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Preliminary results are out for Idaho students' SAT and ISAT scores

(BOISE) – Preliminary statewide results from assessments taken by Idaho students this spring show encouraging increases in students' proficiency in English and math through the ISAT and a puzzling dip in 11th graders' performance on the SAT college entrance exam.

ISAT: The Idaho Standards Achievement Test is administered to all public school students in grades 3-8 and 10, gauging their proficiency in English Language Arts/ Literacy and Mathematics. Preliminary results show:

- In math, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced increased in six of the seven grades compared to a year ago, with grade-level gains ranging from 1% to 4%. In fifth grade, the percentage remained the same as last year's. The overall proficiency for the state was 43.3%, up from 41.9% last year.
- In ELA, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced increased in five of the seven grades compared to a year ago, with gains of 1% to 3%. In seventh and 10th grades, the percentage remained the same as last year's. Idaho's overall proficiency was 53.7%, up from 52% in 2017.

"Idaho educators are working hard to align instruction to rigorous standards and equip students to meet the expectations of the new assessments, and that effort takes time to calibrate. So in this fourth year it is good news to see improvements in student performance across the board," Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. "Some districts are seeing really significant increases."

Increased percentages of proficient students are being seen in many districts, small and large, in all parts of the state, according to a State Department of Education sampling of ISAT results across Idaho. Examples include:

- Marsing School District saw a 13% increase in 10th graders' math proficiency (83 percent of students proficient) and 6% in ELA (91 percent of students proficient).

- Nez Perce School District students increased math proficiency by 13.5%, showing an average proficiency across all grades of 69%.
- McCall-Donnelly School District 10th graders increased ELA proficiency by 8% (95 percent of students proficient) and math proficiency by 9.5% (69 percent of students proficient)

In some Idaho classrooms, every student scored proficient or advanced. Just two examples: Students in a Lava Elementary School teacher's classroom in the Marsh Valley Joint School District registered 100 % proficient in math, the third consecutive year that teacher's class hit that mark. And in the West Ada School District, math students in all of one Heritage Middle School teacher's classes came in 100% proficient this year.

Superintendent Ybarra noted that more schools and districts are using tools provided by the State Department of Education, such as interim assessments to help inform their instruction as students prepare for the spring test.

Students finished testing in late May, and individual score reports are available through school districts. Local educators will be able to review school-level data and ensure it is accurate before results are finalized. The SDE will use those results, along with other indicators, to identify schools for recognition and support under Idaho's new accountability system in August. A new interactive K-12 School Report Card will be unveiled in December.

SAT: Nearly 20,000 Idaho 11th graders took the SAT college entrance exam in April. Idaho requires all students to take a college entrance exam to graduate from high school, and most juniors take the SAT because a state contract provides the test at no cost to the student, and results can be forwarded to four colleges for free. SAT results also provide school districts a tool for monitoring annual progress toward college and career readiness in local Continuous Improvement Plans.

Districts and schools received reports this month, and students could access their individual reports last month. Students' scores are compared to benchmarks set by the College Board as a level of performance likely to earn a C or better in college classwork. Preliminary data from the 2018 Idaho SAT Test Day administration show:

- Idaho juniors scored an average (mean) of 503 in evidence-based reading and writing, with 58% reaching the SAT's college-readiness benchmark of 480. That's down from 506 and 60% last year.
- Juniors scored an average (mean) of 486 in mathematics, with 33% reaching the SAT's college-readiness benchmark of 530, down from 492 and 34% last year.

“To put these results in context, I’m looking forward to conversations with our school leaders and teachers, discussing what this data tells them about where students did well and where they may need more help,” Superintendent Ybarra said.

The SAT results raise more questions than conclusions, and analysis of the results is planned, said Karlynn Laraway, SDE director of Assessment and Accountability. One way to home in on the answers may be to compare these juniors’ SAT results with other assessments at the cohort’s previous grade levels, she said.

Idaho is not alone in this year’s SAT score dip, Laraway said, noting that other states administering the College Board test statewide saw similar trends.

One possibility, she said, is that the downward trend could be specific to this cohort of students: Perhaps these juniors regarded the test less seriously.

“Are these results a matter of attitude or aptitude?” Laraway said. “We don’t know.”

This year’s decrease in average SAT scores is disappointing, she said, but it shouldn’t be alarming to students and parents.

“If a student doesn’t meet the benchmarks set by the College Board, that doesn’t mean he or she can’t go on to college and be successful,” Laraway said. “One test score does not define a student, and higher education institutions look at multiple measures.

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Attachments: The attached Excel files summarize Idaho’s 2018 SAT School Day results and ISAT proficiency percentages for this year and the previous two years.