



Graduation Rate and Virtual Schools

Connections Academy is committed to the students that we serve. We value any data that can help us improve, but we also know that the conversation around “graduation rate” is one that needs to be expanded. We welcome the opportunity to take part in these discussions to accurately reflect the important role that virtual schools play in student success.

4 Year Cohort Model

Assessing graduation rate for students who attend virtual school is complicated by a number of factors. It is important to note that a virtual school attracts students from across the state versus a local school which brings together a like-population. In addition, Idaho changed the way that it calculated graduation rates from 2012-2013 school year to the 2013-2014 school year from a one year rate to a four year rate. This dramatically affected Inspire, virtual schools and alternative schools graduation rate data who serve a uniquely different and mobile population.

Grad Rate	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Inspire	75.9%	33.7%	38.9%

Graduation Rate for Idaho in 2013-14 was 77.3%

Mobility and Graduation Rate

Virtual schools have a high mobility rate due to the various factors that a student chooses to enroll in a virtual school. Many students chose Inspire to solve a problem for a particular period of time such as bullying, medical issues, family situation, pregnancy, or other crisis situation. The success that Inspire achieves during that time is not reflected in future graduation success if students transfer to a new school once their crisis situation is gone. In addition, mobility can also be a challenge for state data systems to accurately reflect a mobile student population. Finally, many students come to a virtual school academically behind. It takes time for these students to catch up and they may need more than four years to graduate. Idaho does not include extended year graduation success into the cohort rate. Inspire 2013-14 Cohort (started 9th grade in 2010-11 and expected to graduate in 2013-14):

- **80%** of full academic year 12th graders graduated in 2015 (enrolled by October 1st and continuously enrolled until graduation or end of the school year including summer)
- **80%** of students graduated who enrolled on cohort and stayed through the end of the Senior year regardless of grade level in the 2013 and 2014 graduation cohorts. (61/76)
- **100%** of students graduated who entered in 9th grade and stayed all four years in the 2013 and 2014 graduation cohorts. (21 students)
- **23%** of students enrolled were behind in credits;
- **69%** of the total high school enrollments for the class of 2014, were students enrolling after 9th grade.

Factors to Consider in Graduation Rate Calculations

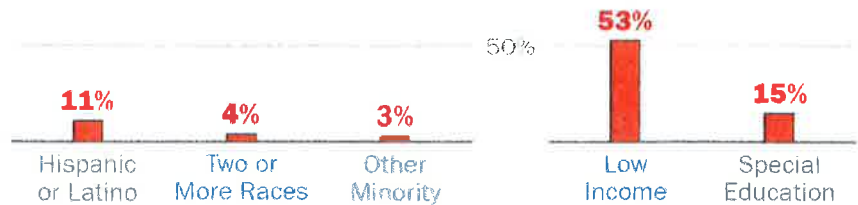
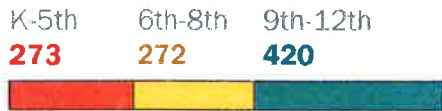
1. It is important to consider *progress towards graduation* as a metric either in a separate accountability framework for virtual schools or include in all school calculation. For example,
 - Arizona has created a separate accountability framework for virtual schools which includes a Persistence factor (progress towards graduation) and a 5, 6, and 7 year graduation rate calculation.
2. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has created additional flexibility for states that was not available under ESEA to use in calculating graduation rates:
 - Include 5 and 6 Year Graduation Rates
 - States now have the ability to include “*at the state’s discretion, the extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate.*” The “extended rate” allows states to use 5 YR and even 6YR rates.
 - School of Record
 - Many times a virtual school is the school of last resort before dropping out. ESSA allows a state to determine who is accountable for that drop out and at what time it occurs. A student who transfers to a new school but doesn’t stay enrolled at the new school *for at least half of the school year* and has exited without a diploma must be counted for purposes of graduation cohort calculations for the school that they either were “enrolled for the greatest proportion of school days while enrolled in grades 9 through 12; or in which the student was most recently enrolled (prior to the transfer).” Idaho may want to consider requiring students to be enrolled for at least the length of the Full Academic Year definition before including them in the graduation cohort calculations of the new school.
 - Define Full Academic Year (FAY)
 - As was the case with NCLB, ESSA allows states to define a Full Academic Year (FAY). Students who have not attended the same school for the period defined by FAY should not be included in a school’s results. Due to the high transfer rates of students in and out of virtual schools, Idaho should consider including the *highest possible number of attendance days* for its FAY definition. Indiana, for example, requires students to be enrolled for at least 162/180 or 90% of the school year to be included in the results. As noted above, under ESSA, the definition of FAY can also be applied to the inclusion in the graduation cohort calculation.

INSPIRE CONNECTIONS ACADEMY 2014-2015 PERFORMANCE SUMMARY



ABOUT OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF Statistics as of October 2014.

Student Enrollment: 965



Staff:

Teachers with Advanced Degrees: **59%**

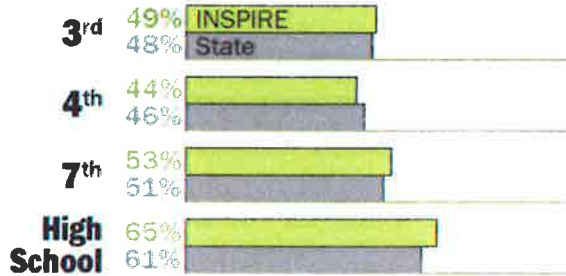


Average Years of Experience: **10.68**

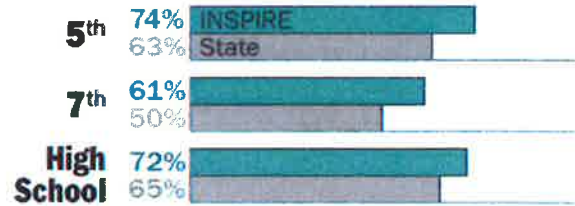


2014-2015 ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS Based on state and school testing data.

READING PROFICIENCY TEST



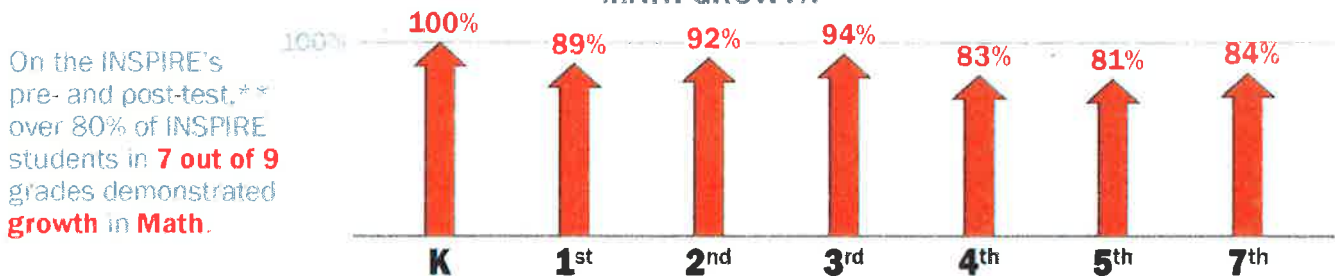
SCIENCE PROFICIENCY TEST



INSPIRE students **exceeded** state proficiency rates in **Science** in **all tested grades**.

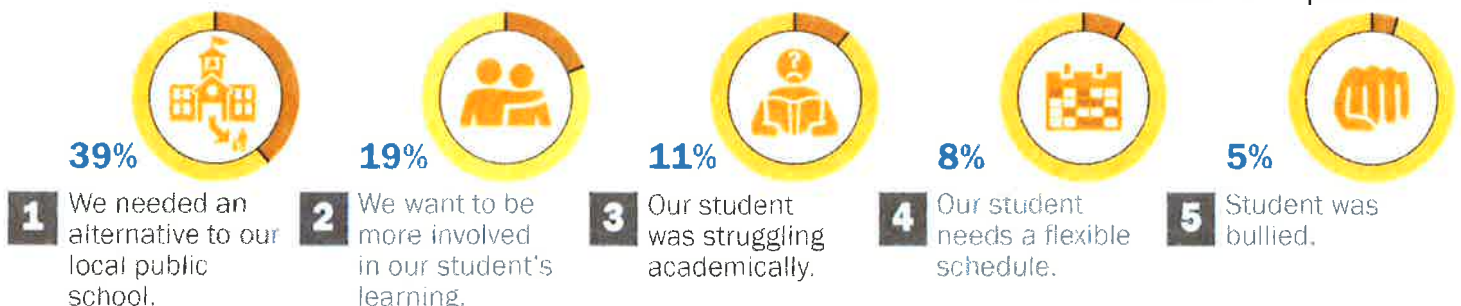
INSPIRE students **met* or exceeded** state proficiency rates in **Reading** in grades 3, 4, 6 and high school.

MATH GROWTH



On the INSPIRE's pre- and post-test,** over 80% of INSPIRE students in **7 out of 9** grades demonstrated **growth** in **Math**.

TOP REASONS IDAHO FAMILIES NEED INSPIRE Based on families' responses during 2014-2015 enrollment process.***



*"Met" is defined as being within 2 percentage points.

**The Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress (LEAP) test is administered by the school to students in elem and middle school.

***Parents were asked to choose one reason, though many anecdotally provided several.

SPECIAL HONORS FOR INSPIRE, THE IDAHO CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

IN THE MOST RECENT PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY:



95% OF PARENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE HELPFULNESS OF INSPIRE'S TEACHERS.



96% OF PARENTS SAID THEIR CHILDREN ARE SATISFIED WITH INSPIRE.

93% OF PARENTS ARE

95% OF PARENTS SAID THE INSPIRE CURRICULUM IS HIGH QUALITY.



SATISFIED WITH THE VARIETY OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT INSPIRE.



WHAT STUDENTS & PARENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL

"The INSPIRE team is truly focused on supporting each student! I am very impressed by their efforts to provide an excellent education for every student."

"I am impressed with the academic rigor, particularly in science and math."

"We had a great school year full of fun, discovery, and hard work. Thank you so much for your excellent staff and program."

"Thank you so much for your support of our son. He's spoken with you most often about the logistics of completing his coursework and such, given that he does travel so much for dancing. It has made such a world of difference for him, and it has made it possible for him to really follow his dream."

"Teachers are always so helpful and really take an interest in my child and her learning. My daughter loves the curriculum and is learning so much. Thank You."

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Important to Know #1

75% of 2015 graduating seniors attended post-secondary options.

- 23.2% attending a 2 year college
- 41.1% attending a 4 year college
- 5.4% attending vocational programs
- 5.4% going on a 2 year mission

Important to Know #2

\$204,214 in scholarships awarded to the 2015 graduates.

Important to Know #3

National Merit Scholar received a four year scholarship to attend Oklahoma University and the Presidential Scholar received a four year scholarship to Idaho State University.