



**District Strategic Planning Audit
Preston, Idaho
October 2014**

Preston School District

This report presents findings from an outside educational leader’s visit to Preston School District October 6 and 7th. In addition, data analysis and phone conversations with the Board Chair and Superintendent occurred prior to and after the visit. The report describes “bright spots” either observed and/or articulated by trustees, administrators, faculty, parents, and students. It also suggests “next steps” for addressing challenges facing the school. The report reflects the limitations of a few days of study by staff member Dr. Heather Williams, to comprehend the many efforts under way to improve the academic preparation of students in the Preston School District.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The faculty, administration, Board of Trustees, and greater school community of Preston School District (PSD) have a sincere focus on doing “what is best for kids” in their community. On behalf of the Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies at Boise State University, I would like to extend our gratitude to the educators and staff of Preston School District who shared their voices for inclusion in this report. Their commitment to the children of Preston was clearly evident in their cooperation during the interview process.

The primary purpose of the “audit” was to understand the degree current instructional strategies and systems are effective in promoting student achievement and successful schools. The superintendent and Board of Trustees wanted to engage key district staff in the process of reviewing and assessing the school system’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as programs and practices in order to inform a strategic action plan for future success.

We are grateful to the Preston School Board for its dedication to the children of the district. We are thankful to the Joel Wilson, Superintendent, for his commitment to children and his cooperation in the study. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge the district office staff for their efforts in gathering documentation, scheduling interviews and school visits.

School districts can excel and provide equity in education for all students when the school community becomes a unified force dedicated to high academic achievement. It is our firm belief that the school district is strategically poised for a change that will lay the foundation for increased student achievement and overall district success for many years to come.

While PSD is already a good school district, more can be done to improve student achievement, provide all students with a clear vision for college and career success, and make Preston School District a “superior school district.” **The overriding challenge is for PSD to advance academic achievement of *all* students, as measured on state assessments and national college readiness exams, and increase cohesiveness as a district in creating the best graduate of Preston school district.** The district needs to align their work K-12—Boardroom to classroom, in order to provide the best education for their students.

BACKGROUND

Preston School District is located in city of Preston which is the county seat of Franklin County, Idaho, United States. The population was 5,204 at the 2010 census. The Preston community lies about eight miles from the Utah border, north of the city of Logan, Utah. In an early narrative account of the History of Idaho written by Hiram French (1914), it was noted that the early settlers of Preston recognized the importance of education and provided for a school even before they built their house of worship. Preston School District became an independent school district in the early 1900's and had about one thousand students in 1914, as well as a strong desire to build school facilities for future generations. This is important to note because that "pioneer spirit" and eye to future generations is evident in Preston circa 2014. Today, PSD serves a student population of 2553 in grades preschool through 12. Eighty-eight percent of the student body is Caucasian, 8 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Native American, and 2 percent made up of other races or more than one race. Sixty-two percent of the students have been identified as being economically disadvantaged, with about 9 percent identified to receive special education services and two percent identified as English Language Learners (ELL).

The faculty and staff of around 315 serve a student body that is 53 percent male and 47 percent female. About forty percent of the staff lives in Utah and commutes to the school district for work. PSD operates on a semester schedule with seven classes per day at the secondary level. The school district operates four schools on a four day week: Pioneer Elementary (K-2); Oakwood Elementary (3-5); Preston Junior High (6-8); Preston High School (9-12); and Franklin County High School (9-12 alternative school).

BRIGHT SPOTS

Preston School District has a strong culture of caring among staff, students, and parents/patrons. Teachers, administration, and staff are dedicated to the students and have a high degree of willingness to achieve positive results for kids.

The interviewer noted that the school's culture was a comfortable one, full of school pride, where students and staff are willing to help each other and take care of one another. All students interviewed talked about the culture of care among students and teachers. Students feel cared for and respected as individuals. Further, the interviewer observed students during passing time and lunch and it was evident students care about their schools, facilities, and community. Students stopped to pick up trash, were polite in the hallways, had good manners, and were helpful to each other and adults. Interviews with parents, trustees, administrators, and teachers commented about the "values of the community", the "good kids", and "good families" as being reasons that they liked living in Preston, taught in Preston, or sent their children to Preston schools. Parents and the greater school community value their children and the educational process, and only want the best for their students. Parents are willing to volunteer and be involved in whatever it takes to provide their students a "good education."

Student, parent, teacher, trustee, and administrative interviews all were in agreement that there is a very strong commitment of faculty and staff to assure that all students succeed. PSD offers students a variety of extra help opportunities. Students interviewed stated that they could easily get help before school or after school. One student stated that teachers have stayed late and persisted to help her understand a difficult concept. PSD established the Franklin County High School for at-risk students (9-12). The program provides a small learning community for approximately 40 students, who are grouped in the same classes for English, math, and science. The school has a core of passionate

teachers and their own administrator. The model creates a focused environment to assist students in graduating from high school. Franklin County High School is in a new building this year, which was a point of pride in many of the interviews. The school is seen as a positive program and fulfills a need in the community. In the past sixteen years, the alternative school has graduated 458 students that otherwise may not have successfully graduated from Preston school district. The district has a strong commitment to continue to see the program thrive and meet the needs of students.

PSD has strong unified leadership from the school board level and support from stakeholders in the community.

Support begins with district leadership. The district has worked diligently throughout the recession to maintain programs and facilities, while keeping a low per pupil expenditure. Administrators in the district took on multiple roles and responsibilities during the downturn in educational funding in order to keep cuts away from the classroom. There is a desire to continue to provide facilities and staff to maintain reasonable class sizes, leadership at the board and district level recognize that class sizes are possibly becoming too large at the elementary and intermediate grades.

The Preston School District Board of Trustees understands their role is governance, not management, and their responsibility is to pinpoint the “delicate balance of finding common ground between tax payers, parents, students, and staff.” The Board, through and with its administration, is working to find common ground and a unifying vision for the district as it moves forward. The district is currently seeking ways to improve the educational process for all students by strategic planning and exploring ways to better meet the needs of students. The strategic planning process is well underway with a group of varied stakeholders. The Board functions as board and not as five individuals with agendas. All trustees were individually interviewed, and each made comments on feeling they have healthy debates and deliberations, they don’t always see eye to eye on issues, but are always able to support the majority vote without resentment or dysfunction.

PSD has a history of good academic achievement with all schools scoring either a 3 or 4 on Idaho’s 5 star rating system. The Five-Star Rating System, which is Idaho’s accountability metric, is intended to “measure and recognize the academic performance in Idaho’s schools.” K-8 schools are measured based on academic growth, academic proficiency (on the ISAT) and participation in state tests. Schools that include a grade 12 are measured based on growth, proficiency and participation as well, but also on postsecondary and career readiness, which is measured through “a school’s graduation rate, the number of students enrolled in and successfully completing advanced courses, and student scores on college entrance exams.” Four-Star and Five-Star schools are considered top performers, and Three-star schools are recognized for doing a good job, but also are required to develop an improvement plan. One- and Two-Star Schools are schools where the State Department of Education provides resources to develop research-based improvement plans, along with the support schools need to meet plan goals.

PSD has the proven ability to operate efficiently on minimal tax dollars. For the last five years, the district on average has spent about \$4500 per student, otherwise known as per-pupil-expenditure. Per-Pupil Expenditure in Idaho is taken from the “General Fund Expenditures per Full-Term A.D.A” field in the “Statewide Expenditure per ADA” worksheet within the Complete Financial Summaries Report located on the State’s website at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/statistics/>. General Fund Expenditures represent spending by districts on an annual operating basis, **excluding costs associated with the construction of buildings.** ADA, or Average Daily Attendance, is the “aggregate number of days enrolled students are present, divided by the number of days of school” (I.C. 33-1001). This per pupil expenditure incorporates purchases facilitated by the federal, local and state resources that comprise the

General M&O Fund.

The majority of the school district's revenue comes from the state level. This state funding is distributed to public schools according to statute (Title 33, Chapter 10, Idaho Code) and appropriation intent language (special distributions). The amount that a district receives from the state is based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA), which is calculated from public school data submitted to the State Department of Education on a monthly basis. Two ADA calculations are used to inform funding. The first is from the first day of school through the first Friday in November, and the second is calculated based on the 28 weeks of the school year with the highest attendance level. For both of these measurements, attendance is defined in State Board of Education rules as a minimum of 2.5 hours for kindergarten and 4 hours for grades 1-12. ADA is then converted to Support Units, per §33-1002 (6), Idaho Code. Additionally, the dollar value of a support unit is determined by the grades served by a particular district, and by the experience and education levels of the organization's staff.

The district has a fund balance that is about seventeen percent of revenue. The fund balance has been reduced the last few years to address decreased state funding while maintaining programs for students. In addition, the school moved to a four-day week in 2010.

The Achievement Gaps

PSD will need to address the academic performance of certain student groups: specifically economically disadvantaged, Hispanic and male students. The following charts are based on the spring 2013 ISAT data, the most recent achievement data available for review. The charts reflect the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the ISAT in reading and math for grades 10, 6, and 3.

Grade 10

Reading	This District
All Students	82%
Female	83%
Male	82%
African American	n/a
Asian	n/a
Hispanic	81%
Multiracial	n/a
American Indian	n/a
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n/a
White	83%
Economically disadvantaged	76%
Special education	29%

Math	This District
All Students	61%
Female	60%
Male	61%
African American	n/a
Asian	n/a
Hispanic	25%
Multiracial	n/a
American Indian	n/a
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n/a
White	66%
Economically disadvantaged	55%
Special education	0%

Source: ID SDE, 2012-2013

Grade 6

Reading	This District
All Students	84%
Female	93%
Male	77%
African American	n/a
Asian	n/a
Hispanic	80%
Multiracial	n/a
American Indian	n/a
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n/a
White	86%
Economically disadvantaged	81%
Special education	40%

Math	This District
All Students	70%
Female	76%
Male	66%
African American	n/a
Asian	n/a
Hispanic	47%
Multiracial	n/a
American Indian	n/a
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n/a
White	74%
Economically disadvantaged	62%
Special education	35%

Source: ID SDE, 2012-2013

Scale: % at or above proficient
Grade 3

Reading	This District
All Students	86%
Female	92%
Male	82%
African American	n/a
Asian	n/a
Hispanic	71%
Multiracial	n/a
American Indian	n/a
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n/a
White	88%
Economically disadvantaged	83%
Special education	45%

Math	This District
All Students	89%
Female	92%
Male	87%
African American	n/a
Asian	n/a
Hispanic	94%
Multiracial	n/a
American Indian	n/a
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n/a
White	89%
Economically disadvantaged	86%
Special education	50%

Source: ID SDE, 2012-2013

CHALLENGES, NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Preston School District is a good school system that can become even better as it addresses the needs of students and staff. The recommendations in this report will hopefully help the district stretch students and staff to take the district to a new level.

The overriding challenge to advance academic achievement of *all* students, as measured on state assessments and national college readiness exams, and increase cohesiveness as a district in creating the best graduate of Preston school district. The district needs to align their work K-12—Boardroom to classroom, in order to provide the best education for their students. The district’s current organizational structure for teaching and learning lacks clear lines of reporting and accountability which results in duplication of effort, or lack of evidence of effort. There is little evidence that indicates instructional leadership is being developed across the district at all levels. There is no evidence of a clear vision and a supporting plan for instruction in the district. The result is an ad hoc approach with great variation across schools. There is little evidence of providing tiered support for lower performing to higher performing schools. There is very little evidence of system-wide leadership development and capacity- building to meet the needs of students and schools. There is little evidence of coherence between the academic and operations sides of the district, which is critical to supporting the needs of schools and students.

Almost all students can and will make the effort to learn grade level and course standards if adults in the school create the right conditions. Almost all teachers can and will make the effort to align their instruction to course standards and assessments, if the system creates the right conditions. Students and staff who have a common goal and see meaning and purpose in their work are more motivated.

Everyone should be involved in continuously improving teaching and learning. Does the district have a functional mission to prepare all students for success in their pursuit of postsecondary studies and work? College readiness does start in preschool. Do the practices of the leadership and faculty reflect the beliefs that can drive the changes in district, school, and classroom practices that will cause students to make greater effort to achieve college-and-career readiness standards?

- How do the district, building, and teacher leaders support the vision for continuous improvement in Preston School District?
- Do teachers and principals have the support of the system leaders?
- How do system leaders involve the faculty, parents, and the business community in setting and achieving improvement goals?
- What policies for professional development for principals to enhance their instructional leadership skills and create positive teaching conditions? New teachers?
- What procedures are there for induction and support of new principals? New teachers?

Based on over thirty interviews with students, staff, trustees, parents, and administrators there is not a functional mission for the school district at this time. Most interviewees agreed that buildings, departments, or individual teachers had goals or a vision for their work—but the district as a whole did not have comprehensive vision for how their work together creates a successful Preston graduate. Many commented that “the work” feels disconnected and disjointed with “lots of holes” K-12. An example that was given numerous times was the math curriculum. Adoption of math materials that align with the new Idaho standards were purchased for Pioneer and for some grade levels at the junior high, but Oakwood was skipped in the process. Further, there is much debate and conjecture of the alignment the math curriculum for grades 6-12.

There are no common assessments that could be identified by interviewees, either for grade levels or courses. It seemed that to most in the district, K-12 alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment was the number one need at this time. There is little evidence that the curriculum is implemented with fidelity across all grade levels and content areas in all schools. There is little evidence that literacy and math goals exist (K-12), aligned to the district vision and student achievement data.

Poorly defined roles and responsibilities, accompanied by the practice of site-based autonomy, prevents the fidelity of curriculum implementation across the district. There is no evidence of a comprehensive aggressive plan to address achievement and opportunity gaps. There is no evidence of a system-wide intervention program for reading and math. There does not appear to be a common language or approach regarding instructional strategies and interventions throughout the district. Several areas of instructional assessments need attention: development of common, formative assessments; dedicated collaborative planning time for the analysis of student achievement data; results-orientation when planning instruction; and professional development in the use of assessments to drive instruction. There should be implementation of a multi-phase district action plan to improve the district's curricular alignment, instruction, and assessment system. Professional development should be constructed and delivered to district staff that includes the utilization of school-based data teams. Finally, protocols should be developed and implemented for the effective monitoring of district, school and classroom instructional data.

Recommended Actions:

As a district, agree on the desired attributes of a Preston graduate – what are the knowledge, skills, and dispositions you want for all students who leave your system as a successful graduate? A Preston graduate starts in your system in kindergarten; based on current resources, align what role each building has in creating a Preston graduate.

Leadership should conduct a thorough review of the current state of the curriculum in order to determine its quality and full alignment with state standards and assessments. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all staff within the district and ensure appropriate collaboration between the departments/ grade levels and between schools. Develop classroom walk-through protocols for district-wide administrators (Superintendent, Federal Programs Director, Special Education Director, etc), principals, and instructional coaches/teacher leaders to systematically monitor and report on the effective implementation of the curriculum and the quality of instruction in the district. The district should implement a comprehensive curriculum plan based on district goals and student achievement data, aligned to a comprehensive monitoring system. The plan should define clear and targeted academic objectives by grade and subject area.

A specific set of research-based instructional strategies/best practices should be identified for the district as a foundation for teachers to use. These strategies should be appropriately embedded into the curriculum documents and should be utilized as a key component of the district's professional development plan. The strategies should be based on common language and a common understanding related to teaching and learning that is valued, respected, and non-negotiable. Identify and implement a rigorous and consistent reading and math intervention program for schools aligned to a robust assessment system.

The district's organizational chart needs review to enhance and improve the lines of communication, accountability and responsibility. The district should develop a vision aligned to district priorities and characterized by clear accountability at all levels for the effective implementation and monitoring of the curriculum, instruction, assessment and the overall improvement in student achievement. The district

must establish defined roles and responsibilities for administrators. What is the priority—academics or operations? Every effort should be made to eliminate the confusion over who ultimately makes decisions and how those decisions get made (re: Is the Board running their agenda? Is the Superintendent making recommendations? Does the district operate by “let a 1000 flowers bloom” mentality and principals are left to thrive or wither on their own?) Build a tiered level of support for low to high performing schools, and collaborative structures between buildings and between the districts.

Build on the work of joint department meetings between the middle school and high schools. Build on the bright spot of the functional building leadership team and grade level/department teams at Preston Junior High. Establish grade level/department teams to **work on the work—together**. Work with the curriculum leadership teams (buildings and district wide) to create vertical teams of teachers of the same subjects to review their curriculum and assessments so they know what is taught at each grade level. Ongoing work to align the curriculum to readiness indicators is a good start. Establish a schedule of ongoing meetings to work on the curriculum and assessment, participate in joint professional development and monitor results of the transition initiative. Determine what students should know and be able to do to meet standards by the end of each grade. Have all teachers who teach in the same academic area, or grade level at the elementary, work together to reach agreement on essential state/national readiness standards necessary to prepare students for challenging work at the next grade level. Work with middle schools to communicate to students the importance of doing well in high school. Begin talking with sixth and seventh-graders (and their parents) about what it means to be ready for high school college-preparatory courses, and what they need to do to be able to take advantage of concurrent enrollment classes as 11th and 12th graders.

An instructional leader must work with teachers to implement new strategies that actively engage all students in learning new material. School leaders must make quality instruction a focus throughout the school. Teachers must accept responsibility for making the necessary curricular changes in their classrooms. Have each department or grade level team develop a specific plan to improve instruction. Use department and grade level team meetings to provide follow-up for professional development; opportunities for teachers to look at assignments, assessments and student work to see if they meet standards; and help each other share best practices, strategies, and manage the change process.

Expect teachers to observe other staff members. Expert instruction takes place in every school. When teachers observe other teachers, they increase the likelihood that quality instruction will spread in the building. Establish a process for documenting and sharing best practices. Have instructional leaders and the principal conduct daily walk-through observations (focus walks) and note examples of quality instruction. Spend five to 10 minutes in each classroom and highlight practices observed. Leave comments with the teacher and move to the next classroom. Tabulate strategies observed over the course of a week or a month to provide feedback to the faculty.

Provide additional opportunities for professional development on instructional practices. Make instruction the focus of faculty meetings. Find ways to recognize teachers for outstanding instruction, for example have an excellence-in-teaching item on the agenda for each faculty and department. Continue to ask teachers to model outstanding practices. Expect staff members to spend at least four hours a month in a study group that focuses on a teaching strategy.

The second challenge is to clearly establish the expectation that all students be scholars. Expand transition programs from middle school to high school and high school to post-secondary opportunities to improve Go-on rates and student success in life after Preston School District. The district needs to work with the principals and teachers to find ways to offer more concurrent enrollment

and/or make the senior year count. Is there a way to find time or resources to get more teachers certified to teach concurrent classes? Is there someone to promote the concurrent offerings you already have? It should be a priority to put in place a system of guidance so students and parents know what is available. **PSD leaders should set goals to increase the percentage of students participating in concurrent courses by 10 to 15 percent annually.** In addition to increasing the overall percentage of students participating, PHS leaders also need to review enrollment data to determine that upper-level courses serve all groups. Building leaders need to investigate procedures and strategies to recruit underrepresented student groups into these upper-level courses until course enrollment matches the overall demographics of the school.

Currently, students report that it is difficult to connect their academic requirements with a future career or field of study. It seems seniors are taking courses to fill up their schedule without thought to how elective courses could help jump-start their postsecondary work. By implementing a structure that promotes academic rigor and the “connection” of academics and career plans, PHS leaders can create relevant learning experiences, while helping students jump-start their postsecondary work while yet in high school.

Possible idea: Set a goal that all 2018 graduates will complete either an academic or a career concentration beyond the core or both. Research shows that students who complete a rigorous academic core and either an academic or a career concentration have higher reading, mathematics and science achievement than students who do not complete such a program. PSD can ease the concerns of parents by providing a clear plan of how students are preparing for life after high school. *Some suggested concentrations may include:*

- **Mathematics/science concentration** consists of a minimum of four college-prep mathematics credits and four college-prep science credits, including at least one course for concurrent post-secondary level in mathematics and science.
- **Humanities concentration** consists of four credits each in pre-AP English and social studies, including at least one course at the AP, and four credits in a foreign language, fine arts, journalism, debate or additional advanced-level courses in literature, history, economics, psychology or other humanities areas.
- **Career/technical concentration** consists of four sequential courses in a chosen field. A **career/technical concentration** begins with a career pathways exploration course and has at least three credits in a planned sequence of quality career/technical courses in a broad field of study. At least two of the courses should be equal in content and standards to courses offered at one or more area community colleges and lead to an employer-recognized credential, associate degree or certification. Preston school district has many professional technical programs; build on the interest and success of these programs.

By developing a system of academic and career concentrations, PSD can provide a comprehensive sequence of courses including school-based and work-based learning experiences. Create a booklet of information around Career Clusters or College Majors for students and parents to see how courses and experiences in Preston relate to a future career. Next, align courses for grades 11 and 12 to courses at area colleges, including common course syllabi, end-of-course exams and standards. If high school teachers meet standards for teaching at the college and students meet the academic placement requirements to enter English and mathematics courses for college credit, work out a system where students earn college credit at PSD.

The Preston School District’s Go On Rate is 34%, which is twenty percentage points lower than the state average. There is speculation inside the district that the data is incorrect, or the district is statistically penalized for students that serve missions for their church prior to enrolling in college. This may be true, it may not be true...during interviews no one had looked at the actual Clearinghouse data to determine if in fact it was correct, or incorrect. The national Go On rate is 62%, and Idaho as a state falls below this average coming in at 54%.

Go On Rate	
Preston School District	34%
State of Idaho	54
United States Average	62

District Go-On Rates are from the National Student Clearinghouse and the Idaho Office of the State Board of Education. These rates are for those graduating from high school in the class of 2012. These numbers count only seniors who graduate from high school (not all seniors). This data takes into account if they have enrolled in postsecondary within 16 months of high school graduation. Their methodology notes, which can be found along with the aggregate data for Idaho here, read as follows:

The Office of State Board of Education (OSBE) receives student enrollment and graduation numbers from two sources: Idaho public postsecondary institutions and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Idaho public postsecondary institutions submit data directly to OSBE while the NSC reports on enrollment and graduation records from participating schools throughout the country. Students who have opted for private records are not included in this report.

The National Student Clearinghouse includes data from more than 3,300 colleges and universities, enrolling over 96% of all students in public and private U.S. institutions. NSC Degree Verification has over 80% of U.S. four year degrees in its data set.

Students may have been enrolled in multiple postsecondary institutions. However, only one institution is represented for that student. The institution represented is based on the following criteria (in order):

- *First institution attended*
- *If simultaneously enrolled, then number of terms attended at the institution determines selection*
- *If same number of terms, enrollment level (full-time, part-time, less than part-time)*
- *Highest institution ID number*

The college-going rate for a district is the percentage of that district's graduates that go on to post-secondary education. This number includes two-year, four-year and less than two-year programs both in-state and outside of Idaho. To learn more about the National Student Clearinghouse and its methods for collecting this information, go to their website at www.studentclearinghouse.org

Grade 12 to post- secondary transition:

I learned in interviews that many seniors do not take a full schedule of classes. Interviewed students stated that they would like to see more dual credit opportunities and alignment of courses with the local community colleges and universities. Do teachers meet annually with employers and post-secondary faculty to discuss expectations? Content knowledge and performance standards for graduating students? If teachers are not meeting with postsecondary instructors to learn what they expect and where they see

Preston and other schools' graduates struggling, PSD will continue to produce graduates who are not fully prepared for further learning.

Recommended Actions:

Action 1: Strengthen requirements in grade 12. Encourage seniors (and their parents) to take advantage of dual credit courses. The district and the school need to look at expanding dual-credit courses offered in conjunction with community colleges and universities. Use ACT and SAT materials to strengthen English and mathematics courses. Communicate to students and parents the Idaho Advanced Opportunities (see appendix A), to encourage students to take a more rigorous program of study. Encourage career/ technical teachers to meet with technical instructors at two-year postsecondary institutions to create seamless career pathways and to develop articulation agreements so that students may earn college credits. **Relentlessly market the opportunities available within the Preston School District to students and parents.**

Action 2: Work regularly with the colleges that enroll the highest percentage of PSD students to find out what they expect students to know and be able to do, particularly in reading, English/language arts and mathematics. Revise the curricula and requirements, particularly during the senior year. The counselor named to lead the senior year effort should be responsible for maintaining information on students' status, goal (college, military, work), SAT, ACT and state scores.

Action 3: Communicate and cultivate all the different ways in which students can get college credit while in high school (i.e., articulation agreements, joint enrollments, dual enrollments, and web-based courses) and make getting out this information a top priority. Evaluate college placement exams (SAT scores) from juniors and enroll those who do not pass in well-developed catch-up mathematics or English classes as a way to get more seniors ready for college without having to take remedial coursework.

Students stated that they would like more opportunities to explore careers and postsecondary options. Maintain contact throughout the year with parents through written and telephone communications. Hold an annual meeting with the student and his/her parents or guardians to discuss the student's progress and the program of study for the following year beginning in middle school.

The third challenge is to provide the system conditions for deep learning and innovation to occur. This will require that leaders focus on creating the conditions in which the necessary changes and innovations **can** take place. I observed examples of quality learning experiences, adults and children that were kind to each other, and a "high degree of willingness" on behalf of teachers to do what it takes to help students. However, students and staff appeared to be compliantly engaged in the learning process, not fully and authentically engaged in the learning process and confused about what role they played in improving the system. There was consensus that effective district wide communication (both internal and external) and necessary follow through on decisions was a systemic problem.

There was an observed lack of consistent communication at all levels; lack of time for collaboration; a lack of established structures and guidelines for collaboration; no clear plan for focused, ongoing professional development or creating a professional learning community; a school climate that does not promote strong teacher leaders, teacher leadership teams, or a consistent organized structure for planning and implementing school improvement; inconsistencies in district involvement in site based decision making; and infrequent use of data to monitor student achievement and implementation of school improvement strategies.

The school board and key administrators recognize that the district has an opportunity to challenge the status quo and make meaningful change for the district. They also realize that the district is a bit of disarray and disconnect for various reasons. There is recognition that, “We have overburdened staff and we must find a way to encourage better conditions so we can recruit and retain highly qualified, highly effective staff.” Principals took on multiple roles during the downturn in funding to help the district balance the budget, but now they are spread too thin to make meaningful change. There were also statements like, “People are afraid to step forward.”

Further, there is consensus that much needs to be done to tell the story of the district. What is going right? What opportunities do students have? Teachers? How can the district be more collaborative, both internally and externally? One interviewee said, “We have many of the same opportunities as other schools, and some better opportunities- but we stink at marketing.”

Recommended Actions:

The majority of the Board’s time should be spent on setting the “whats” of the district – vision and mission, while allowing the staff to develop and carry out the “hows” of implementation. The superintendent and administration team need to articulate the “whys” to create or maintain buy-in. I would encourage the school board to engage in training on strategic planning, and involve more voices from all aspects of the organization in developing the action plan related to these long-term goals.

Communicate the needs and progress of students to the community, and create the public will to improve achievement for all students in the district.

Engage teachers in leadership roles and get more voices into the decision making around the strategic plan. Adopt a school improvement focus team structure to implement school improvement goals and develop a seamless district improvement plan. Provide more opportunities for embedded professional development. Use the expertise that already exists in the building to help others deepen their understanding of effective research-based teaching strategies.

Examine team-planning time and adopt a structure for meetings to achieve district/school improvement goals. Adopt norms for interaction and a process that encourages acceptance, ownership and achievement. Examine and redesign team-planning time to address issues of school improvement. Adopt a year-long professional development plan aligned to the district improvement plan, encourage professional learning communities and find opportunities to use existing teachers who are using exemplary practices.

Promote the vision of education on a continuum that becomes increasingly more complex as it moves from preschool to grade 12. Identify communication gaps and adopt a process for keeping everyone informed. Develop a data use plan. Identify the types of data to collect, sources of data and responsibility for providing data to stakeholders and improvement teams.

Appendix A:

Advanced Opportunities Frequently Asked Questions from the Idaho State Department of Education
www.sde.idaho.gov

8 in 6 Program

Q. What is the goal of the 8 in 6 program?

A. To provide students with the ability and willingness to complete high school graduation requirements at an accelerated rate by taking overload and summer courses. Once state graduation requirements are satisfied, students can stay in high school and take college credits paid for by the state (under the Dual Credit for Early Completers program) and graduate with their peers.

Q. Can a student start the 8 in 6 program at any time between grades 7-12?

A. Yes. Students in grades 7 through 12 may enroll throughout the school year. The enrollment form can be found here: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/advancedOpp/docs/Form.pdf>.

Q. How do districts and public charters identify student in the 8 in 6 program?

A. Once the enrollment form is submitted, students in 8 in 6 are identified in the "student demographic" file in the State Department of Education (SDE) longitudinal data system called the Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE). 8 in 6 course details are reflected in the "course enrollment" file in ISEE.

Q. Does participating in the 8 in 6 program prohibit a student from participating in the dual credit for early completers program?

A. No, the 8 in 6 Program dovetails with the Dual Credit for Early Completers Program. Once students satisfy Idaho state high school graduation requirements (except the senior project and any other course that the state board of education requires to be completed during the final year of high school), participation in the Dual Credit for Early Completers Program is encouraged.

Q. How does the money work in this program?

A. Put simply, the district / public charter school pays for the cost of the course upon student enrollment in the course, provides the requisite data through ISEE, the SDE reviews the data and reimburses the district within 125 days of receiving the data. Payments are made to districts / public charter schools in February for summer / fall courses and June for spring courses.

Q. Are dual credit, advanced placement and concurrent enrollment courses eligible under this program?

A. Changes to the 8 in 6 program occurred during the 2014 legislative session, which involve expanding eligible courses to include dual credit, advanced placement and concurrent enrollment courses.

Q. Does the 8 in 6 program cover the cost of postsecondary credit attainment?

A. 8 in 6 pays for the cost of eligible courses (up to \$225 per course) associated with high school graduation requirements. 8 in 6 reimbursements cannot cover additional costs associated with postsecondary credit attainment or transcription fees. However, if a course satisfies both a high school graduation requirement and is college credit bearing; and no additional fees are charged for the college credits or transcription fees, the SDE will reimburse the course cost through 8 in 6. The 8 in 6 program

is intended to pay for courses related to high school graduation requirements.

Q. Is there a road map of recommended courses a student should take in the 8 in 6 program?

A. As each student's course map and academic aspirations are different, there is not a typical road map of courses predetermined for a student; each student should work with their parents and school counselor to determine their best course for future coursework.

Q. Will the state reimburse for any online course?

A. Provided the student is enrolled in the 8 in 6 program, the SDE will reimburse eligible course costs that meet the following criteria: 1.) non-sectarian in nature, 2.) taught by and Idaho Highly Qualified Teacher, 3.) a majority of instruction is delivered electronically, and 4.) is accredited by AdvancED (all Idaho public high schools are accredited by AdvancED). Visit MyIdahoCourses.org for a list of eligible online courses.

Q. Are courses offered by the Idaho digital learning academy (idla) eligible for 8 in 6 reimbursement?

A. Provided they meet the criteria for eligible courses described above, yes.

Q. If a high school course is taken by a junior high student; does the high school need to accept the credit?

A. If a student completes a required high school course offered by an accredited provider with a grade of C or higher before entering grade nine (9), then the student has met the high school content and credit area requirement for such course, which should be reflected on the student's high school transcript.

Q. Does the 10% limit apply only to 8 in 6 or does this limitation include the other advanced opportunities programs?

A. This 10% cap only applies to the 8 in 6 program. There are no caps currently for the Dual Credit for Early Completers Program, the Fast Forward program or the Mastery Advancement Program.

Q. If the 8 and 6 is limited to 10% of 7 through 12 graders by district / public charter school, is there criteria set for students that want to enter the program?

A. If a district or public charter school reaches this limit, local policy should identify criteria for participation. Such policy must include students who have successfully completed an online course and may include GPA, completion of advanced coursework or a clear 4 year learning plan. Once students are enrolled in 8 in 6 they remain in the program provided participation requirements are adhered to.

Q. Are all school district and public charter schools participating in the 8 in 6 program?

A. All districts are required to support students in all Advanced Opportunity programs, including 8 in 6.

Q. Are districts and public charter schools required to send the sde confirmation they are participating? Is there paperwork or an application that must be completed?

A. All the information the SDE requires is captured through ISEE. Students must fill out the enrollment form and submit it to the identified school contact. No additional confirmation is required.

Q. What is the definition of an overload course?

A. An overload course is defined as above and beyond the maximum credit offering at the school (the regular school day offerings). For example: if a school offers 16 credits during the school year, an overload course would be any additional course taken above the 16 credits.

Q. What are the eligibility requirements for taking 8 in 6 courses?

A. Initially, students and their parents / guardians must sign and submit the enrollment form to their school contact (typically the counselor). The student enrollment form can be found here: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/advancedOpp/docs/Form.pdf>. Students in grades 7 and 8 must take at least 12 credits to be eligible for summer courses and must take at least 12 credits and the maximum number of courses offered by the school to be eligible for overload courses. Students in grades 9 through 12 must take at least 14 credits to be eligible for summer courses and must take at least 14 credits and the maximum number of courses offered by the school to be eligible for overload courses

Dual Credit for Early Completers

Q. What is the goal of the Dual Credit For Early Completers Program?

A. The Dual Credit for Early Completers program allows students who have satisfied Idaho state graduation requirements (excluding senior project and math in the final year of high school*), to stay in high school, take college credits paid for by the state (up to \$75 per credit hour) and graduate with their peers. Students are eligible to earn up to 18 dual credits per semester or 12 dual credits per trimester.

*Idaho graduation requirements can be accessed at:

<http://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/08/0203.pdf> (IDAPA 08.02.03 104, 105, 106).

Taking dual credit can be beneficial to students because they can reduce the costs and time to earn college credit and increase the likelihood of postsecondary degree / certificate completion.

Q. How does the money work in this program?

A. Put simply, the district / public charter school pays for the cost of the course upon student enrollment in the course, provides the requisite data through ISEE, the SDE reviews the data and reimburses the district within 125 days of receiving the data. Payments are made to districts / public charter schools in February for summer / fall courses and June for spring courses.

Q. How are students identified as early completers?

A. The school district or public charter is responsible for verifying graduation requirements have been met and entering all required data into the ISEE system. ISEE is the State Department of Education's longitudinal data system.

Q. How can students prepare to maximize the potential of earning postsecondary credits in high school?

A. It is critical that students carefully plan their postsecondary goals and discuss these with their parents and school counselor, and base decisions on the 4 year learning plan. Two simple pieces of advice will prepare students for success: 1.) choose a path of study and stick to it (general university requirements are a good place to start)- taking dual credit courses unrelated to postsecondary completion requirements will result in misused time, money and effort. 2.) students should commit to doing their best work in dual credit courses- completion and grades impact both high school and college transcripts.

Planning is critical to ensure dual credit courses will count toward a college degree. Students should

take courses guaranteed to apply to their post-secondary education requirements. If the goal of taking dual credit courses is to receive a college degree faster and more cheaply, then a student should identify their desired degree, find out what courses they'll need to take, and start taking them. Taking dual credit courses that meet Idaho's General Education core are wise decisions. Courses that will only count as electives should be taken with caution or avoided until a student knows what is required and will be accepted for their chosen college major. By making informed decisions about what dual credit courses to take gives students an academic and financial edge in pursuing a college degree.

Q. How does the requirement that students must take math in their last year of high school work with the Dual Credit For Early Completers Program?

A. IDAPA rule 08.02.03.105 states that students who have completed six (6) credits of math prior to the fall of their last year of high school, including at least two (2) semesters of an Advanced Placement or dual credit calculus or higher level course, are exempt from taking math during their last year of high school. If this requirement is not satisfied than students are required to take 2 credits of math in their last year of high school. For the purposes of Dual Credit for Early Completers program eligibility, any courses the State Board of Education requires in the final year of high school are exempt from satisfying state graduation requirements (2 credits of math and senior project). Students may be considered as completing high school graduation requirements without having completed these two requirements to take advantage of the Dual Credit for Early Completers Program. However, students must complete the math and senior project to graduate from high school.

Q. Why are students being asked to collect data related to the dual credit courses they are taking?

A. Complete data are required for the State Department of Education to reimburse the cost of dual credit / professional technical credits. Postsecondary readiness includes demonstrating the ability to capture accurate information and submit it in a timely fashion. Additionally, this measure is intended to reduce the data collection burden for school counselors. The Student Data Form can be accessed here: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/advancedOpp/toolkit.htm>

Q. Can a student be enrolled in the Dual Credit For Early Completers Program if they have satisfied the idaho state high school graduation requirements?

A. Students who have satisfied all of the Idaho State High School requirements but have not yet graduated may qualify for the Dual Credit for Early Completers program. Students who are enrolled in a school district that have higher high school graduation requirements may take a course that satisfies their school district's high school graduation requirement and receive reimbursement for dual credit.

Q. Can dual credit for early completers courses be taken online?

A. Online courses are eligible for reimbursement under the Dual Credit for Early Completers program. However, students should consult with their school counselor to assure courses pursued align with postsecondary program aspirations.

Q. Will the state pay for end of course, college credit-bearing advanced placement examinations?

A. Students are eligible to take up to 12 Advanced Placement (AP) exams, six exams per semester or four per trimester or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams paid for by the state (up to \$90 per exam).

Q. What is the impact of a student enrolling in a dual credit course then failing/dropping out?

A. For purposes of the SDE reimbursement- If a student fails to earn credit for any course or examination for which the SDE has paid a reimbursement, the student must pay for, and successfully earn credit for one such course or exam prior to the SDE paying any future reimbursements. In other words, the SDE reimburses the district, but if a student drops out or fails he / she has to carry the cost and earn the credit for such a course before the state will pay any more for dual credit. For postsecondary purposes, failing one or more dual credit courses may have a negative impact on financial aid in college. Institutions receiving federal financial aid are required to have policies related to Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). How institutions of higher education calculate SAP varies within certain guidelines and are in place to monitor student progress to degree completion. Students should be prepared to demonstrate college-level work in dual credit courses.

Q. Will earning college credits in high school limit access to federal financial aid?

A. Federal student aid guidelines limit the number of courses students can take while receiving federal financial aid to 150% of the credits required for the degree. For instance, the window of federal aid for a 4 year baccalaureate program is 6 years. The time is calculated based on the actual clock hours spent in the dual credit course- an incoming college freshman who earned 3 dual credits as a junior in high school will only have those 3 credits subtracted from their 150% federal aid window. Taking dual credits that count as electives rather than credits required for a degree may impact both a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress and access to federal financial aid. More details on federal aid can be accessed at the 2013-2014 Federal Student Aid Handbook:

<http://ifap.ed.gov/ifap/byAwardYear.jsp?type=fsahandbook&awardyear=2013-2014>

Q. Will entering an Idaho public college or university with dual credits earned in high school limit access to freshman scholarships?

A. Students who earn Dual Credits in high school are NOT penalized or excluded from qualifying for first-year scholarships, and are considered eligible just like other first-year students. Students who encounter any questions about this when applying for financial aid at an Idaho public institution should talk to the financial aid director at the institution or contact Dana Kelly, Student Affairs Program Manager at the Idaho State Board of Education (dana.kelly@osbe.idaho.gov)

Eligibility for freshman scholarships is based upon first time / full time freshman status. As such, students with dual credits earned in high school maintain access to freshman scholarships. Students should investigate freshman scholarship criteria for private and out of state institutions if these are of interest. Regarding how harder courses (dual credit, AP, Honors) relate to competitive scholarships based on merit; postsecondary institutions review transcripts and are aware that these courses are more difficult and typically acknowledge this with offers of admission and scholarships.

Q. How does accruing college or technical preparation credits in high school impact the timing of degree / certification completion?

A. Earning postsecondary credits in high school will decrease the time and cost of completing a program after high school if the dual / professional technical credits align with the student's overall program requirements. Students taking credits that don't contribute to program requirements will take longer to complete. Advising (consultation with counselors) is critical to assure dual credits lead to postsecondary program completion.

Q. How does an earning college credit impact a student's high school GPA?

A. Dual credit courses result in college credit and a grade for the institution sponsoring the course and credit and a grade that will be reflected on the student's high school transcript. If class ranking is

important for students, dual credit endeavors should be approached with caution. As with any advanced opportunity, advising and planning is critical.

Q. How will AP exam results impact reimbursement from the SDE?

A. The SDE will pay for initial AP exams regardless of the outcome. However, if a student scores below a 3 the student must take a subsequent AP exam, pay for it themselves, score above a 3 to have subsequent 8 in 6 exams or courses paid for by the SDE.

Fast Forward Program

Q. What is the goal of this program?

A. The goal of the program is to increase college-going rates in Idaho. It provides a resource of \$200 for every junior, and \$400 for every senior attending Idaho public high school or Idaho public charter high school to pay for 75% of the cost of dual credit courses, advanced placement or other college-credit bearing or professional certificate examinations.

Q. How does the money work in this program?

A. Put simply, the district / public charter school pays for the cost of the course upon student enrollment in the course, provides the requisite data through ISEE, the SDE reviews the data and reimburses the district within 125 days of receiving the data

A. Payments are made to districts / public charter schools in February for summer / fall courses and June for spring courses.

Q. How does this funding relate to other resources offered for Advanced Opportunities?

A. The \$200 / \$400 is intended to be used after all other scholarships, awards or resources available are exhausted (including dual credit for early completers) except for costs associated with students attending Idaho community colleges residing outside of the county in which the community college is located.

Q. How can students prepare to maximize the potential of earning postsecondary credits in high school?

A. It is critical that students carefully plan their postsecondary goals and discuss these with their parents and school counselor, and base decisions on the 4 year learning plan. Two simple pieces of advice will prepare students for success: 1.) choose a path of study and stick to it (general university requirements are a good place to start)- taking dual credit courses unrelated to postsecondary completion requirements will result in misused time, money and effort. 2.) students should commit to doing their best work in dual credit courses- completion and grades impact both high school and college transcripts.

Planning is critical to ensure dual credit courses will count toward a college degree. Students should take courses guaranteed to apply to their post-secondary education requirements. If the goal of taking dual credit courses is to receive a college degree faster and more cheaply, then a student should identify their desired degree, find out what courses they'll need to take, and start taking them. Taking dual credit courses that meet Idaho's General Education core are wise decisions. Courses that will only count as electives should be taken with caution or avoided until a student knows what is required and will be accepted for their chosen college major. By making informed decisions about what dual credit courses to take gives students an academic and financial edge in pursuing a college degree.

Q. Why are students being asked to collect data related to the dual credit courses they are taking?

A. Complete data are required for the State Department of Education to reimburse the cost of dual credit / professional technical credits. Postsecondary readiness includes demonstrating the ability to capture accurate information and submit it in a timely fashion. Additionally, this measure is intended to reduce the data collection burden for school counselors. The Student Data Form can be accessed here: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/advancedOpp/toolkit.htm>

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Q. What is the impact of a student enrolling in a dual credit course then failing/dropping out?

A. For purposes of the SDE reimbursement- If a student fails to earn credit for any course or examination for which the SDE has paid a reimbursement, the student must pay for, and successfully earn credit for one such course or exam prior to the SDE paying any future reimbursements. In other words, the SDE reimburses the district, but if a student drops out or fails he / she has to carry the cost and earn the credit for such a course before the state will pay any more for dual credit. For postsecondary purposes, failing one or more dual credit courses may have a negative impact on financial aid in college. Institutions receiving federal financial aid are required to have policies related to Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). How institutions of higher education calculate SAP varies within certain guidelines and are in place to monitor student progress to degree completion. Students should be prepared to demonstrate college-level work in dual credit courses.

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