

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Stakeholder Overview Testimony
Jan. 14, 2019

My name is Dwight Johnson and I am the State Administrator of Idaho Career & Technical Education (CTE). The mission of CTE is to prepare Idaho's youth and adults for high-skill, in-demand careers.

Our long-term strategic focus areas are three fold:

1. To attract more students into our secondary and postsecondary CTE programs
2. Increase the capacity of those programs to accommodate those additional students
3. Continuously improve the quality of those programs to assure Idaho students have outstanding career opportunities and Idaho businesses have a skilled workforce necessary to grow and expand.

We have many **priorities for 2019** but I have identified three to share with the committee today to further those strategic efforts. Last year we proposed with the enthusiastic endorsement of the Governor's Workforce Development Taskforce two new programs that the Legislature created with SB 1212 and SB 1222 that we will be looking to implement.

1. The first created a CTE Middle School Initiative. Senate Bill 1212 allows us to introduce CTE in grades 7 and 8, rather than waiting to the 9th grade. Our goal is to better connect education to careers by creating improved career awareness for students and their parents and we are pleased that the Governor has recommended funding in our FY2020 Budget to continue implementation of this new effort.

The focus of this new CTE Middle School program is on providing introductory CTE experiences for students so they have greater exposure to the wide range of careers available to them and the education and training they will need to be successful in those careers.

Increasing student career exploration opportunities in middle school would provide for more informed student choices to participate in secondary CTE programs and help students more effectively plan for high school and beyond as they prepare to enter the workforce in whatever career path they choose.

2. The second priority is implementing a new Workforce Readiness Incentive program that was created last year by SB 1222 and we are pleased that the Governor is recommending funding to begin implementing this program.

This legislation was endorsed by the Governor's Workforce Development Taskforce to incentivize Idaho CTE teachers to incorporate workforce readiness skills throughout our secondary CTE curriculum.

This program operationalizes that recommendation by creating a mechanism to promote workforce preparedness by directly rewarding CTE teachers who graduate CTE students who can demonstrate they are workforce ready. This Workforce Readiness Incentive program is patterned after similar best practice models that have been adopted in Colorado and Florida.

3. **Our third priority to implementing a new State Plan for our Federal Funding.** In August of last year the U.S. Congress unanimously reauthorized the federal Perkins Act, which provides federal funding in support of Career Technical Education. We are very pleased with that strong support.

This new federal legislation has some new requirements so we will be writing a new State Perkins Plan for Idaho over the next 18 months. We will be doing outreach to our stakeholders across the state to get their input and want to use this as an inflection point and opportunity to leverage these funds more effectively to improve the quality of CTE in Idaho in better connecting students with career opportunities in their local communities.

We are very pleased with the **student advances over the past 24 months** we are making in CTE programs:

- We have had an overall 13% increase of student enrollment in CTE secondary courses growing from 82,692 in 2016 to 93,850 in 2018.
- The pass rates of our Technical Skill Assessments by High School CTE concentrators have increased from 55% to 66%.
- And the pass rates of our Workforce Readiness Assessments have increased from 75% to 89%.
- At the postsecondary level our enrollment rates have been relatively flat going from 3,512 students enrolled in 2016 to 3,400 students in 2018. But given the low unemployment rate in Idaho we would typically see large decreases postsecondary enrollment based on the opportunity for students to find employment. So, we feel these numbers represent a significant accomplishment.
- And our numbers at our Workforce Training Centers located at our 6 technical colleges, which provide short-term customized training for area businesses, has increased from 44,801 in 2017 to 50,797 in 2018.

Finally, the two changes I would make to general education and or education policy if I were king for a day would be:

1. To have the ability and resources to conduct a significant statewide marketing campaign to students and parents to change lingering negative perceptions about CTE so Idahoans would clearly understand the opportunities and competitive advantage that CTE provides for every Idaho student regardless of their career pathway.
2. And secondly, although I understand the difficulty and concerns about adding additional High School graduation requirements, I would love to see CTE incorporated as a graduation requirement rather than seen as an elective.