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## **Idaho's graduation rate shows small increase, optimism for future**

(BOISE) – Nearly eight in 10 Idaho high school seniors graduated in 2017, a slight improvement with some bright spots and room to improve, Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said Wednesday.

One bright spot in the newly released data: More than 36 percent of Idaho's high schools – including rural and urban populations across the state – graduate students at a rate of 90 percent or higher.

The overall state average – 79.67 percent for 2017 -- spurred Superintendent Ybarra to direct staff to take a deeper dive into the statistics to see which, if any, demographics may be undercounted and how the state can help more students achieve their goals of graduation and post-high school success.

Idaho's overall graduation rate for 2017 is up slightly, from 79.66 percent in 2016 and 78.91 in 2015.

"It is exciting to have three years of data using the same formula to calculate rates," Superintendent Ybarra said. "This allows us to dig deeper into the data, identify trends and ask questions."

"Did some of them move out of state? Did they earn GEDs (equivalency certificates that do not count in graduation rates)? Did they simply not finish in the time allotted?"

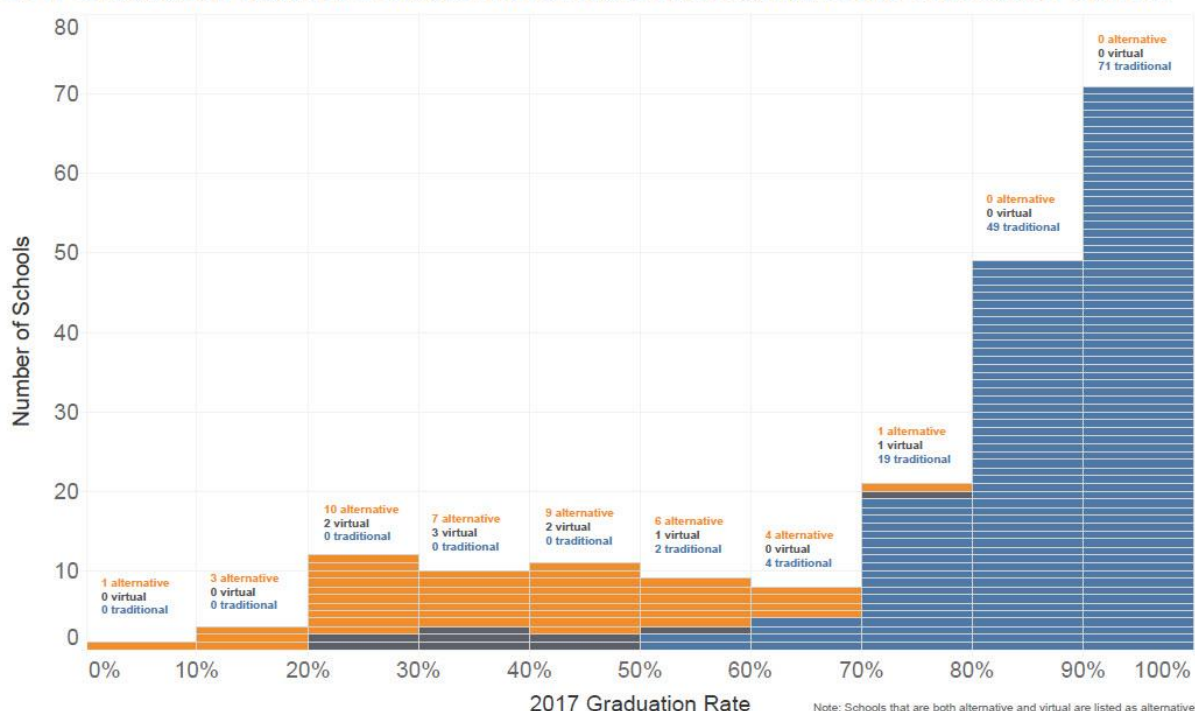
"Finding out the answers will help us understand how to help them," Superintendent Ybarra said. Some students need more time: The State Department of Education will add a five-year cohort for graduation-rate calculations that will help determine how many Idaho students are graduating a year later than the traditional four-year cohort allows.

To illustrate that point: Of the 4,604 students who did not graduate with their 2017 class, 21 percent or 1,005 returned to school this year. Some – 32 – have completed their graduation requirements and received their diploma. The remaining are still enrolled.



School Type  
 Alternative  
 Virtual  
 Traditional

### 2017 Graduation Rate for Schools with at least 10 Students in the Graduation Cohort



Idaho’s virtual schools and alternative schools record the lowest graduation rates in Idaho, reflecting their unique challenges. This graphic shows how many schools of each category graduate at low and high percentage rates.

“Clearly, we see that students who qualify as ‘at risk’ are an area for continued focus,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Some are finding success outside the traditional high school setting, with about 25 percent graduating from an alternative program.”

This year a new statewide system of support, the STAT team, will focus on providing resources and assistance to schools and districts with average graduation rates of 67 percent or lower. In addition, Superintendent Ybarra said, “I see promise in more advanced opportunities for students and recent strategies that will pay dividends in the long run – such the literacy initiative to ensure students read well by third grade, which will help prevent those children from ever becoming ‘at risk’.”

“Our proposal to increase investment in college and career advising and to start that advising at the middle –school level will help connect more students to the value of continuing on beyond high school. And the initiative for mastery-based education personalizes learning to meet the needs of individual students who may not have found success in a traditional setting.”

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**Attachments:** Statewide graduation rates by school and district plus a .jpg of the graphic.