

WHAT WE LEARNED

Idahoans support
MORE RESOURCES
to improve schools and learning

6 **KEY** FINDINGS

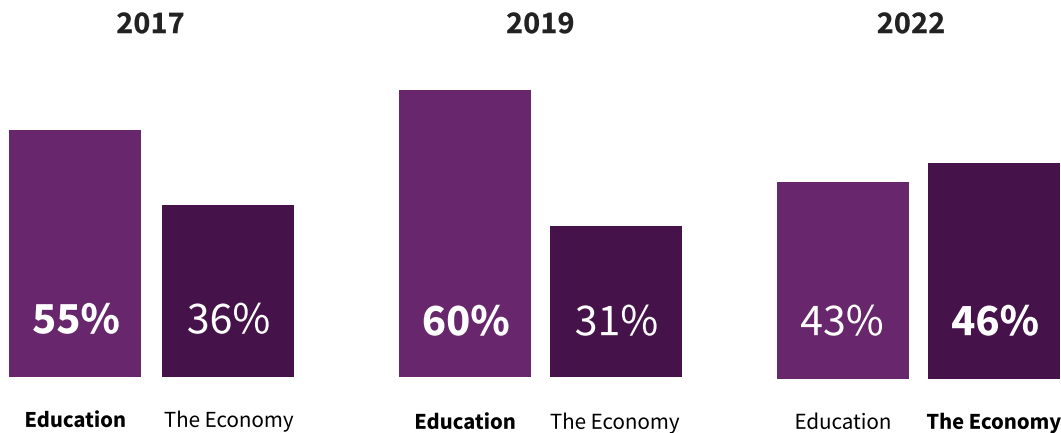
- 1 The economy takes over education as the top priority.
- 2 Idahoans want more resources to educate their youngest.
- 3 Our public schools could be better.
- 4 There's strong support for standards and accountability.
- 5 Idahoans want teens better prepared for life after high school.
- 6 Comfort with charter schools remains steady in Idaho.

1

The economy takes over education as the top priority.

Public education is still extremely important but a surge of economic worries caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic has led more Idahoans to cite the economy as the most important issue facing the state for the first time in five years.

Given a choice, most Idahoans have said education is the most important issue facing the state — until this year.



And Idahoans are quite worried about the harm that the Covid-19 pandemic has done to the state’s children on many levels: academically, socially, and emotionally. More than eight in ten (83 percent) are concerned about the pandemic’s toll on children’s mental health. 80 percent are concerned it has dealt a serious set-back to children’s social skills and development, and another 83 percent believe that too many students have lost ground academically and will struggle to catch up.



9 in 10

Idahoans believe that parents became more aware of how much they rely on schools to make their family’s day-to-day lives possible.



8 in 10

Idahoans suspect that parents have become more interested in alternatives to the regular public schools, like charter schools or homeschooling.

Since the pandemic, parents have become more aware of how much they rely on their schools to make their family’s day-to-day lives possible.

2

Idahoans want more resources to educate their youngest.

The overwhelming majority of Idahoans would support some form of state funding for all-day kindergarten, with only 27 percent in favor of leaving things as they are, where the state funds only half-day kindergarten.

What Idahoans want for youngest learners

- 58%** would provide all-day kindergarten for all families
- 15%** would provide all-day kindergarten for low-income families only
- 27%** would leave as-is

Idahoans were more evenly split when it comes to providing funding for pre-kindergarten.

- 42%** would provide pre-kindergarten for all families
- 17%** would provide pre-kindergarten for low-income families only
- 40%** would leave as-is

73%

of Idahoans support more state funding for all-day kindergarten.

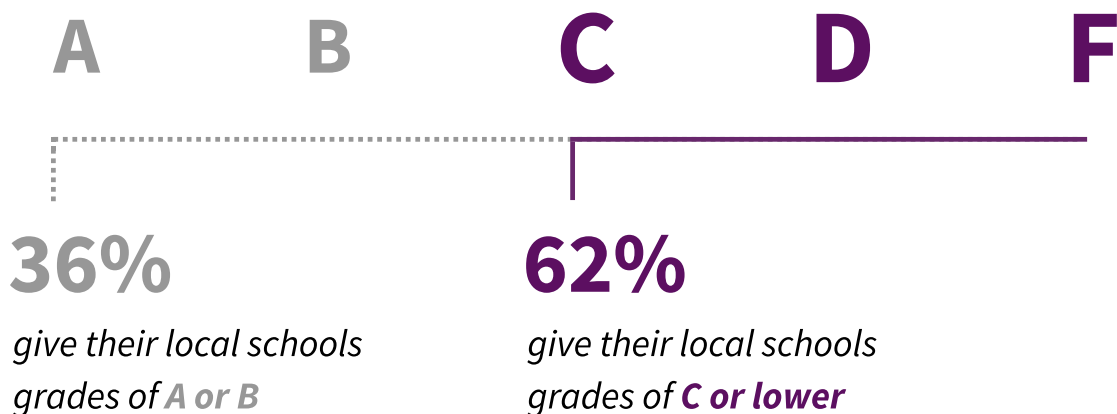
3

Our public schools could be better.

Idahoans consistently voice concerns about the public schools across the state and in their own communities. Most believe “Idaho’s public school system is OK but could be a lot better with some changes,” with 23 percent even saying “there’s so much wrong with it that a complete overhaul is necessary.” By contrast, few (9 percent) believe Idaho’s public school system is “in very good shape and needs little change.”

66% believe Idaho’s public school system is OK but could be a lot better with some changes.

Disappointment carries over to their own communities’ public schools; Idahoans continue to give their local public schools lackluster grades.



Most Idahoans would redress financial disparities across districts in their state.

Parents who live in communities with successful schools, for example, are often aware of what’s happening in other parts of Idaho and want them to succeed too.



76%

of Idahoans think it’s the state’s responsibility to enable poorer districts to compete with wealthier ones.



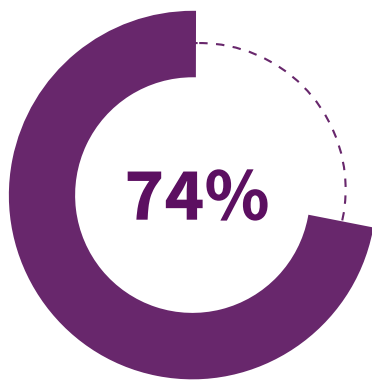
21%

think “inequalities in school funding are an unavoidable part of life”.

3 in 4
Idahoans think it’s the state’s responsibility to enable poorer districts to compete with wealthier ones.

4 There's strong support for standards and accountability.

Idahoans broadly support holding schools and students accountable for performance. Most believe it's a good idea to rate the public schools on such measures as student growth, test scores, and graduation rates.



believe it's a good idea to rate public schools.

The overwhelming support for standards and accountability remains virtually unchanged since 2019.

Idahoans want teens better prepared for life after high school.

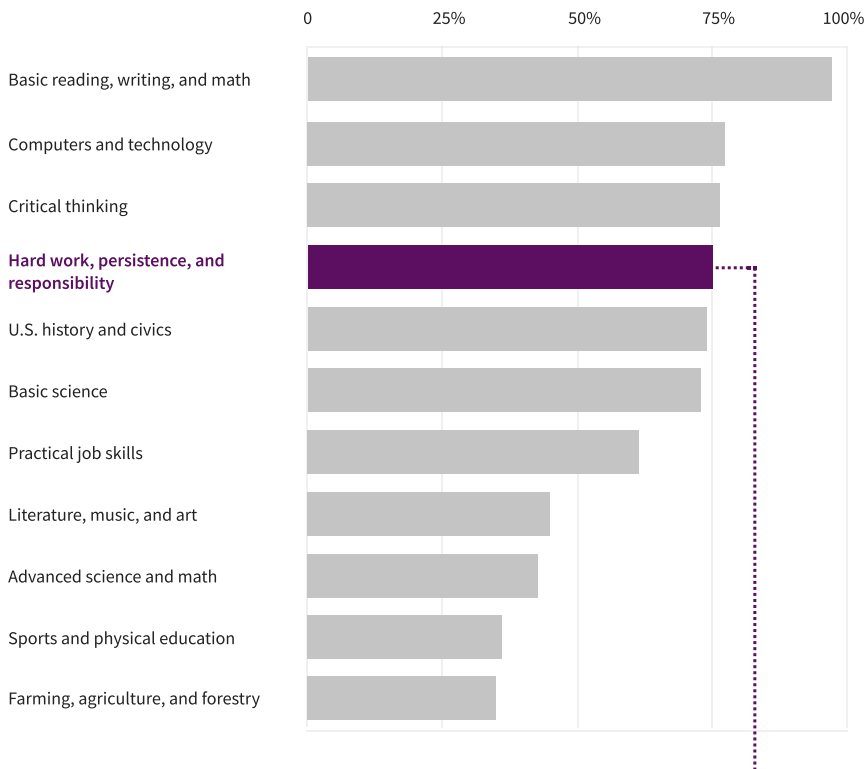
The purpose of a public education is often debated: Is the mission of the schools to prepare students for work? For college? To be well-rounded members of society? Should the schools stick to teaching academics or should they instill character too? Idahoans say yes to all of these. Their agenda for the public schools is broad. Academics are just a part of it.

Only one in four Idahoans surveyed would have the schools mostly focus on academic subjects.

96% of all adults surveyed believe it’s absolutely essential for Idaho’s public schools to teach the basics like reading, writing, and math. But teaching kids character, to work hard, to be persistent, and to get along with others also garners large majorities of support from Idahoans.

80% of Idahoans agree that a major impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has “dealt a serious set-back to children’s social skills and development.”

Idahoans selected which subjects were absolutely essential for Idaho public schools to teach



75% say it is just as important to teach the value of hard work, persistence, and responsibility.

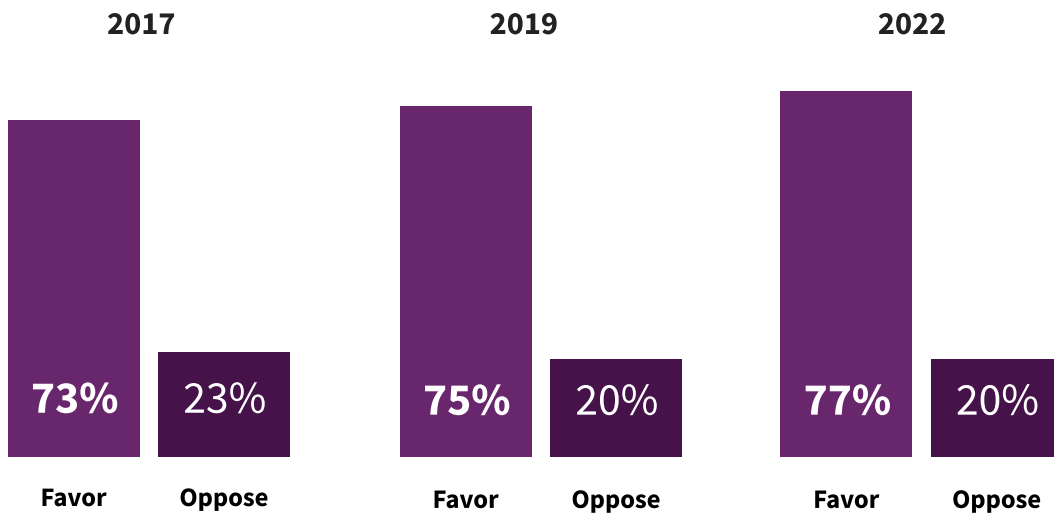
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Comfort with charter schools remains steady in Idaho.

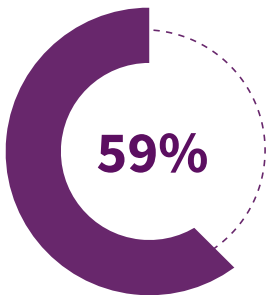
The landscape for charter schools in Idaho is quite favorable in terms of people’s attitudes and experiences. Three in four Idahoans favor charter schools when they are described as “public schools that have a lot more control over their own budget, staff and curriculum, and are free from many existing regulations.” Only 20 percent oppose them.

A closer look at respondents who feel strongly – either way – about charters shows that those who strongly favor them outnumber those who strongly oppose them by a 34% to 5% margin.

Support over time for charter schools in Idaho



When Idahoans are asked to compare the regular public schools to a charter school in their area, most say the charter schools offer a better education.



of Idahoans say charter schools offer a better education.

61%
 of parents responded that they would choose to send their children to alternatives such as private or charter schools over regular public schools if they could.