



# *PARENTS GUIDE*

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## TIPS FOR CHOOSING A SCHOOL IN IDAHO

2022

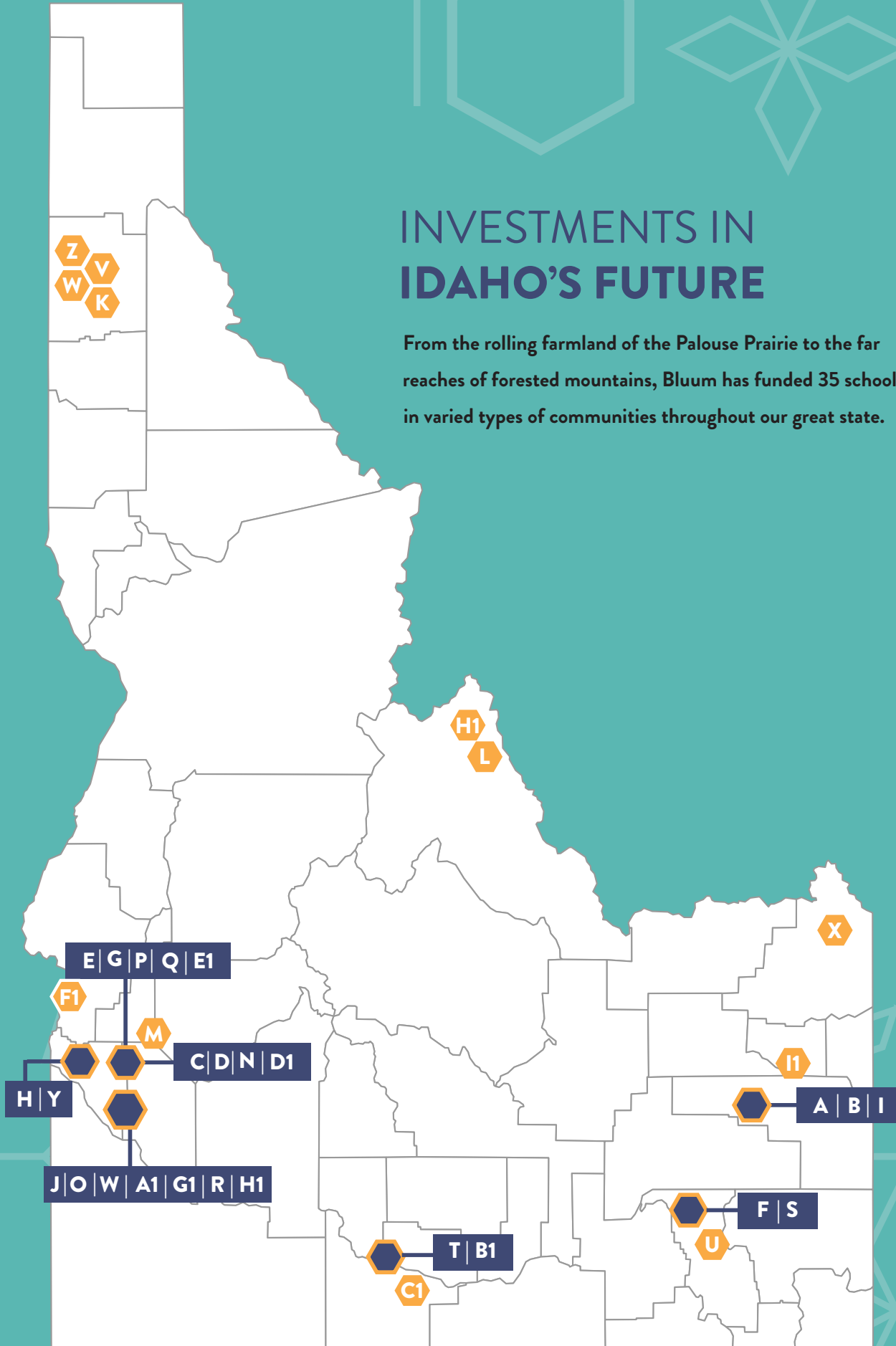
# INVESTMENTS IN IDAHO'S FUTURE

## Key for the Map:

- |          |  |           |  |
|----------|--|-----------|--|
| <b>A</b> | Alturas International Academy, Idaho Falls   | <b>Q</b>  | Gem Prep: Meridian North, Meridian                                 |
| <b>B</b> | Alturas Preparatory Academy, Idaho Falls   | <b>R</b>  | Gem Prep: Meridian South, Meridian                                 |
| <b>C</b> | Anser Charter School, Garden City  | <b>S</b>  | Gem Prep: Pocatello, Chubbuck                                      |
| <b>D</b> | Cardinal Academy, Boise<br><i>(Deborah Hedden-Nicely &amp; Emily Bergstrom Fellowship)</i> | <b>T</b>  | Gem Prep: Twin Falls, Twin Falls                                   |
| <b>E</b> | Compass Public Charter School, Meridian  | <b>U</b>  | Grace Lutheran High School, Pocatello                              |
| <b>F</b> | Connor Academy, Chubbuck   | <b>V</b>  | Hayden Canyon Charter School, Hayden                               |
| <b>G</b> | Doral Academy, Meridian  | <b>W</b>  | Idaho Arts Charter School, Nampa                                   |
| <b>H</b> | Elevate Academy, Caldwell  | <b>X</b>  | Island Park Elementary, Island Park                                |
| <b>I</b> | Elevate Academy, East Idaho  | <b>Y</b>  | MOSAICS Public School, Caldwell                                    |
| <b>J</b> | Elevate Academy Nampa, Nampa<br><i>(Jewels Carpenter &amp; Phil Diplock Fellowship)</i>    | <b>Z</b>  | North Idaho STEM Charter Academy, Rathdrum                         |
| <b>K</b> | Elevate Academy North, North Idaho<br><i>(Marita Diffenbaugh Fellowship)</i>               | <b>A1</b> | Pathways in Education, Nampa                                       |
| <b>L</b> | Fernwaters Charter School, Salmon  | <b>B1</b> | Pinecrest Academy, Twin Falls                                      |
| <b>M</b> | Forge International School, Middleton  | <b>C1</b> | RISE Charter School, Kimberly<br><i>(Kimberly School District)</i> |
| <b>N</b> | Future Public School, Garden City  | <b>D1</b> | Sage International School, Boise                                   |
| <b>O</b> | Gem Prep: Nampa, Nampa   | <b>E1</b> | St. Ignatius Catholic School, Meridian                             |
| <b>P</b> | Gem Prep: Meridian, Meridian   | <b>F1</b> | Treasure Valley Classical Academy, Fruitland                       |
|          |  | <b>G1</b> | Treasure Valley Leadership Academy, Nampa                          |
|          |  | <b>H1</b> | Upper Carmen Charter School, Upper Carmen                          |
|          |  | <b>I1</b> | 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.







**BLUUM**  
LET LEARNING GROW



## 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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# INTRODUCTION

**BELOW:** Students at Forge International School in Middleton, ID dance to celebrate World Kindness Day.

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.*





# SCHOOL OPTIONS

## 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.



NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

116



# 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.



Charter schools are open to all students. If more students enroll than they have space for, students are randomly chosen via the “**lottery**”\* process.



Charter schools are typically founded by parents and/or educators.



Like district schools, they are governed by a school board, but unlike district schools, charter school boards are appointed, not elected.



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

OVERSEEN 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

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.



*Magnet schools don't have the same curriculum as their traditional district counterparts, offering instead a specific, focused school experience.*

# 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



## CAREER TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

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.

**BELOW:** A student at St. Ignatius Catholic School works through a lesson with her teacher.



*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.

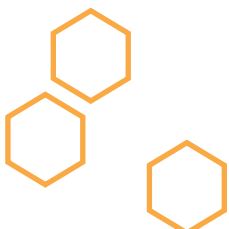
Each state has its own requirements and regulations for homeschooling. In Idaho, homeschooled students aren't required to learn using a standardized curriculum or take state assessments.

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/](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 & BLENDED LEARNING

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.

**BELOW:** A student at Gem Prep works with his teacher to master the material.



*Strong parental involvement is required for online-only learning environments.*

# 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

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.

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

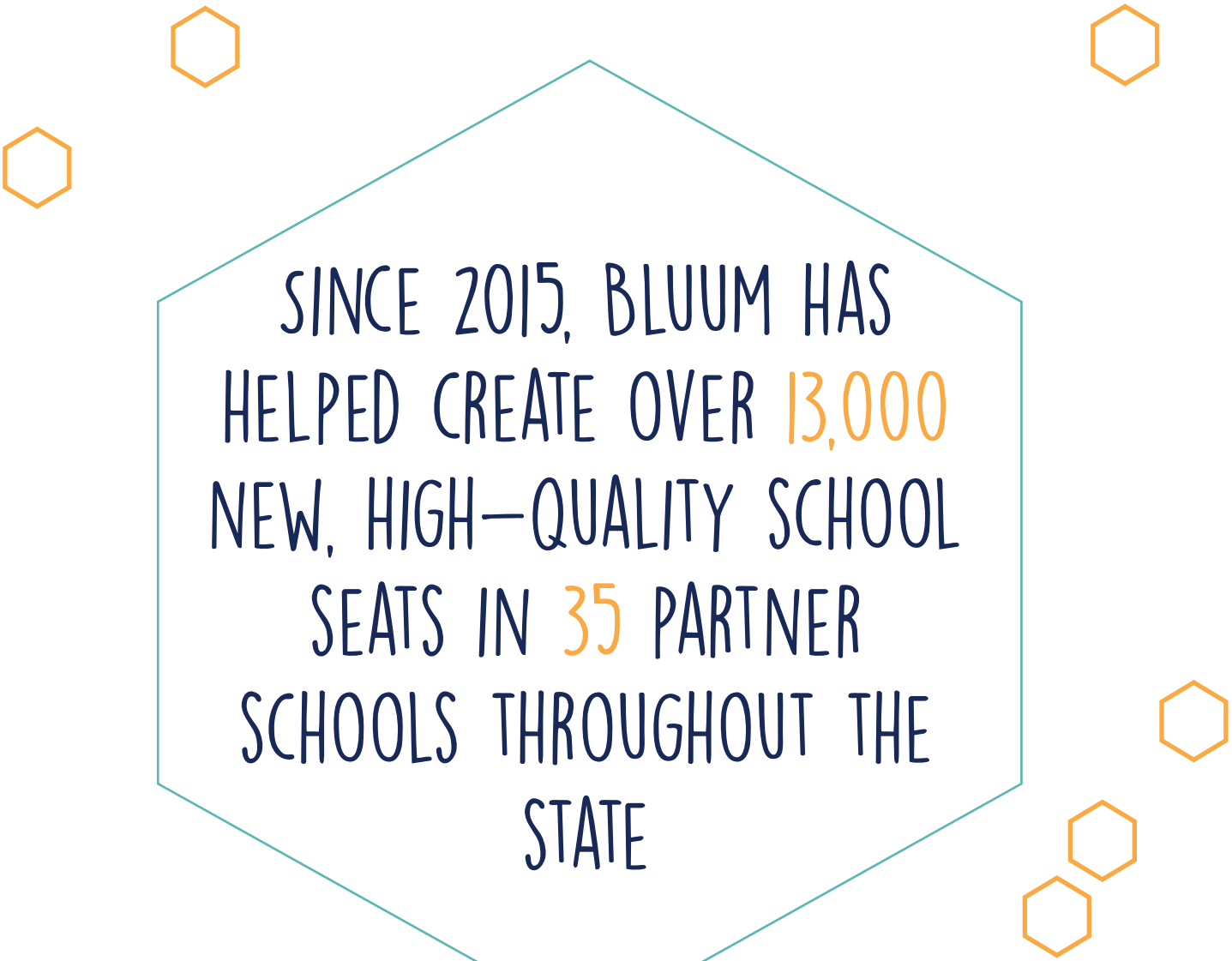


*Parents can choose to mix various educational models for their children.*



# THINGS TO CONSIDER

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.



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.





# OTHER PHRASES TO KNOW

**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.

**STEAM:** Short for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math education.

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





## NOTES:

[illegible]





### 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.



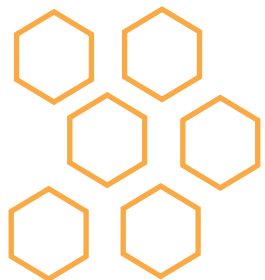
<https://www.idahoednews.org/idaho-education-data/>

Visit for Ed Trends and other useful education data.

**BLUUM.ORG**

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