IDAHO AT A GLANCE

Rural education 2009

Revised with February 2009 district classifications

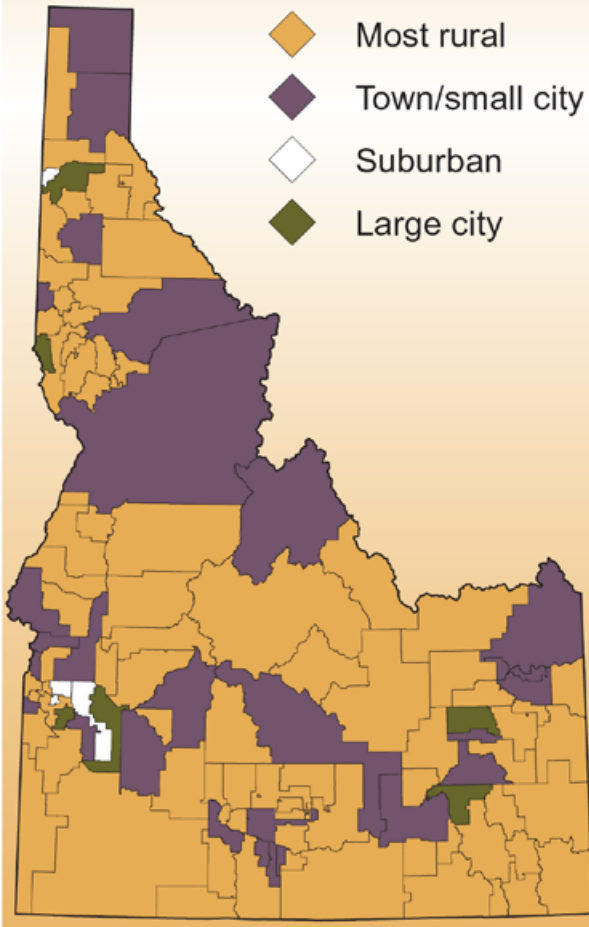
About two-thirds of Idaho's school districts are rural. Compared to other districts in Idaho, rural districts . . .

- **tend to have lower enrollments**
- **are more likely to be losing students**
- **tend to spend more per student, despite lower teacher salaries**
- **tend to have smaller class sizes**
- **are more successful at meeting No Child Left Behind targets**
- **are much more likely to be adopting four-day school weeks**

Over one-fourth of Idaho's K-12 students are rural. Compared to other students in Idaho, rural students . . .

- **score nearly the same on both state and federal standardized tests**
- **are more likely to come from low income families**
- **are just as likely to be "English as a Second Language" students**

What is Rural?



RURAL = "Most rural" districts
NON-RURAL = Town/small city, Suburban & Large city districts

This publication focuses on the state's "**most rural**" districts, which are those where the biggest urban area has less than 2,500 people.

Many districts in the **town/small city** group, those with an urban area of 2,500-49,999 people, are also very rural. Trends in these districts are similar to those in the "most rural" group.

Suburban districts have a population density of at least 500 persons per square mile and are next to an urban area with at least 50,000 people.

Large city districts have an urban area with at least 50,000 people.

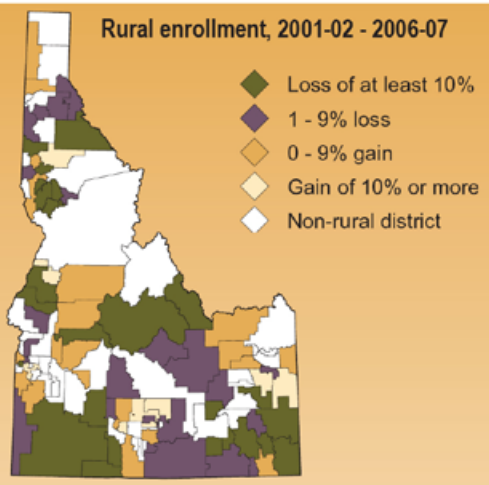
Definitions are based on 2006-07 Urban-Centric Locale Codes developed by the U.S. Census Bureau with the National Center for Education Statistics.

How a school district is classified depends on the location of the schools in the district. If 50 percent or more of the public school students attend schools that are "most rural," for example, then the district is assigned to the "most rural" category.

To view data for your district and larger maps, visit www.ag.uidaho.edu/uicsc/ruraled

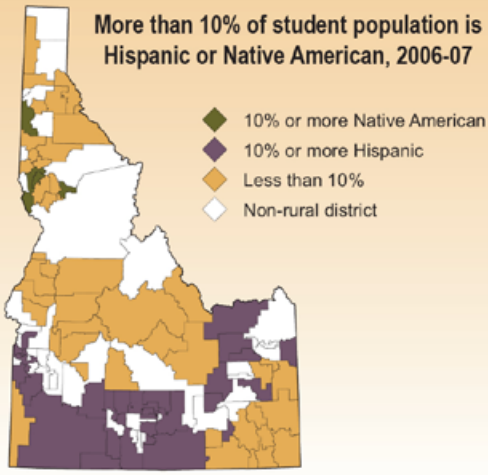
Enrollment

- Overall, rural school enrollment is increasing but growth is uneven across the state. Growing rural districts tend to be in southern and eastern Idaho. Vallivue had the highest growth rate of 59% between 2001 and 2006.
- One-third of rural school districts gained students between 2001 and 2006; one-third held steady or had modest declines; and the rest experienced declines of at least 10%.
- One-in-seven rural students is enrolled in a district that is losing a significant percentage of students.
- Non-rural school districts are much more likely to have increasing enrollments.



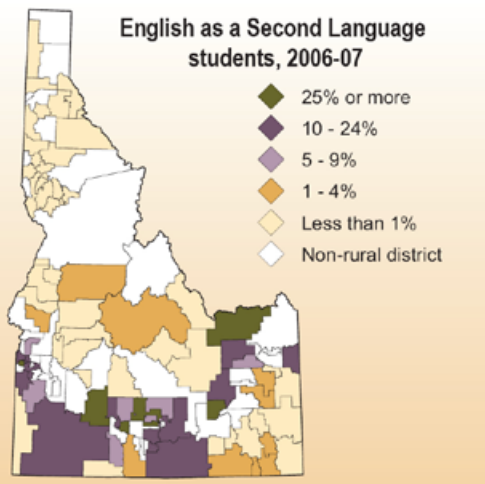
Diversity

- Hispanic students made up 16% of the rural student population in 2006.
- Rural Hispanic students are concentrated in southern Idaho, especially in south central Idaho where three-in-ten students are Hispanic. In two districts, Wilder and Three Creek, the majority of students are Hispanic.
- Four districts, all in northern Idaho, have high percentages of Native American students: Lapwai (82%), Plummer/Worley (60%), Kamiah (15%) and Culdesac (11%).



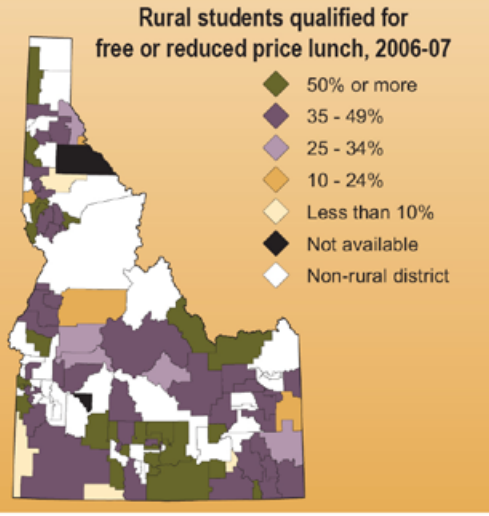
English as a Second Language (ESL)

- Eight percent of Idaho's rural students are ESL students.
- Only four states have a higher percentage of rural ESL students.
- Districts with high concentrations of ESL students are in southern Idaho, especially in agricultural communities.



Students from low income families

- Forty-four percent of rural students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, compared to 35% of non-rural students.
- Only 13 states have higher rates of eligibility among rural students. Most of the 13 are in the southern U.S.
- Children from low income families are much more likely to read below grade level on the Idaho Reading Indicator.

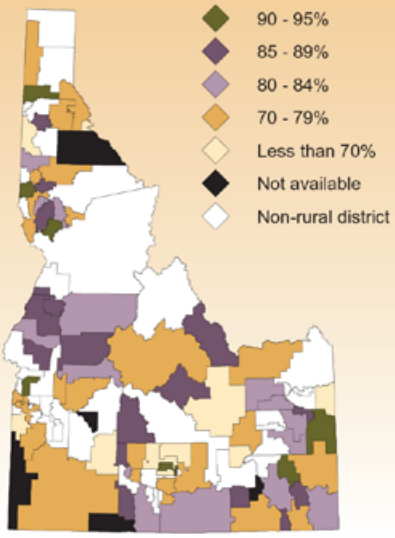


Rural students have similar test scores as other students

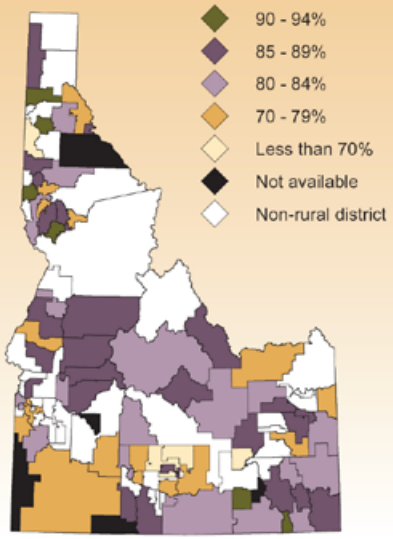
Idaho students take the **Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)** in reading, language usage, math, and science.

- More than 80% of both rural and non-rural students received scores of proficient or better on the reading and math portions of the ISAT during the 2007-08 school year.
- ISAT scores help determine whether schools meet their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) targets under the No Child Left Behind Act. Idaho's rural districts have had more success than others in meeting these targets: 52% of rural districts met their AYP goal in 2007-08, compared to 20% of non-rural districts.

Students scoring proficient or above on ISAT *Math* test, 2007-08



Students scoring proficient or above on ISAT *Reading* test, 2007-08



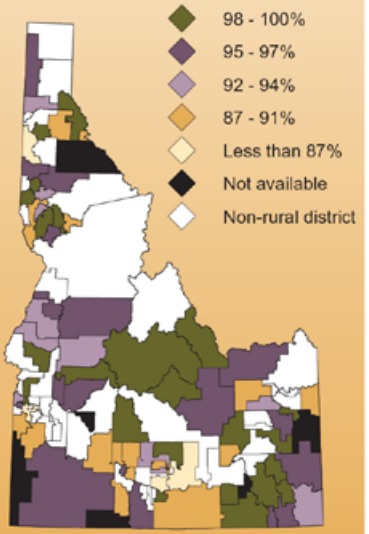
The **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)** tests students across the country in math, reading, science and other subjects.

- In 2007, Idaho's rural students scored as well on NAEP tests as other rural students in the U.S. They also scored as well as their non-rural Idaho peers.

High school graduation rates are another measure of student achievement. In 2007-08:

- the average high school graduation rate was 94% in rural districts compared to 87% in non-rural districts.
- over one-fourth of all rural districts had a 100% graduation rate, compared to only one non-rural district .

High school graduation rate, 2007-08



Despite this good news, many rural districts in Idaho do not do well on standardized tests and do not have high graduation rates. Districts that struggle in both areas include:

District	ISAT (% proficient)		HS grad rate
	Reading	Math	
Plummer/Worley	61	59	67
Vallivue	79	76	72
Minidoka County	79	72	79

Note that ISAT and high school graduation data are not available for groups of less than 34 students. Also note that in 2007-08, the Grangeville School District split into Mountain View and Salmon River Joint School Districts. These new districts have not been classified by the NCES, so they retain the 2006-07 Grangeville School District non-rural classification for these maps.

The 4-day school week is an enrollment & funding issue

Of the 13 districts with a 4-day school week in 2007, ten are rural districts[1] and three are town districts.[2] All 13 had a decline in enrollment over a 10-year period (1996-97 to 2006-07), with the most dramatic declines in Bear Lake (35%), Challis (34%) and Soda Springs (27%). Districts with persistently declining enrollment face decreasing state revenues per pupil and have to find ways to cut costs.

The 4-day school week has not been studied in-depth, so it is difficult to draw strong conclusions about its effect on funding and student achievement. Most districts switch to a 4-day week hoping to reduce operating costs of transportation, food service and custodial service. However, the biggest savings typically come from decreased schedules for hourly staff and increased state funding due to higher average daily attendance. Nevertheless, some schools find that the savings don't meet expectations. Anecdotal evidence points to both positive and negative effects on students in the classroom. More time and research are needed to assess the effects on student achievement.

As many rural schools continue to lose students, and as the state budget continues to be cut back, many districts will be looking for ways to save money. While the 4-day week is one option, districts need to explore the issue in-depth before making such a change.

[1] Bear Lake, Challis, Clark, Grace, Mackay, Marsh Valley, North Gem, Oneida, Soda Springs, Three Creek Elementary
[2] Boundary, Orofino, Salmon

Dual-enrollment provides new opportunities for rural students

The **Idaho Dual Credit Program** allows students to take college courses while still in high school. Many dual credit courses are offered in the high school, others are offered online or through interactive video, and some students attend class on a college campus.

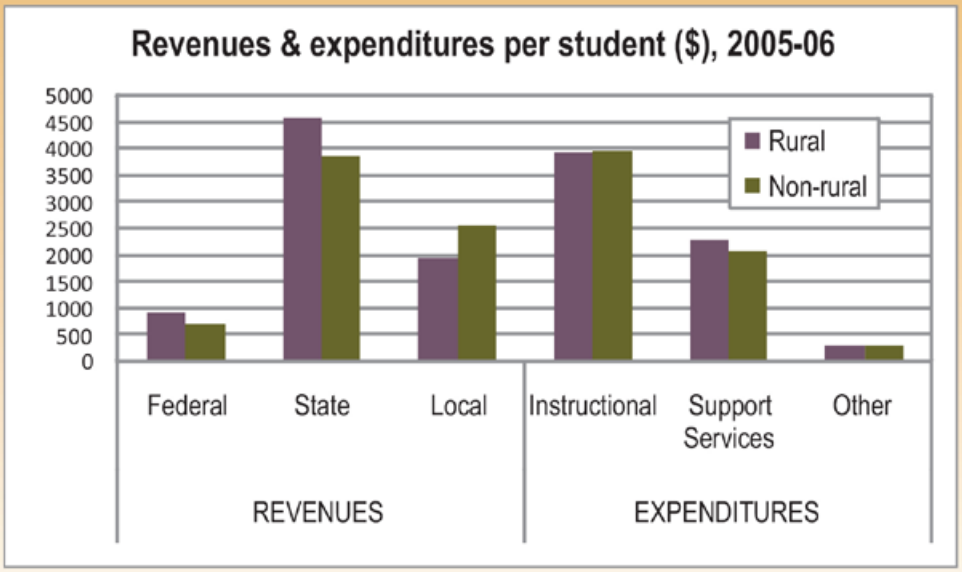
- Enrollment numbers vary from year to year, but the general trend shows increasing enrollment in both rural and non-rural districts.
- Students from three-fourths of both rural and non-rural districts have participated in a dual enrollment program. In most rural districts, only a handful of students participate, but a few districts have 40 or more students take part.
- The number of students participating in the program is influenced by proximity to a college or university, funding, online access, and teacher qualifications. A master's degree in the teacher's content area is required to teach dual credit courses in the classroom setting.
- College and university efforts to expand this program to rural students include: providing dual enrollment courses online, partnering with the Idaho Digital Learning Academy and the Idaho Virtual Academy to provide dual credit courses online; offering scholarships to high school teachers so they can earn a master's degree in their content area; and targeting rural high schools to raise student and staff awareness of the program.

Rural school connectivity – connecting to the future

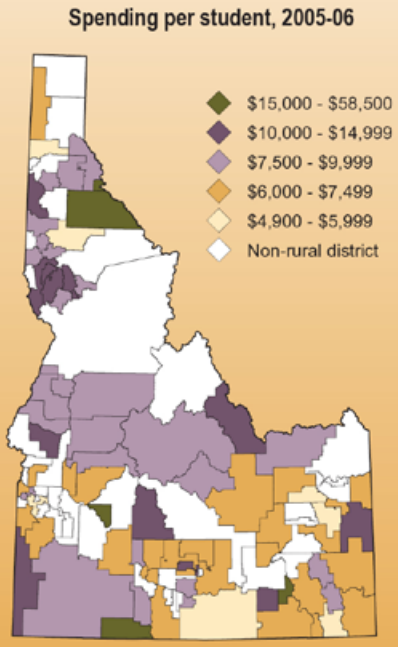
All Idaho students have the right to receive an equitable education. Distance learning is one way to give rural students equal access to advanced courses and a wider variety of electives. Technology is also integral to standardized testing and reporting, and has great potential in teachers' professional development and preparing students for college and the future workforce. Currently, data on how well Idaho's rural schools are connected are still incomplete. The Idaho Education Network (IEN), which aims to connect all Idaho schools and universities with at least T1 Internet capability, is mapping Internet capability of schools across the state. Future work includes linking all schools to the state's colleges and universities to facilitate distance learning and teacher training. These efforts will be integral to guaranteeing all Idaho students have access to a quality education.

Rural districts: higher per student costs and a smaller tax base

- Districts spend most of their funds on instructional and support services. Small, rural districts do not have the economies of scale enjoyed by larger districts, so it costs more, per student, to cover all expenses. During the 2005-06 year, rural districts spent an average of $200 more per student than non-rural districts. Most of this difference goes to support services, which include transportation, maintenance, business operation, administration and more.



- Education costs depend on student characteristics as well as on how rural a district is. Generally speaking, per student costs are higher in secondary grades and for students from poor families, those with special needs, and those for whom English is a second language. Rural districts often have higher percentages of students with these characteristics.
- While there are programs to help compensate for differences in per student costs, rural districts do not always benefit as intended. When funding formulas are based on a minimum student population, a per-student basis, or growth in the student population, rural districts often lose out. For example, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is meant to help school districts deal with high rates of poverty. Unfortunately, a recent change in the funding formula now favors larger districts. In FY07, the new funding formula provided over $220,000 less to Idaho's rural schools than the old formula would have provided.



- Major sources of school funding are federal, state and local revenues. Compared to other districts in Idaho, rural districts rely more on federal and state sources and less on local sources. This is because many rural districts have higher percentages of federal lands and lower property values than non-rural districts, and thus have a smaller tax base to provide local school funding.

Selected education indicators

	Most-rural school districts	Non-rural school districts	Idaho
DISTRICTS*			
Number of districts	82	44	126
Enrollment, 2006-07			
Students (number)	74,879	192,721	267,600
Students (percent)	28	72	100
Average enrollment per district	913	4,380	2,124
Change in enrollment (percent of districts), 1996-97 to 2006-07			
Districts with more than 10% decline	65	31	54
Districts with up to 10% decline	12	25	16
Districts with up to 10% increase	12	19	14
Districts with more than 10% increase	11	25	15
Districts making No Child Left Behind's Annual Yearly Progress (percent), 2007-08	52	20	41
Total general revenue per student (dollars), 2005-06	7,455	7,154	7,238
Federal sources (percent)	12	10	11
State sources (percent)	62	54	56
Local sources (percent)	26	36	33
Total current expenditures per student (dollars), 2005-06	6,566	6,363	6,420
Instructional (percent)	60	63	62
Support service (percent)	35	33	33
Other (percent)	5	5	5
STUDENTS			
Hispanic students (percent), 2006-07	16	13	13
Students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch (percent), 2006-07	44	35	37
Students in special programs (percent), 2006-07			
English as a Second Language students	7	6	6
Special Education students	10	10	10
Gifted & Talented students	3	6	5
Students scoring proficient or above on ISAT (avg percent), 2007-08			
Math	81	80	81
Reading	83	84	84
Graduation rate (avg percent), 2007-08	94	87	92
TEACHERS			
Student-teacher ratio, 2006-07	17	19	18
Average salaries (dollars), 2006-07			
Elementary teachers	40,919	44,040	41,917
Secondary teachers	42,588	45,583	43,246

**Districts include those for which the National Center for Education Statistics provided locale codes in 2006-07.*

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Data Sources

US Census Bureau; National Center for Education Statistics; National Assessment of Education Progress; Idaho Department of Education; Idaho State Board of Education; Idaho Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO); Registrars at Idaho's major universities and colleges (BSU, CSI, ISU, LCSC, NIC, NNU & UI); Rural School & Community Trust; Annie E Casey's Idaho KIDS Count.

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