TIPS FOR CHOOSING A SCHOOL IN IDAHO
INVESTMENTS IN IDAHO’S FUTURE

Key for the Map:

A  Alturas International Academy, Idaho Falls
B  Alturas Preparatory Academy, Idaho Falls
C  Anser Charter School, Garden City
D  Cardinal Academy, Boise
   (Deborah Hedden-Nicely & Emily Bergstrom Fellowship)
E  Compass Public Charter School, Meridian
F  Connor Academy, Chubbuck
G  Doral Academy, Meridian
H  Elevate Academy, Caldwell
I  Elevate Academy, East Idaho
J  Elevate Academy Nampa, Nampa
   (Jewels Carpenter & Phil Diplock Fellowship)
K  Elevate Academy North, North Idaho
   (Marita Diffenbaugh Fellowship)
L  Fernwaters Charter School, Salmon
M  Forge International School, Middleton
N  Future Public School, Garden City
O  Gem Prep: Nampa, Nampa
P  Gem Prep: Meridian, Meridian
Q  Gem Prep: Meridian North, Meridian
R  Gem Prep: Meridian South, Meridian
S  Gem Prep: Pocatello, Chubbuck
T  Gem Prep: Twin Falls, Twin Falls
U  Grace Lutheran High School, Pocatello
V  Hayden Canyon Charter School, Hayden
W  Idaho Arts Charter School, Nampa
X  Island Park Elementary, Island Park
Y  MOSAICS Public School, Caldwell
Z  North Idaho STEM Charter Academy, Rathdrum
A1 Pathways in Education, Nampa
B1 Pinecrest Academy, Twin Falls
C1 RISE Charter School, Kimberly
   (Kimberly School District)
D1 Sage International School, Boise
E1 St. Ignatius Catholic School, Meridian
F1 Treasure Valley Classical Academy, Fruitland
G1 Treasure Valley Leadership Academy, Nampa
H1 Upper Carmen Charter School, Upper Carmen
I1 White Pine Charter School, Ammon
INVESTMENTS IN IDAHO’S FUTURE

From the rolling farmland of the Palouse Prairie to the far reaches of forested mountains, Bluum has funded 35 schools in varied types of communities throughout our great state.
WE BELIEVE
A robust choice of learning opportunities helps children, families and educators achieve more and do better.

WE ARE COMMITTED
To ensuring that Idaho’s children reach their fullest potential by cultivating great leaders, replicating high-performing school models, and taking risks to develop new approaches so all Idaho students have access to a great education.

ABOUT BLUUM
Bluum is a nonprofit organization helping Idaho become a national model for how to maximize learning outcomes for children and families.

BLUUM STRIVES TO
- Empower and support educational leaders who take risks and put children first;
- Grow and replicate high-impact school models;
- Develop and share effective practices;
- Provide school support and management help; and
- Demonstrate measurable impact program-wide and across individual partner schools.
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To ensure every child has the possibility to reach their maximum potential for a successful future, Idaho has created a marketplace of school and learning opportunities. This guide will help you understand your options for choosing the right type of education for your child(ren). We believe that providing information about Idaho’s many — and growing number — of learning choices can help parents make smarter decisions about what may work best for their children.

Of the roughly 330,000 Idaho children ages 5 to 18, approximately a quarter attend a school of choice rather than their traditional neighborhood school.
PUBLIC DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Public schools operated by local school districts are — by far — the most familiar learning option for Idaho families and students. For many families, where they decide to live is driven by the quality of their local public schools. Public district schools pose few costs to parents, and many existing costs — such as school lunches — are eligible for federal subsidies. Public district schools also have the most established transportation networks, making them a good option for busy working parents. Most district schools are also able to offer a host of extracurricular activities, including competitive sports programs.

*Dual Enrollment: when a student is homeschooled and enrolled in some district classes or extracurriculars simultaneously.*
WHY WOULD A PUBLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

CIRCLE THE ATTRIBUTES BELOW THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

- No Tuition or Entry Fee
- Close Proximity to Home
- Established Transportation Networks
- School Lunches
- Extracurricular Activities
- Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Options

*Dual Enrollment* is an option for high school students.
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

A charter school is an independently run public school that is granted greater flexibility in its operations by the state, in return for greater performance accountability. The “charter” establishing each school is a performance contract detailing the school’s mission, program, students served, performance goals, and accountability metrics. As public schools, charters are free and open to all families. The first charter schools opened in Idaho in 1998, and as of 2021 there are more than 65 charter schools in Idaho serving over 30,000 students.

Charters are required to adhere to the same state academic standards as district schools, and charter students must take the same state academic assessments as their district school peers.

Charter schools receive the same state and federal dollars that district schools receive. However, public charter schools are not allowed to raise local tax dollars and are prohibited from raising money by public bond or levy.

*Accountability: A set of policies and practices used by states and charter school authorizers to measure student performance, and to ensure schools are delivering positive academic outcomes for students.

*Lottery: The randomized process by which charter schools admit students if more students enroll than the school has space for. There is no fee or academic pre-requisites to apply for the lottery; it is open to all students.

*Authorizer: The entity that decides who can start a charter school, holds the school accountable for academic and financial performance, and who can close the school if these conditions for operation are not met. In Idaho, the following entities may authorize a charter school: public school districts, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, and colleges and universities, as stated in Idaho Code, 33-5202A - “A private, nonprofit, Idaho-based nonsectarian college or university that is accredited by the same organization that accredits Idaho public colleges and universities.”
Number of Public Charter Schools: 66

Below: Students at Alturas International School in Idaho Falls, ID read in groups in their classroom.

Particular focus areas at charter schools range from STEM, Classical Education, Career Tech to International Baccalaureate.
WHY WOULD A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

CIRCLE THE ATTRIBUTES BELOW THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

- Tuition Free
- Smaller, Community-Based Schools
- Offered by an Independent Governing Board
- Offers different learning models like EL Education, STEM or College Prep
- Offers extended-day programs, all-day kindergarten, year round programs or creative use of online learning
Public magnet schools offer children more choices within their school district.

Unlike charter schools, a magnet school is part of the local public school district. But unlike traditional district schools, that draw students from specific neighborhood boundaries, students from anywhere within the district can attend a magnet school.

Each magnet school has a special focus, such as the arts, language, or science and technology.

Magnet schools are part of the local public school district and operate under the locally elected school board and administration.

Magnet schools are funded using the same formula as public district schools.

Public magnet schools, just like all other Idaho public schools (district and charter), are free. You may be asked to supplement your child’s learning expenses by contributing school supplies or money for extracurricular activities.
WHY WOULD A PUBLIC MAGNET SCHOOL BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

CIRCLE THE ATTRIBUTES BELOW THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

- NO TUITION OR ENTRY FEE
- OFFERS MORE CHOICES WITHIN THEIR SCHOOL DISTRICT
- OFFERS KIDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN A SPECIFIC DISCIPLINE

NUMBER OF PUBLIC MAGNET SCHOOLS: 48
Schools that provide Career Technical Education (CTE) are designed for students who want to explore skilled trades, and get a head start on their career path. To prepare students for career, college or both, CTE schools offer students hands-on learning in various fields including construction, welding, manufacturing, medical arts, business, marketing, and more.

CTE schools can be district or charter schools, and they typically serve middle and upper grades.

BELOW: Students at Elevate Academy in Caldwell assemble their creations in Manufacturing class.

These schools offer students hands-on experience in skilled trades.
WHY WOULD A CAREER TECHNICAL SCHOOL BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

Circle the attributes below that are important to your household:

- Bridge between school and career
- Graduate into a higher-wage career field
- Having an immediate practical application for what they are learning

Number of Career Technical Schools: 18
PRIVATE, RELIGIOUS, PAROCHIAL

Private, religious, and parochial schools are a long-standing part of Idaho’s education landscape.

Religious schools are private schools that teach through a religious lens (in Idaho, these schools are often Christian) and incorporate faith into the curriculum.

Parochial schools are religious schools that are part of a specific parish (such as Catholic schools).

In Idaho, a private school is any school that doesn’t receive public funding (home schooling is not considered a private school).

Private and parochial schools charge families tuition. Tuition and fees are set by each school and vary widely. In Idaho, tuition ranges from $250 per student per year, to up to $25,550 per student per year. Some private schools offer tuition breaks for families that enroll more than one student, and some also have private scholarship assistance.

All religious and parochial schools are private, but not all private schools are religious.
WHY WOULD A PRIVATE AND PAROCHIAL SCHOOL BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

CIRCLE THE ATTRIBUTES BELOW THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

- Freedom to mix faith and education
- Free from state testing requirements
- Education reflects family values, philosophy or religious affiliation

NUMBER OF PRIVATE AND PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS: 124
HOMESCHOOLING

In a homeschool setting, parents take on the role of the educator.

Each state has its own requirements and regulations for homeschooling. In Idaho, homeschooled students aren’t required to learn using a standardized curriculum or take state assessments.

Rather, families are responsible for choosing educational materials and evaluating academic progress.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING IN IDAHO:
https://www.sde.idaho.gov/school-choice/home-school/
WHY WOULD HOMESCHOOLING BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

CIRCLE THE ATTRIBUTES BELOW THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

- Parent is full-time educator
- Individualized attention and flexible timeline for mastering material
- Freedom to mix faith and education
- Family trips can be learning opportunities
- Can fit education around activities such as sports, music, etc.
Online schools are conducted entirely online — students do not attend a traditional in-person school, but instead work with instructors and other students via the Internet.

Some online-only schools supplement their classes with tutoring centers where students can get face-to-face help as needed. Students who are most successful in online programs have strong support at home from parents or others invested in their child’s education.

**Blended learning** schools challenge students at their own level, combining individual and small group instruction in the classroom with powerful, interactive online programs.

Idaho’s online and blended learning schools are all public schools (either charter or district) and receive public school funding.

Strong parental involvement is required for online-only types of learning environments — unless your student is particularly focused and driven, you’ll want to assist them with their studies.

*Blended Learning: Blended learning combines in-person, classroom learning with online coursework.*
WHY WOULD ONLINE OR BLENDED SCHOOLS BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

Circle the attributes below that are important to your household:

- Offers students and parents lots of flexibility
- Students work from home at their own pace
- Technology enhances the educational experience with teacher and parent support

Number of online and blended schools: 13
Alternative public schools, like magnet schools, were developed during the 1970s, as educators sought new ways to improve graduation rates and outcomes for at-risk youth. Alternative schools are public schools for at-risk students in grades 7-12. They can be district or charter schools.

Students must meet eligibility criteria for alternative schools, but once they do, they have the chance to earn a high school diploma in an environment that is tailored to their needs.

Many of these schools focus on career tech programs such as health sciences, information technology, manufacturing, hospitality, and tourism.

Alternative schooling is free, just like any public school, but you may be asked to pay for your student’s school supplies or participation in extracurricular activities.

**NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS:**

66
WHY WOULD AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL BE A GOOD CHOICE FOR MY CHILD?

Alternative schools are designed for at-risk youth and feature smaller class sizes and flexible learning models. Idaho defines an at-risk youth as a student who meets at least three of the following criteria:

- Repeated at least one grade
- Has greater than 10 percent absenteeism during the preceding semester
- Has an overall grade point average of less than 1.5
- Has failed one or more subjects
- Is two or more semester credits per year behind the rate required to graduate
- Is a limited-English proficient student who has not been in a program more than three years
- Has a substance abuse problem
- Is pregnant or a parent
- Is an emancipated youth
- Is a previous dropout
MIXING OPTIONS

One emerging trend is parents who employ a mix of options to fit the learning needs of the child. They may homeschool and enroll a student in a public school (called dual enrollment) or supplement an in-person education with online learning. They may also adjust their mix of learning options from year-to-year.

BELLOW: Students at Treasure Valley Leadership Academy in Nampa, ID work on their assignment.

Parents can choose to mix various educational models for their children.

*Online Learning: An educational method in which students take courses or classes entirely online. Online learning can also refer to educational tools such as Khan Academy.
Academic achievement is a big factor, but not the only factor to consider when choosing a school. You should also consider whether the school’s mission, focus, and method of education align with your child(ren)’s interests, and your family’s values.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Since 2015, Bluum has helped create over 13,000 new, high-quality school seats in 35 partner schools throughout the state.
KEY QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY A HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL:

☐ DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR EVERY STUDENT AND EVERY ADULT ASSOCIATED WITH THE SCHOOL?

☐ DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A COMMITTED BOARD OF TRUSTEES THAT DEMONSTRATES RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SCHOOL’S SUCCESS AND FAILURE OVER TIME?

☐ DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER, OR LEADERSHIP TEAM?

☐ ARE LEADERS COMMITTED TO MAKING THE BEST DECISIONS FOR STUDENTS?

☐ DOES THE SCHOOL ATTRACT AND RETAIN TEACHERS WHO "KNOW THEIR STUFF" AND INSPIRE STUDENTS TO LEARN AND EXCEL?

☐ ARE PARENTS WELcomed IN THE SCHOOL, AND DO ADULTS IN THE SCHOOL KNOW EACH AND EVERY STUDENT AND FAMILY?

☐ DOES THE SCHOOL SHARE THE SAME VALUES ABOUT EDUCATION AND LEARNING AS MY FAMILY?
KEY QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY A HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL:

In addition to these key questions, the nonprofit Idaho Education News has created a resource for parents called Idaho Ed Trends, that can help you explore and compare education data in Idaho. You can even choose several schools to see side-by-side how they stack up. Visit https://www.idahoednews.org/idaho-education-data/ for Ed Trends and other useful education data. This useful tool can help you answer other important questions like:

☐ WHAT IS THE STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIO (WHAT’S THE AVERAGE CLASS SIZE)?

☐ HOW DO STATE READING AND MATH SCORES COMPARE TO OTHER SCHOOLS?

☐ WHAT’S THE AVERAGE GO-ON AND GRADUATION RATE?

☐ HOW DOES THE SCHOOL SERVE STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

Finally, as a parent, you should not be afraid to reach out to schools directly. Ask questions and take a tour to help inform your decision.
Advanced Placement: Advanced Placement, or AP, courses were created by the College Board and offer college-level instruction to high school students. Students may sit for an AP exam, and depending on the colleges they wish to attend, their AP scores may allow them to test out of introductory classes or qualify for a more advanced course. Any student can take an AP Exam, regardless of AP enrollment.

Credits: Credits, otherwise known as course credits, credit hours, credit units or units, are used by educational institutions to measure the value of a class, seminar, or workshop.

CTE: Short for Career Technical Education.

College Prep: Curriculum, class structure, and school culture designed to prepare students for a college environment.

Dual Credit: Students who are enrolled in dual credit courses study for higher-education and high school credit at the same time.

Governance: A school is “governed” or overseen by a volunteer board of directors. In Idaho, public district school boards are elected by voters, while public charter school boards are appointed.
Mastery-based Learning: Refers to systems that use learning standards to determine academic expectations and define “competency” or “proficiency” in a given course or subject area rather than grade level.

Personalized Learning: Accelerating student learning by tailoring instruction to the individual needs, skills, and interests of each student.

Project-Based Learning: Project Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects.

Service Learning: A form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves.


STEM: Short for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The nonprofit Idaho Education News has created a resource for parents called Idaho Ed Trends, that can help you explore and compare education data in Idaho. You can even choose several schools to see a side-by-side comparison.

https://seekcommonground.org/family-guides
Visit Seek Common Ground for more information on picking a school through grade level.

https://www.idahoednews.org/idaho-education-data/
Visit for Ed Trends and other useful education data.
WE BELIEVE

A robust choice of learning opportunities helps children, families and educators achieve more and do better.