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## **Idaho's high school graduation rate is on the rise**

(BOISE) – With the Class of 2018, Idaho's statewide graduation rate topped 80 percent for the first time, continuing a steady, positive trend, Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said Thursday.

Across Idaho, 80.65 percent of high school students graduated within four years, up from 79.67 percent in 2017 and 79.66 in 2016. The 2015 graduation rate was 78.91 percent.

"Our graduation rates have been improving steadily, and the pace is accelerating," Superintendent Ybarra said. "I am confident the pace will continue to pick up, thanks to hard work by our schools and districts and the intensive help my department now offers to lower-performing schools under our new accountability plan, which kicked in for the 2018-19 school year."

"The most important thing to remember is that these numbers represent children, and the state and our schools are committed to do everything we can to help those students find success in high school and beyond," Ybarra said.

The growth in four-year graduation rate is particularly encouraging because 2018's graduating class was larger than 2017's by 370 students – up from 18,059 to 18,429.

Also encouraging is the increasing number of Idaho high schools, both rural and urban, that report graduation rates of 90 percent or higher. About 43 percent of the state's high schools – 90 out of 210 – met that mark in 2018. And 18 schools achieved 100 percent graduation rates for 2018.

This year the SDE is measuring a five-year graduation rate for the first time to help keep track of the number of students who don't quite finish high school in the traditional four years, SDE Director of Assessment and Accountability Karlynn Laraway said. About 25 percent of the students who did not graduate in four years returned for a fifth year in 2017/18, she said.

The initial five-year rate shows that the number of students in the Class of 2017 who graduated by 2018 was 82 percent, about 2.3 percentage points higher than the Class of 2017 four-year rate. That increase

was more pronounced among English learners, students with disabilities, and among black, Hispanic and multiracial students.

“Some students take more than four years to complete high school, and some drop out but come back,” Laraway said. “Schools are reaching out to their students who have stopped attending, discussing available options to earn their diploma, including alternative or online schools if a traditional high school campus isn’t a good fit for them.”

Rates among online and alternative schools, which have unique challenges working with students who have dropped out or are on the verge of dropping out, also are on the rise. Some showed sizable increases: Idaho Virtual Academy increased its graduation rate from 60 percent in 2017 to 67 percent in 2018, and Another Choice Virtual Charter increased its graduation rate from 30.2 percent to 44.7 percent. Among alternative schools, New Vision in Post Falls graduated 54.1 percent in 2018, up from 44.9 percent in 2017. And Meridian Academy’s rate increased from 56.1 percent to 60.98 percent.

The latest four-year graduation results show continued room for improvement, particularly in serving students with disabilities. In that demographic, only 58.5 percent of students graduated in 2018, down from 60.9 in 2017 and 60.5 in 2016. That subgroup consistently has the lowest graduation rate among all student subgroups.

Graduation rates for various other student subgroups – including black students, economically disadvantaged students and English learners – showed increases. Among Hispanic students, the graduation rate rose from 74.8 percent in 2017 to 75.9 percent in 2018.

Not yet reflected in Idaho’s graduation rates is the state’s new accountability system, which launched in August. The SDE established a new statewide system of support, the STAT team, which focuses on providing resources and assistance to schools and districts with average graduation rates of 67 percent or lower.

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**Attachments:** Statewide graduation rates by school and district for the traditional four-year cohort for 2018 and the new five-year cohort, which includes members of the Class of 2017 who completed high school in 2018. A cohort is made up of all students who start ninth grade together. The five-year rates includes students that graduated in four years as well as those who finished in five years.