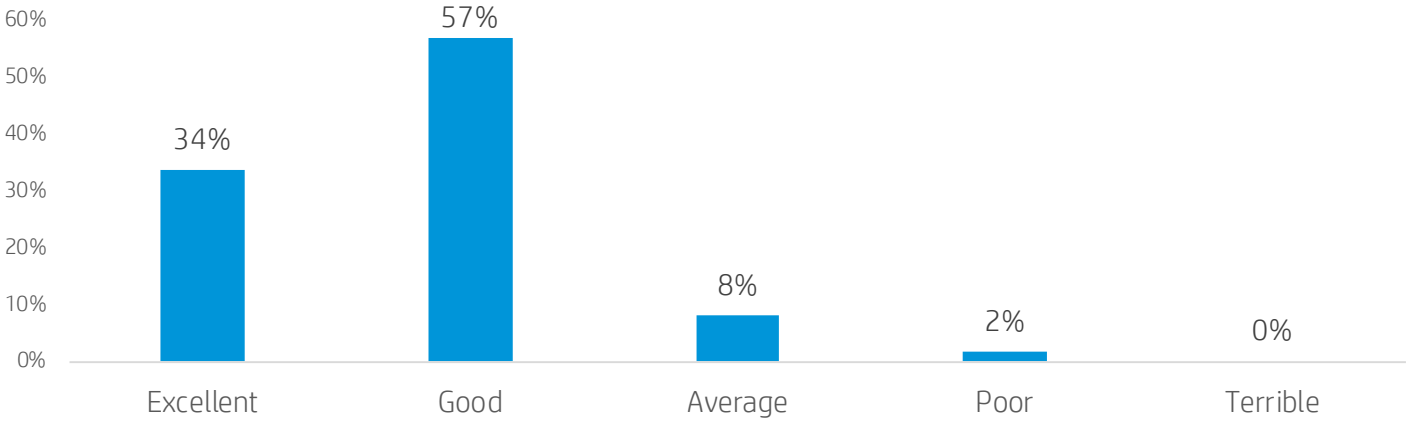
Note on the business survey visualizations

The survey was divided into four sections, each with several individual questions. Readers will note that the question numbers do not follow a set sequence-this is intentional. Only questions deemed important or relevant to our analysis are visualized in this section. As noted in the introduction, the datasets have been permanently conveyed at no cost to the Idaho Policy Institute at Boise State University.

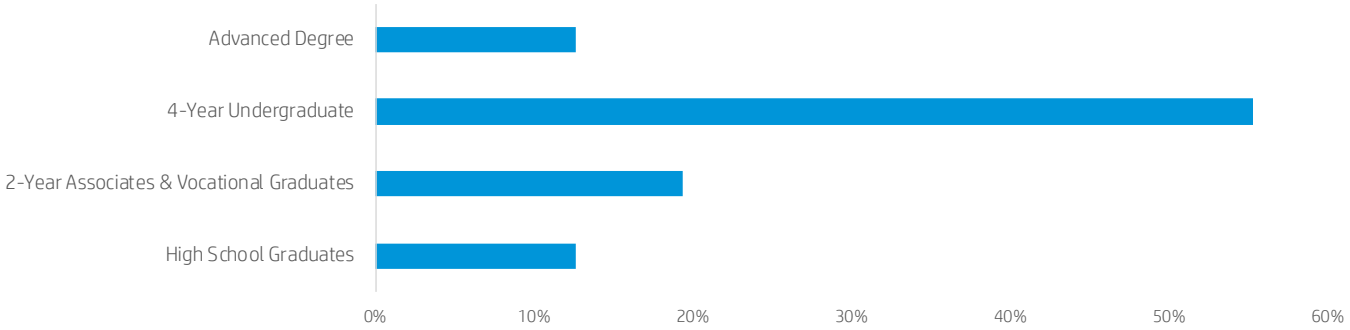
Q1.2 | Which of the following best describes your company or organization's primary industry?



Q1.5 | Overall, how would you rate Idaho as a place to do business?

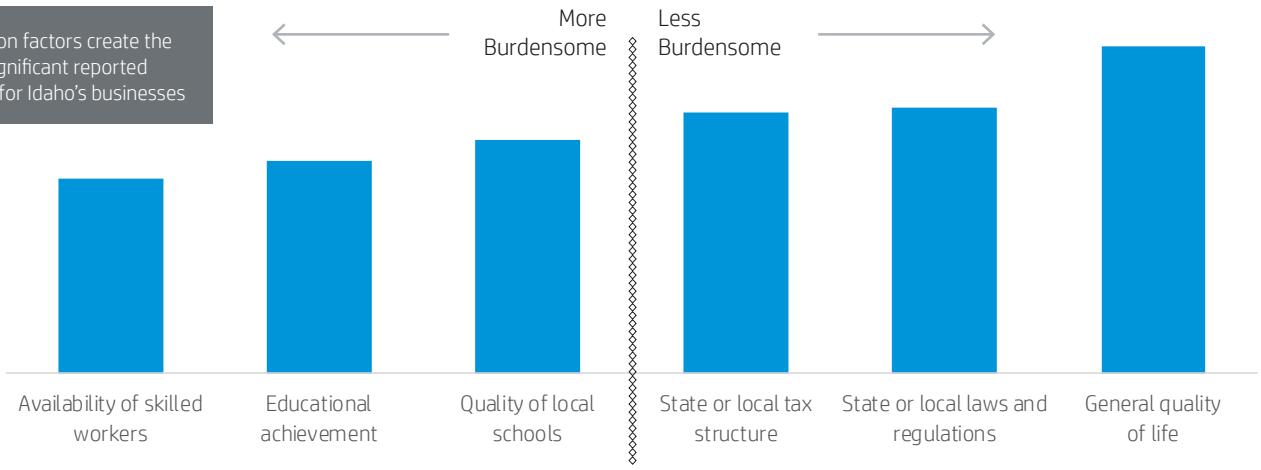


Q3.4 | From from which of the following education levels does your company or organization hire the most students or early-career employees?



Q1.7 | How burdensome do you find each of the following when it comes to doing business in Idaho? (Lower score = more burdensome)

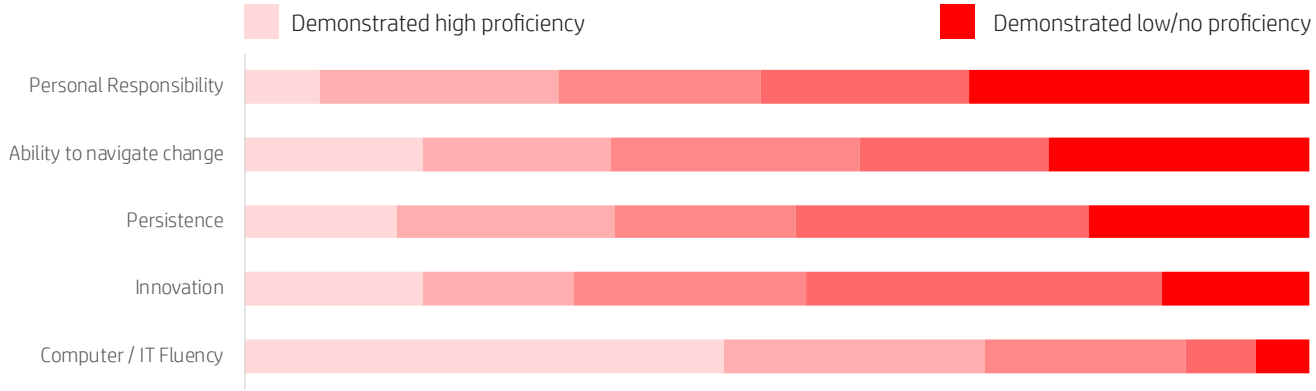
Education factors create the most significant reported burden for Idaho's businesses



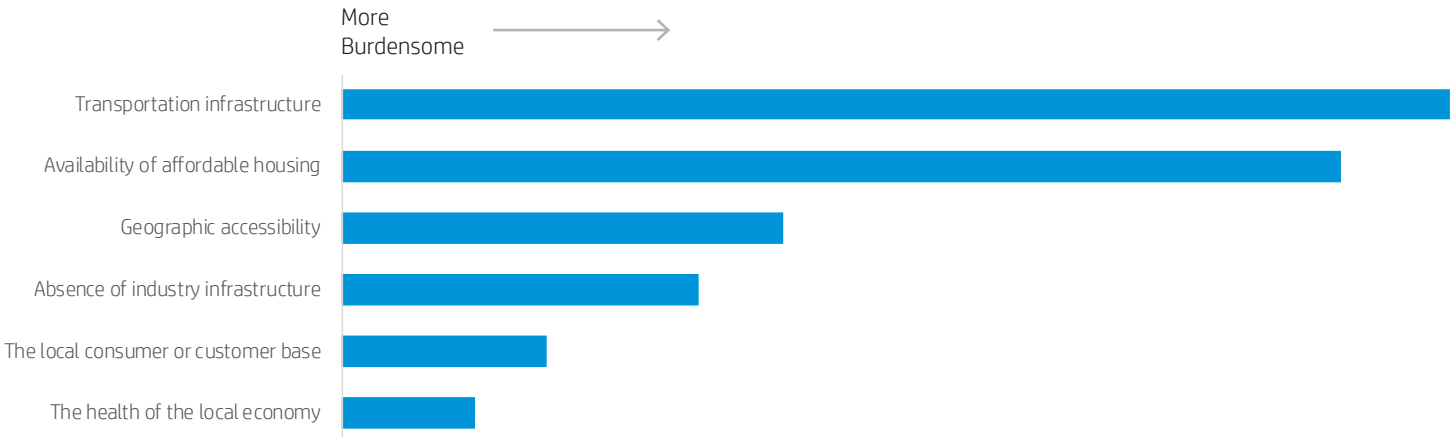
Q3.6 | Beyond specific job skills, what are the most important characteristics you look for in student or early-career hires?



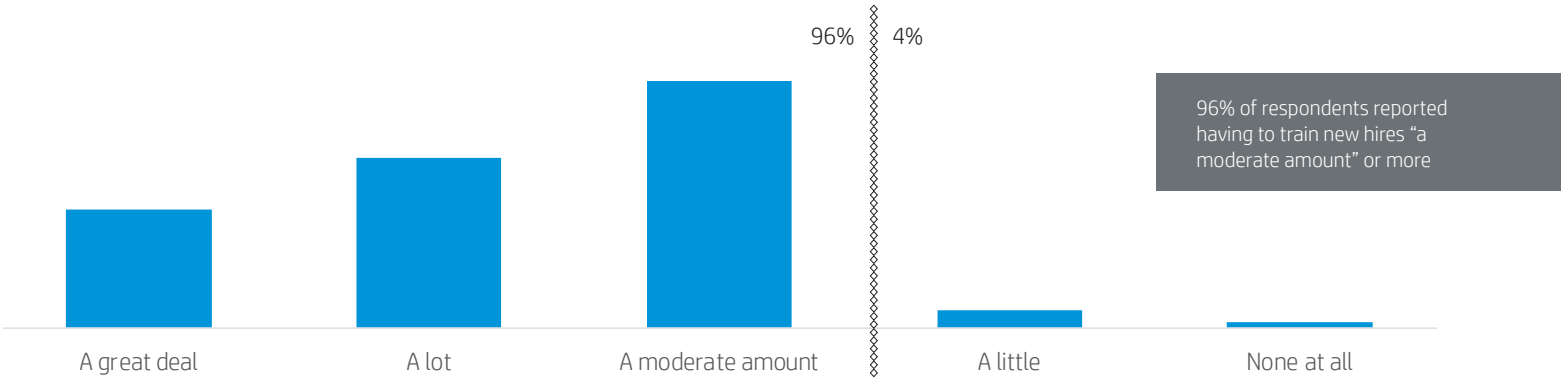
Q3.7 | How well have recent new-hires demonstrated the following skills?



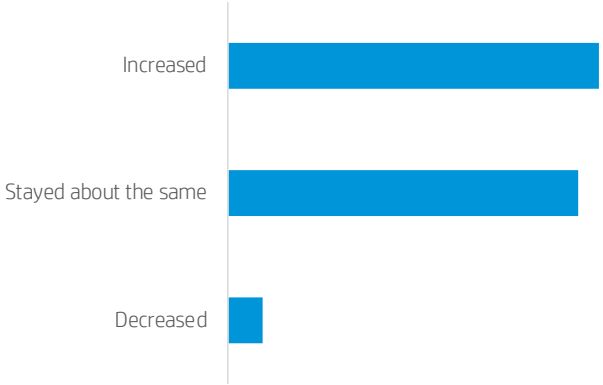
Q1.8 | What are the most significant non-education related burdens to your business?



Q3.10 | How much on-the-job training is necessary for new employees hired out of school?



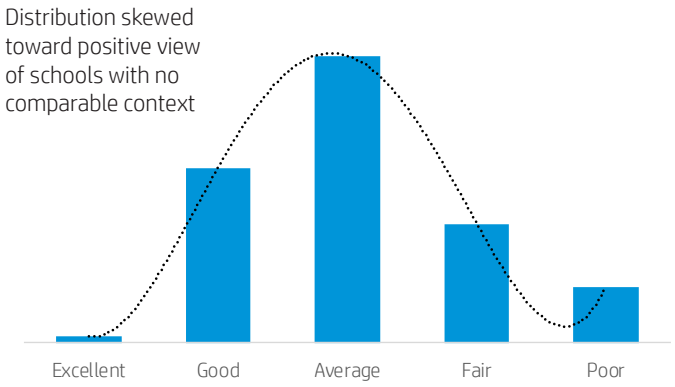
Q2.5 | In the past 12 months has your organization's budget for training employees increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?



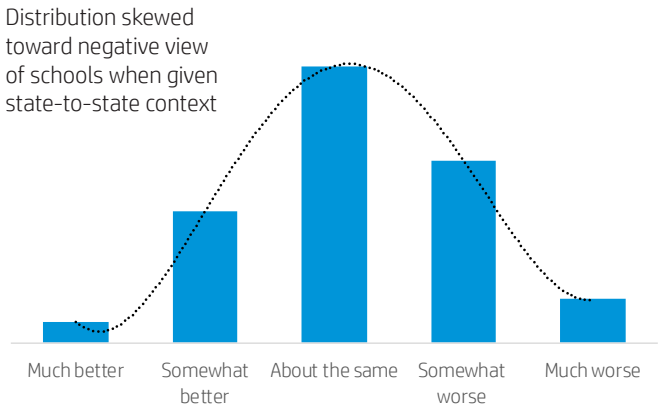
Several businesses reported spending over $250,000 during their last fiscal year on learning and development programs for employees (Q2.8).

The Voice of Idaho's Businesses

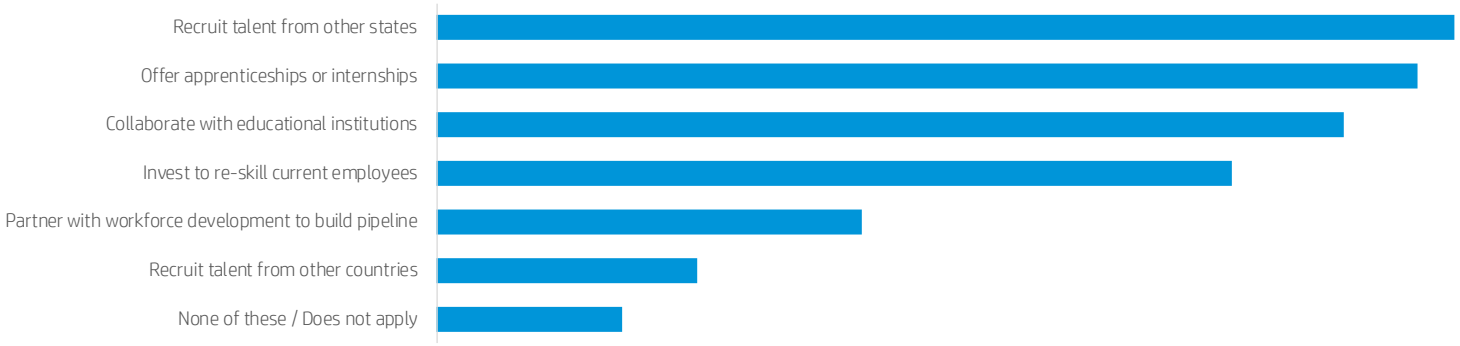
Q4.3 | How would you rate local schools in preparing students to work at your company or organization?



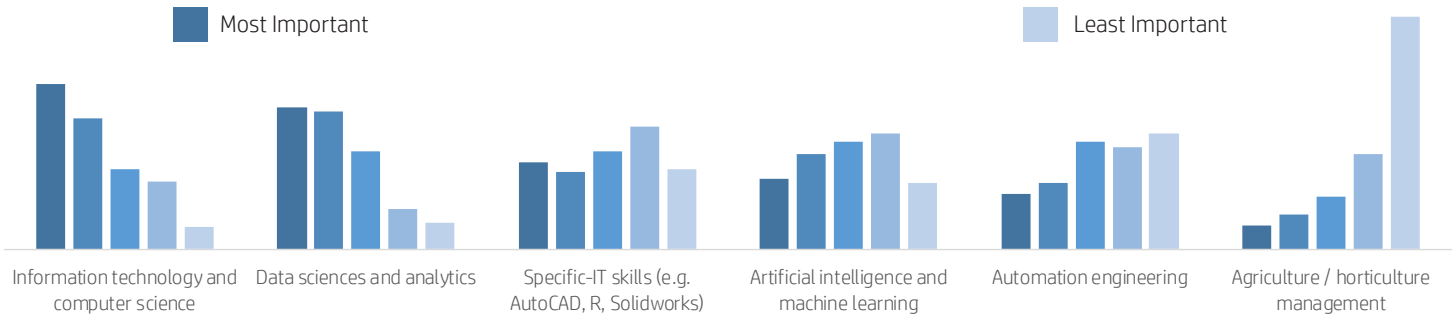
Q4.2 | Would you say that local schools are better or worse than in most states?



Q3.13 | What strategies has your company or organization employed to fill roles not easily hired from within local talent?



Q4.4 | Regarding the needs of your business: over the next 3-5 years, how important is it for students to learn the following subjects?



Q3.5 | What would you say are the biggest gaps that your employees have when they join your workforce?

"Resourcefulness and finding practical solutions to problems."

"The ability to think critically and problem solve in an unstructured environment."

"Problem solving, critical thinking, and lacking an entrepreneurial mindset."

"Ready to work skills - on time, consistent, and capable of adapting as needed."

"Lack of professional social skills and business appropriateness, lack of understanding of delayed gratification, lack of humility"

"Good work ethic"

"Skills that were once basic: reading, writing and an ability to communicate effectively."

"Ability to think beyond the details of the technology to details of the business and empathy for customer problems"

"For our management level employees, it's time and experience. For our trade level crews, it's lack of vocational training opportunities prior to entering the workforce which reduces their wages and costs much more money in-house for training."

"Ability to think creatively and outside the box. We care less about the academic achievements and more about the employees' ability to collaborate with others, and lead thought and knowledge excellence in design."




GALENA SUMMIT
BLAINE & CUSTER COUNTIES



The Voice of Idaho's Teachers

Over 500 Idaho teachers responded to the survey. We thank the Idaho Education Association for their assistance distributing the surveys to teachers across the state. Respondents were generous with their end-of-survey input, often offering remarkable insights into the state of Idaho's contemporary education system. While one teacher noted, "sometimes I feel like the questions are worded to advance some predetermined outcome," the research team endeavored to eliminate any survey bias or predetermined outcome. We had one goal: amplify the voice of Idaho's teachers.

Survey Information

"Idaho NETA Teachers"
n = 540 Idaho teachers
46 Questions
Survey conducted 1H 2019

Survey Highlights

84% reported that the technology used in their schools is up to date

74% rated the overall quality of their school district or charter school system as "good" or "excellent"

75% reported never having had training on helping students with career guidance

Description of the respondent population: Teachers

Job Roles

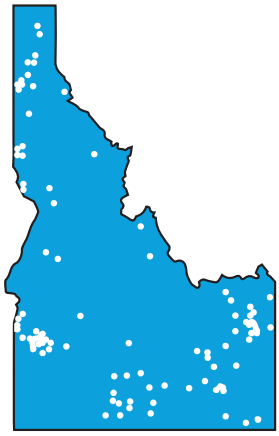
- 90% of respondents were teachers or teaching assistants
- 10% of respondents were counselors or other professionals

Demographics

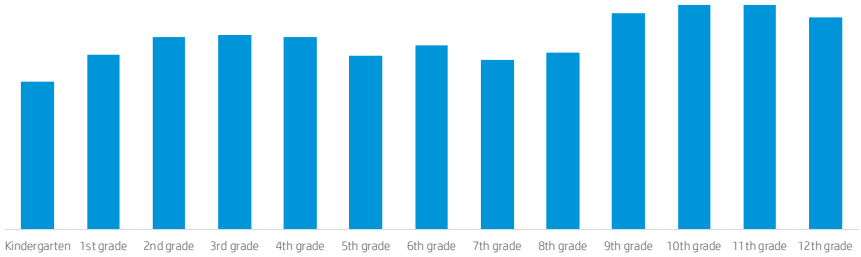
- 83% of the respondents identified as female
- 92% identified as "White"; 8% identified as other races
- 95% were between 25 - 64 years of age
- 23% were between 55 - 64 years of age

Education & Experience

- 95% reported holding a 4-year degree or higher
- 49% reported having a masters degree
- 14.9 average years of service
- 56% attended a K12 public school in Idaho



Respondent Map by zip code (Q5.8)

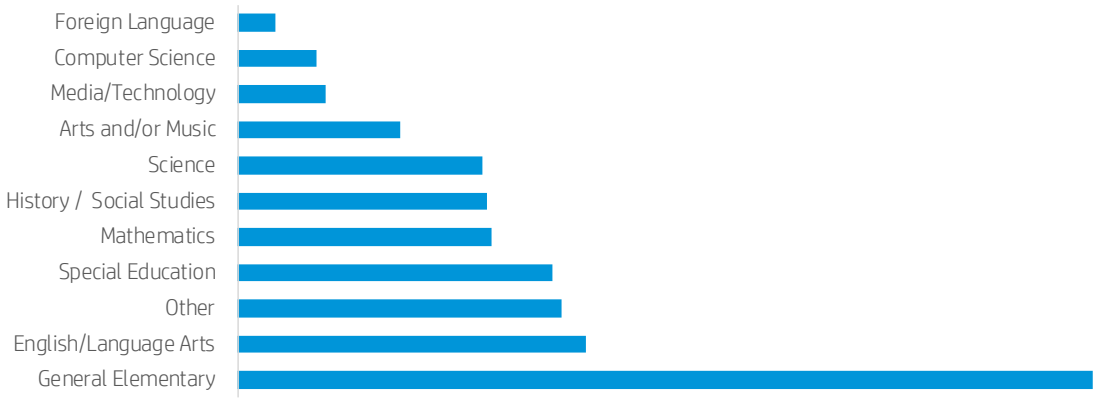


Grade levels taught by teacher respondents (Q1.5)

Note on the teacher survey visualizations

The survey was divided into four sections, each with several individual questions. Readers will note that the question numbers do not follow a set sequence-this is intentional. Only questions deemed important or relevant to our analysis are visualized in this section. As noted in the introduction, the datasets will be permanently conveyed to the Idaho Policy Institute at Boise State University at no cost, excepting any data which could identify specific individuals.

Q1.4 | What subject(s) are you currently teaching? Please mark all that apply.

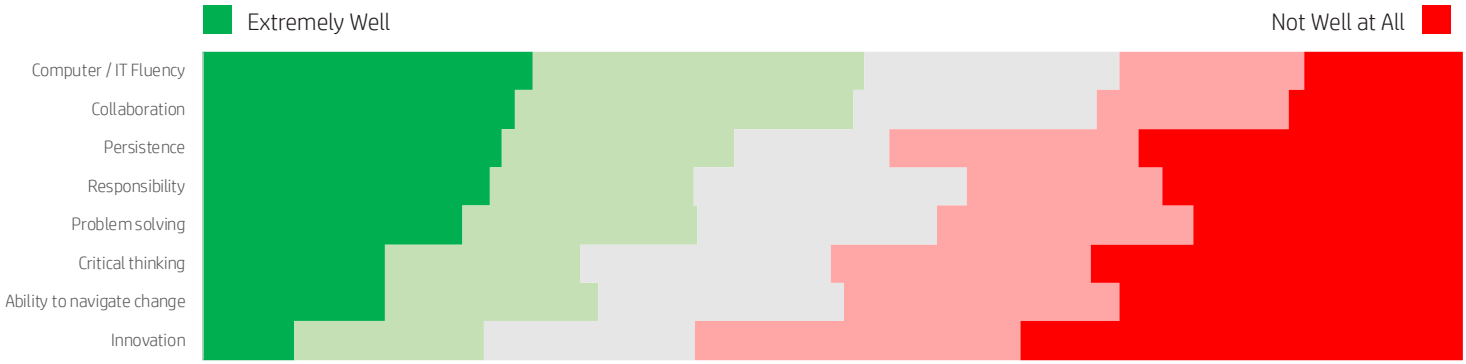


Q2.10 | How important would you say it is for your school district to help student develop the following skills?



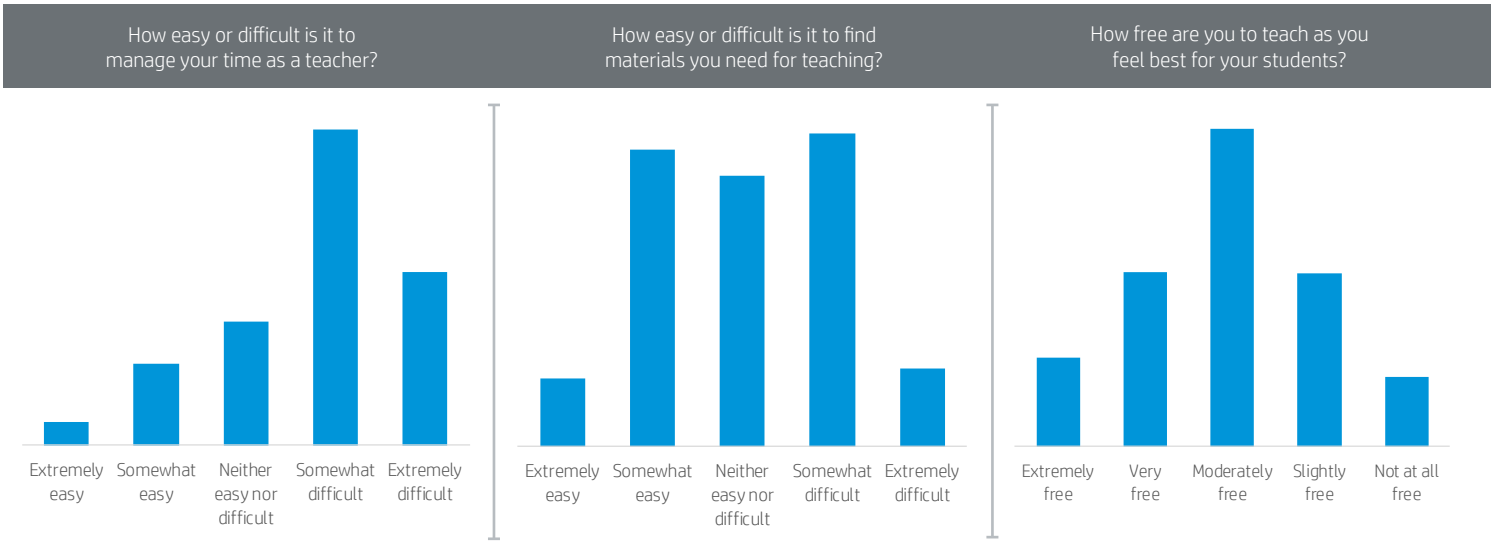
Teachers rated perseverance/ grit, adaptability, and reliability as more important credentials or specific technical knowledge.

Q3.2 | How well would you say that your students demonstrate each of the following characteristics?



From the given choices, teachers reported that innovation, adaptability, and critical thinking are the skills demonstrated least by students

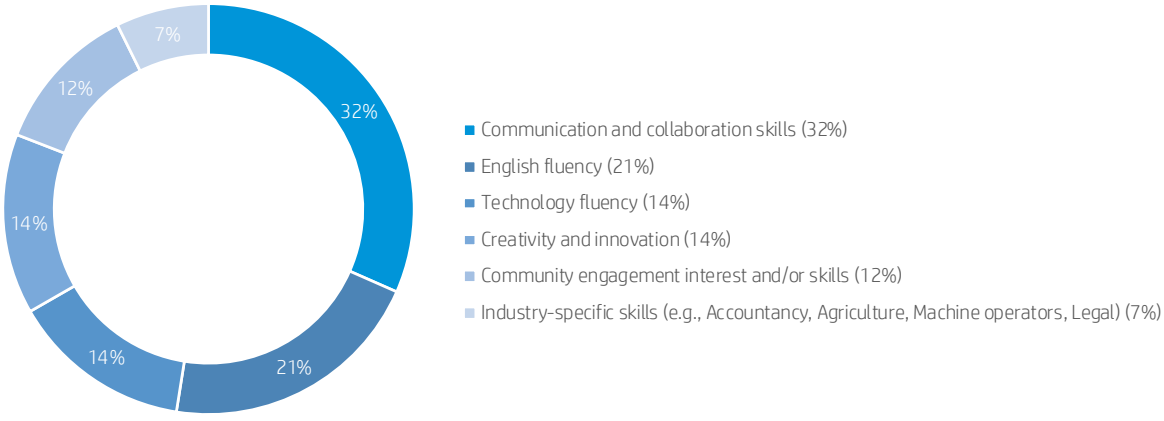
Q4.1 - Q4.3 | Experience drivers of teachers in Idaho



Q3.1 | When you think about characteristics that you aspire to teach students, which are most important?

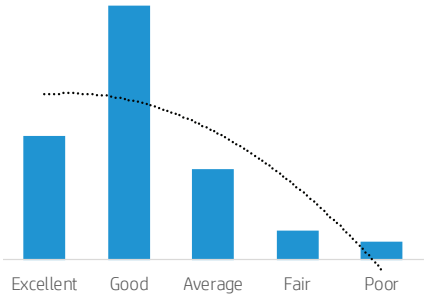


Q3.5 | How important do you think each of the following skills will be to their success in the workforce?

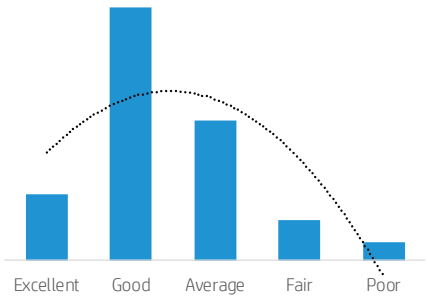


Q2.1; Q2.2; Q2.4 | Opinions on the quality of Idaho's schools overall, for job preparedness, and vs. other states

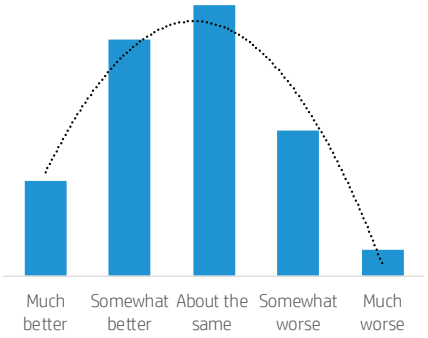
In general, how would you rate the overall quality of your school district?



How would you rate your school district when it comes to preparing students to enter the workforce?



On average, would you say that your school district is better or worse than public schools in most states?



Respondents offered positive views of their schools and districts. However, these views began to skew negative when comparing their schools and districts to those in other states.

59%
selected "responsibility" as the #1 most important characteristic that Idaho's teachers should aspire to teach

32%
selected "communication and collaboration" as the most important workforce skill for the future



Q4.5 | Generally speaking, how much support do your receive from your school's administration?



Teachers reported solid support from their schools' administrations, but...

75%

reported never having received training to ingrate student career planning into their teaching (Q4.9)

Q6.1 | Additional comments at the end of the survey (marked Optional) - Teacher guidance

"I disagree with spending more money on technology when our classes are so overcrowded and we don't have enough paraprofessionals to meet our students' needs."

"For older grades computers are important but young children it is harmful to have them on excessively. Some are already screen addicts at five [years old]. We need developmentally appropriate skills in Kindergarten."

"We desperately need to be able to provide 1:1 student access to computers at the high school level. It's critically important."

"I think there should be a class at a high school level about teaching kids how to balance their bank accounts."

"CTE is vital for students. We connect skills, workforce prep, and incorporate academics in an interesting, applied way that engages students."

"Although tech skills and tech experience are important, students need to develop people skills and the ability to work with others."

"Class size matters! One teacher in a classroom with 30 students is very challenging to manage. Students deserve more individual time with their teacher to help them learn and grow in all areas of education."

"Class sizes are too large to manage effectively."

Q6.1 | Additional comments at the end of the survey (marked Optional) - Teacher experiences

"We as teachers have been asked to do more with less support, expected to be perfect in our special education paperwork, plan amazing lessons in multiple subjects, grade levels, and standards to close the gap for the student population with the highest need...with only one prep period and many times without additional support from paraprofessionals. I became a teacher to inspire young people. I feel hindered in that through a lack of support and understanding in what I am required to do in a given day."

"If I had known teaching in Idaho would become such an unrewarding and frustrating endeavor, I would have never started. At this point in time, there is no way I would tell a young person to even think about education in Idaho as a career, I do wish a few parents and politicians would try to teach today's clientele."

"I just don't think if fair when someone always says all over Idaho, I never see anyone from the State ever come to [the local school] and ask teachers anything."

"The main problems with today's education is behavior and parents."

"Something needs to be done about the workload of teachers and the lack of support for teachers who have students with serious behavior problems. If a teacher struggles with a student, it's automatically the teacher's fault. Very little support from our administration in our school. Administration has no accountability in our district."

"Students are creative and what to learn, however, our grading system takes away joy of learning. Students and parents care more about an A than they do about learning. The number one thing we could do to make more innovators is to take away grades."

"Our job as primary teachers is to teach reading writing and arithmetic and basic social skills and character traits so that kids can function. The character traits are what will carry them into the world of work and will determine if they will be successful or not. Honesty, integrity, responsibility, perseverance, work ethic, curiosity and desire to learn. Those foundations are set early in school."





ARROWROCK RESERVOIR

BOISE & ELMORE COUNTIES

The Voice of Idaho's Parents

Over 900 Idahoans with students currently enrolled in K-12 schools responded to the survey. A strong majority (90%) of these students attended traditional public and charter K-12 schools across a diverse range of grades. Ironically, parents valued specific work-oriented training higher than businesses, but did agree that non-cognitive skills were very important. Social mobility emerged as an important topic: only 11% of parents surveyed wanted their children to follow a similar career path as they did.

Survey Information

"Idaho NETA Parents"
n = 939 Idaho parents
47 Questions
Survey conducted 1H 2019

Survey Highlights

98%
believed their children would graduate high school

79%
of Idaho's students actually graduate high school (NCES, 2019)

11%
wanted their children to follow a similar career path as they did

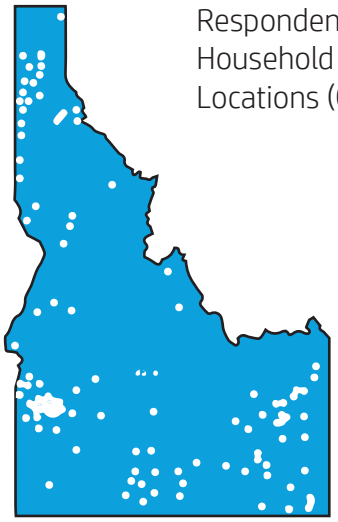
Description of the respondent population: Parents

Pre-tax income expected in 2019

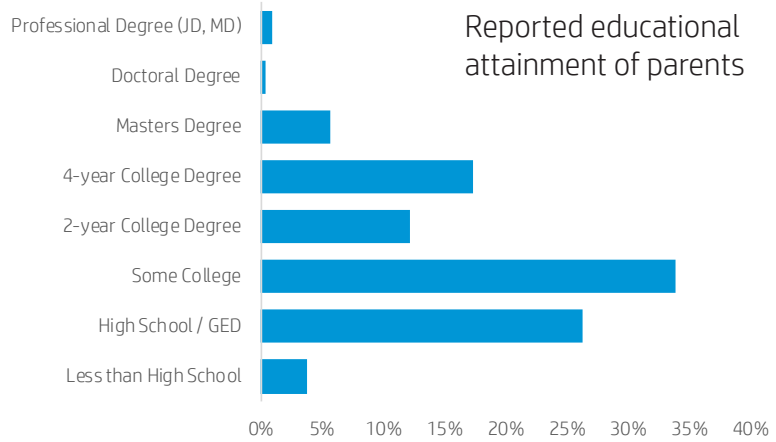
51% reported annual household income of $49,999 or lower
2.7% reported annual income over $150,000

Demographics

82% of the respondents identified as female
86% identified as "White"; 8% identified as "Hispanic"
6% identified as other races



Respondent Household Locations (Q5.8)



Reported educational attainment of parents

Q2.1 | Generally speaking, how much does your student like or dislike going to school?



Q2.2 | Which of the following describes your student's motivation for going to school? Select all that apply.

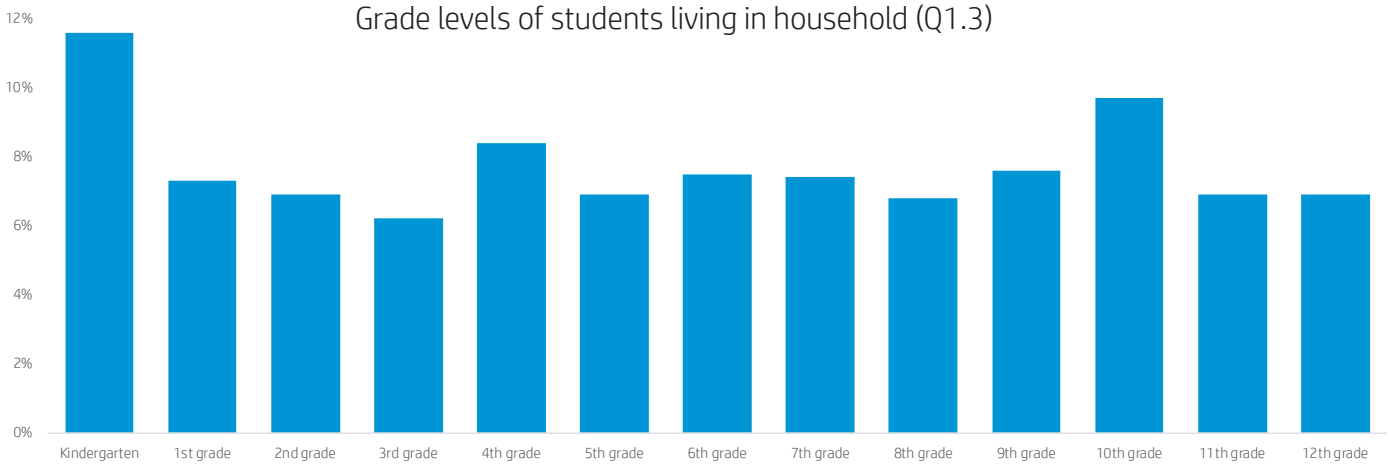


"Select all that apply" appearing in the question may have elicited an unexpected response pattern to this question

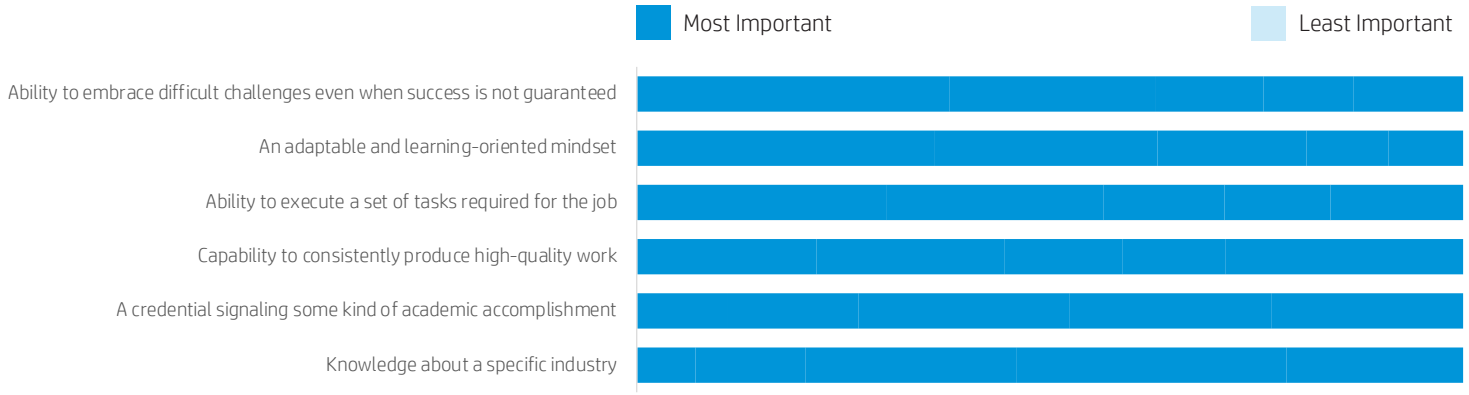
Q2.8 | What would make your student leave Idaho after high school? Select all that apply.

66% cited "work & career opportunities"
60% cited "educational opportunities"
11% cited "other" with responses ranging from "military" to "family" to "mission for church"

Grade levels of students living in household (Q1.3)



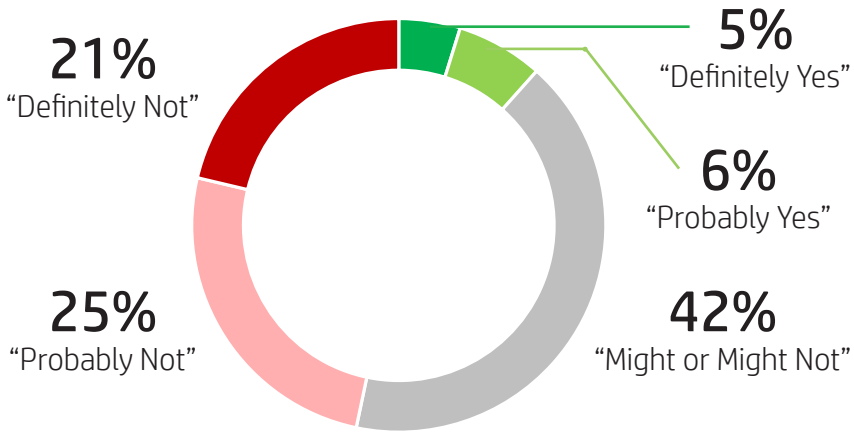
Q3.10 | How important would you say it is for local schools (K-12) to help student develop the following skills?



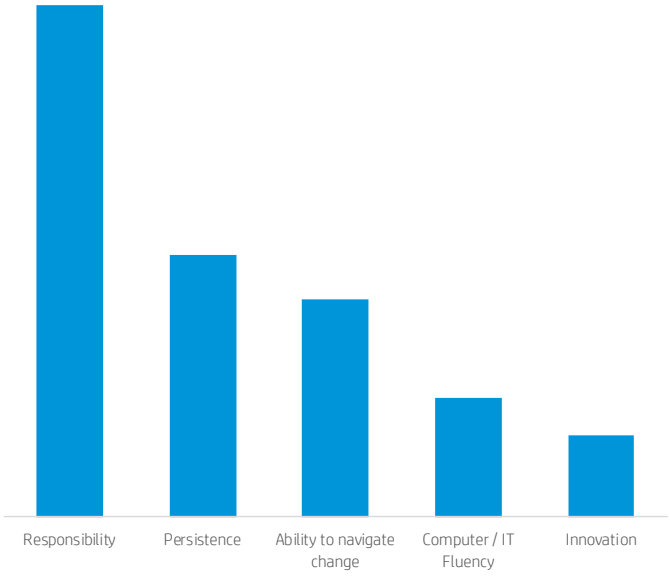
Q4.6 | Do you want your student to follow a similar career as you?

Respondent parents clearly did not want their students/children to follow a similar career as they did.

These responses likely indicate two beliefs: 1. Idaho parents want their children to have better lives than the parents have; 2. Idaho parents are dissatisfied with their current careers.



Q4.3 | Beyond specific job skills, what are the most important characteristics that you hope schools are teaching your students?

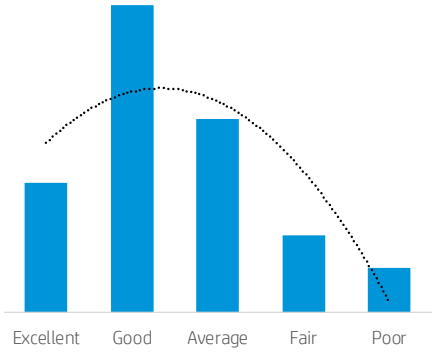


Parent respondents dramatically favored "responsibility" as the most important characteristic they hoped schools would teach to their students.

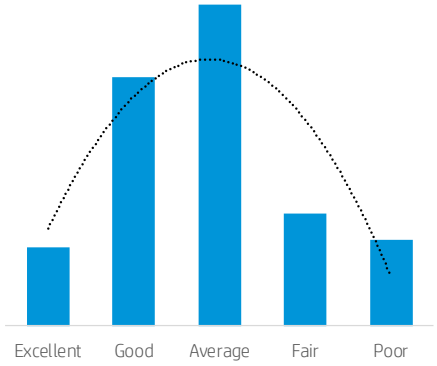
The response pattern closely complies to that of the business and parent respondents, creating clear consensus.

Q3.1; Q3.2; Q3.4 | Opinions on the quality of Idaho's schools overall, for job preparedness, and vs. other states

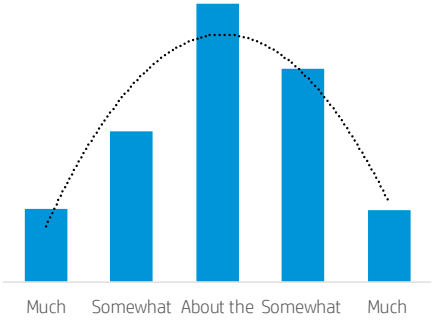
In general, how would you rate the overall quality of your local schools?



How would you rate your school when it comes to preparing students to enter the workforce?



On average, would you say that your school is better or worse than public schools in most states?

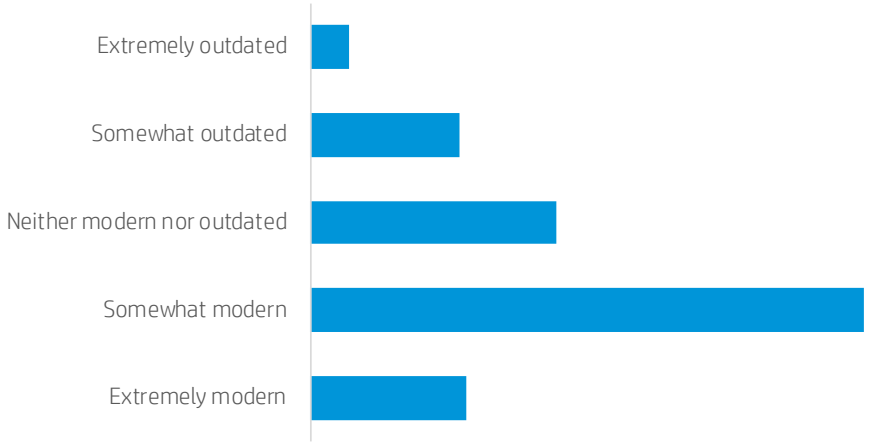


Similar to teachers, parents offered positive views of their schools and districts. However, these views began to skew negative when comparing their schools and districts to those in other states.



EMMETT FARM
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Q3.8 | How would you describe the technology at your student's school?



Parents offered favorable reviews regarding technology access and capabilities in Idaho's schools.'

This view was is largely shared by teachers.



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POWER PLANT
TWIN FALLS COUNTY

Q6.1 | Additional comments at the end of the survey (marked Optional)

"Schools need programs to teach children how to be adults . Banking, money management, tax preparation, basic adult skills that people use daily."

"Life skills need to be taught. Banking, bill paying, taking care of your own vehicles, cooking, house cleaning, yard work. Basic skills in life. Not just technology."

"The opinion question where you had to choose is education made to help kids enter the workforce OR grow personally and intellectually was a difficult question and too different in one another to compare. As a teacher and a parent both of those are extremely important and necessary and the goal of many educators."

"Take out Common Core."

"Schools should focus on the mentality of the students, not so much work ability, but self-worth or growth, acceptance of change, and ability to overcome."

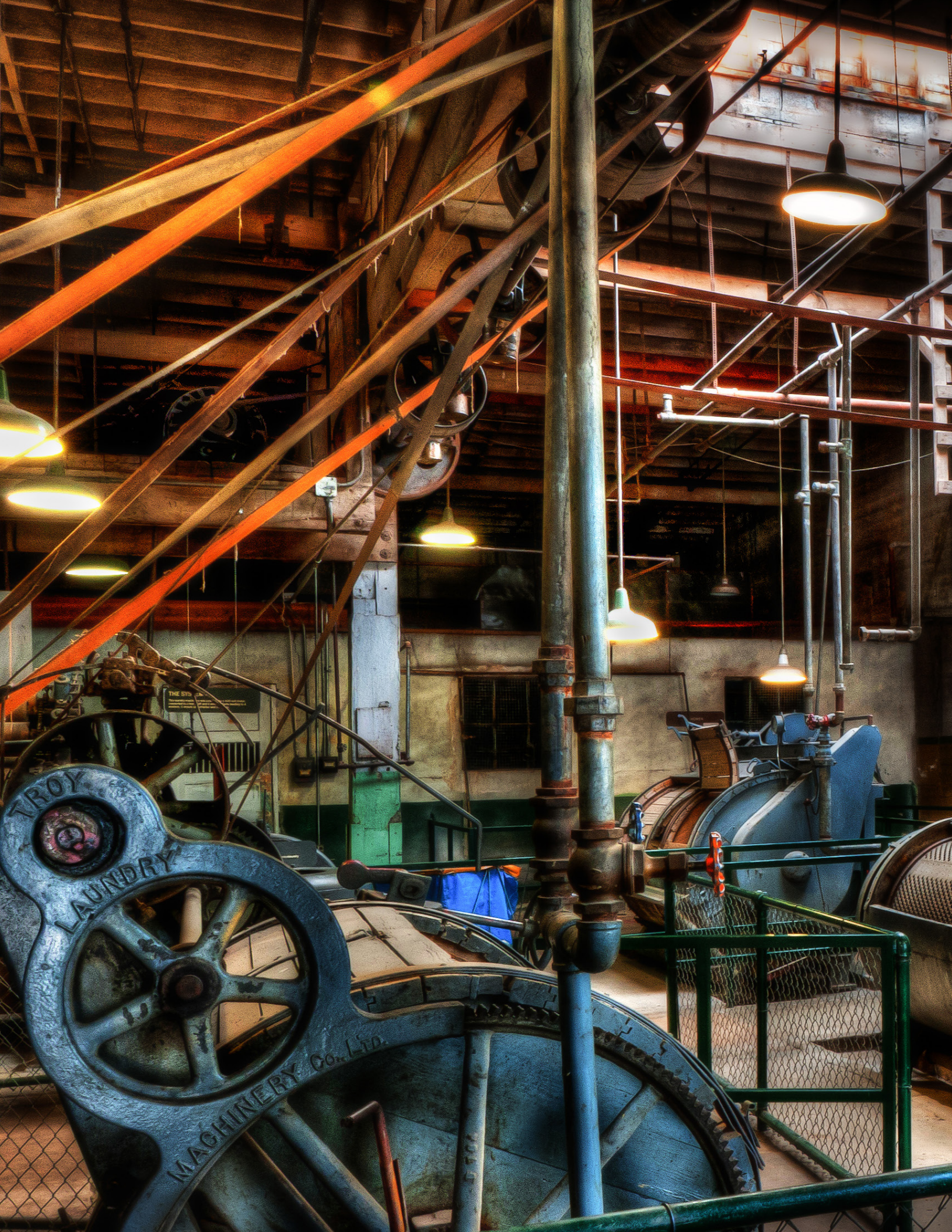
"My child's school is a newer charter school which is fairly high tech and a better option than a traditional public school."

"I attended several other state public schools and feel that they were more innovative and expected more from their students."

"Students would have a higher probability of being successful after high school if there were classes available for students to attend that were based around technology - not just a basic computer class."

"Our teachers are very important influences on our children."

"Idaho schools need better education for those with learning disabilities."


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OLD IDAHO STATE PENITENTIARY

ADA COUNTY

Conclusion and Recommendations

Idahoans agree more than they disagree regarding issues related to education. Our study indicates that a statewide vision for education is both achievable and urgently needed at the dawn of the fourth industrial revolution.

Education is cited consistently as one of the most important issues in Idaho. Unfortunately, some actors and stakeholder groups have engendered a culture of distrust based on past political fallouts or poor communications. In fact, our study shows that Idaho's key education stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, school leaders, NGOs, and businesses—agree on almost all foundational issues, including the very purpose of education.

Meanwhile, the war for talent has gone global, and the skills most needed in an era of constant disruption may require profound changes in curricula, pedagogy, and assessment. Idaho's nonprofit organizations, teacher associations, and the private sector should identify areas of commonality to drive the state forward instead of focusing on areas of difference or worse, focusing on past failed reforms. Idaho needs the resources and expertise of every actor at the table to define the statewide vision.

Making the case for reform: Education as a private good

Idaho is often referred to as a "local control" state, and the research team observed a sense of individualism across roles and across the state's regions. In light of this cultural norm, making the case for improved post-secondary enrollment and completion may compel individuals to plan and act beyond macroeconomic facts and figures. For example: students' earnings are dramatically affected by educational attainment. In 2017, for those under 25, high school graduates earned $27,099 while bachelor's degree holders earned an average of $42,266. The distance between earning categories continues throughout career paths. Those who earn post-secondary credentials earn more for themselves and their families, and become less dependent on their communities and state.

Our conversations with students revealed that they simply do not have awareness of college and career pathways. High quality college and career programs exist in Idaho, such as Next Steps, but the students we spoke with did not know about these programs. Worse, 75% of teachers reported having no training on how to help guide students into career paths. The results of this show up in the state's lackluster 45% go-on rate (although this improved to 60% goal by year three).

Making the case for reform: Education as a public good

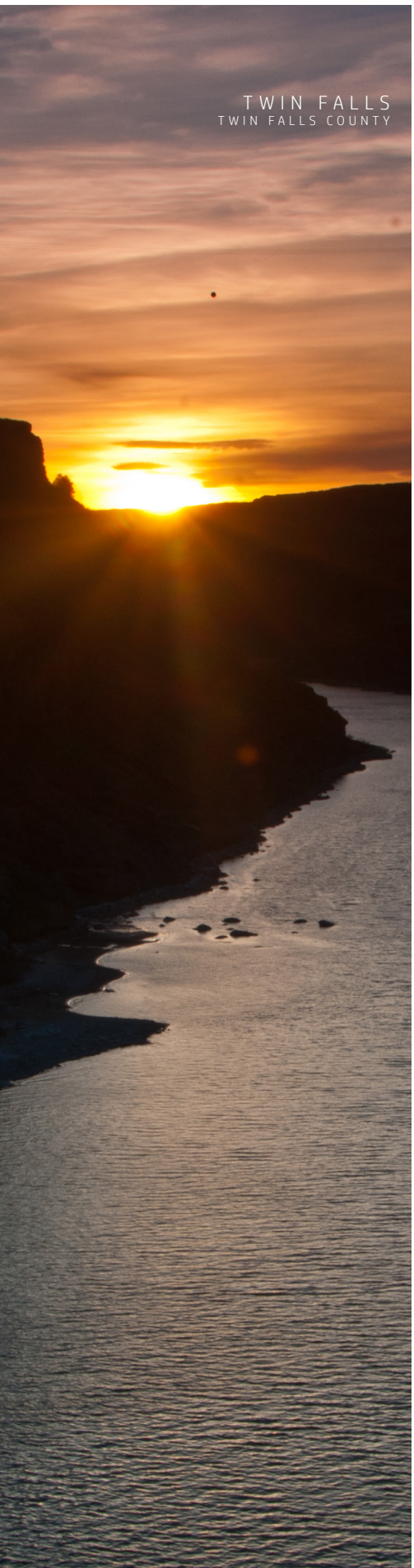
A better-skilled workforce and more productive educational institutions can attract outside investments and employees, while enabling entrepreneurial ventures to thrive. A labor market teeming with workers possessing versatile skills and recognized credentials is good for the economy and tax revenues. Idaho already enjoys an exceptional business climate. If the state can start producing a highly-skilled homegrown workforce, the historic growth will continue. If not, the state risks having to import talent in the short term or losing high-skill/high-pay jobs to other states in the long term. The state's higher education institutions should also consider creating plans to increase federal grant funding for research.

Recommendation overview

Given all the above, the people, businesses, and government of Idaho should work to maximize the return on this investment for individuals and for economic growth. Education is both a private and public good. By conferring both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, Idaho's schools can create a new generation of thoughtful, engaged, and agile students who will fulfill the jobs of the future.

The recommendations on the opposite page attempt to synthesize solutions for Idaho's education stakeholders based on the data collected and analyzed. Legislative solutions are important and can often create broad impact. However, we recommend also considering non-legislative solutions to Idaho's education challenges.





1 Establish a statewide vision for education in Idaho

This study's findings are clear: stakeholders agree on the skills and knowledge that Idaho's K-12 students ought to master before entering the workforce or postsecondary education. Stakeholders agree on the very purpose of education. A singular vision adopted by the state and its schools (public, private, and charter) will help drive improved academic performance while helping the future workforce develop crucial non-cognitive skills.

2 Promote & create postsecondary and career pathways

SDE and experts from Idaho's universities should collaborate with Boise's burgeoning creative/advertising ecosystem to promote current programs and create new approaches with tightly managed nurturing campaigns fueled by analytics and SEO, based on established digital marketing heuristics. Our evidence shows that awareness of college and career choices in Idaho is low. Achieving a 60%+ first-year go-on rate requires a modern approach to awareness, consideration, and preference.

3 Improve early childhood literacy

There is strong consensus in Idaho that childhood literacy is a key to future academic and economic success for individual students. However, many of Idaho's families value homeschooling options and resist compulsory early-childhood education. Given the circumstances, we urge Idaho's stakeholders to consider leveraging the capabilities of Idaho's private sector to help design and produce early literacy materials which can be used in school, home, and community contexts. The solution to early literacy in Idaho may not be a legislative one, but rather a para-governmental program armed with high-quality materials to empower and enable families to help students learn how to read and prepare to start elementary school on the right foot.

4 Elevate the teaching profession

Teachers in Idaho are underpaid compared to their peers in adjacent states, but Idaho's state government has taken steps to begin to bridge the pay gaps. Compensation issues have created an environment where it is difficult to attract new teachers to the profession, and many teachers feel undervalued, regardless of their pay. We urge Idaho's government and institutions to identify additional alternative methods to elevate the teaching profession, especially in ways other than salary or total cash compensation, to build the teacher pipeline.

EMERGING ISSUE

5 Address the emerging student mental health challenges

Our research team was surprised by the frequency and depth of conversations regarding student mental health and the dearth of resources and expertise to address this growing issue. Mental health does not appear in NAEP or SAT scores, nor in any standard education indicators, making it a difficult issue to identify and address. College and career counselors reported often now having to devote more time to mental health than postsecondary counseling, exacerbating the go-on rate performance.






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