

WORKING TOGETHER TO MOVE IDAHO EDUCATION FORWARD

Thanks to a significant investment from the Legislature, successful implementation by local school leaders, and hard work from our students Idaho is leading the nation when it comes to high school students getting a jump start on their postsecondary education.

In 2014-15, Idaho's 11th and 12th Grade students earned more than 100,000 college credits through the state's Dual Credit program. The early success of this program is a good indicator that we can make progress towards preparing students for college-level work.

What's even more impressive is the rapid increase in student participation in these courses and tests. In 2014-15 Idaho kids took more than twice the number of Dual Credit courses and Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) tests than they did in 2008-09.

The State Board of Education research shows that students who participate in Dual Credit, AP, and IB coursework are much more likely to go on to college. In 2015, 71% of students taking Dual Credit coursework enrolled in college within a year of graduation, while only 45% who had not taken Dual Credit coursework enrolled within 12 months.

These advancements were made possible because of a collaborative effort to support a program known as Advanced Opportunities. In support of Governor Otter's Education Task Force Recommendation to *"provide all students advanced opportunities by expanding post-secondary offerings while in high school,"* legislators passed legislation to provide funding for high school students to take college level coursework, and it is paying huge dividends.

Working together, the State Department of Education, the State Board of Education, Idaho Business for Education, the Idaho Education Association, the Idaho School Boards Association, the Idaho Association of School Administrators, and Idaho's universities and colleges have supported increases to the funding for Advanced Opportunities as the program has developed.

Through this program, students can receive funding to pay for college coursework offered at a reduced rate by Idaho colleges and universities and college-level tests offered by the College Board.

Besides giving students a jumpstart on college, another advantage of the Advanced Opportunities program is that it is saving parents and students millions of dollars in tuition. That's because the state picks up much of the cost of these credits which satisfy college graduation requirements. In fact, we have many high school seniors across Idaho who are earning their college associate's degree even before they pick up their high school diploma.

We are early in this work, and the progress thus far is impressive. By continuing to expand these opportunities to more students, and building on this momentum, the future will brighten for our students and state. Though this improvement has not yet impacted our state's postsecondary go-on rates or remediation rates, which have been unchanged over recent years, we expect to see progress in these areas as we go forward.

As Superintendents and Business Leaders, we know there's always more work to be done in better preparing our students for college and career. A better educated workforce will contribute to an improved Idaho economy, and to the future economic well-being of the state. That's why we are all working together to ensure a positive future for our young people and for our great state.

This op-ed is submitted by Southern Idaho Superintendents

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