

Idaho Public Charter School Commission 2015 Annual Report

A Year in Review

Thank you for your interest in Idaho's public charter schools. The Public Charter School Commission (PCSC) is Idaho's largest authorizer, with a portfolio comprising 72% of Idaho's 50 charters. Our mission is to protect student and public interests by balancing high standards of accountability with respect for the autonomy of public charter schools. We endeavor to implement best practices and enforce compliance with Idaho statute in order to ensure the excellence of public charter school options for Idaho families.

In the wake of Idaho's 2013 legislative session, the PCSC, its staff, and its stakeholders developed a performance certificate and performance framework. These documents were designed improve transparency of PCSC expectations, as well as highlight the challenges and successes of our portfolio schools.



Over the past two years, significant and ongoing changes to the state's school accountability system have impacted the ability of this framework to function as intended. Elimination of the Star Rating System, as well as implementation of the ISAT by SBAC, have limited the scope of valid academic data available for publication in this report.

As of early 2016, our portfolio has expanded to include one new school: Alturus International Academy. AIA is anticipated to open in fall 2016 in Idaho Falls, providing students with the option of an International Baccalaureate program.

During 2014, we had the privilege of being selected by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers for a formative evaluation of our work. Their recommendations both affirmed our direction and served as a guide for future improvement. Over the past year, we have continued to implement NACSA's recommendations, with positive results.

We invite you to join us in supporting a high-quality charter school sector in Idaho.

Sincerely,

Alan Reed, Chairman

Tamara L. Baysinger, Director

February 2016

Portfolio Overview

The PCSC's portfolio comprises 36 public charter schools. These schools are located all across the state, in both rural and urban communities. Their time in operation ranges from pre-opening to 16 years. They offer an array of educational choices: Core Knowledge, Expeditionary Learning, Harbor, Montessori, Classical, Waldorf, International Baccalaureate, and more. Several are alternative schools, and others focus on underserved or at-risk populations while welcoming all students who wish to attend. Seven are categorized as virtual schools.

PCSC PORTFOLIO SCHOOL	YEAR	LOCATION	GRADES	METHOD
Alturas International Academy	2016	Idaho Falls	K-8	International Baccalaureate
American Heritage Charter School	2013	Idaho Falls	K-12	Core Knowledge
Another Choice Virtual School	2010	Treasure Valley	K-12	Virtual, Special Needs
Bingham Academy	2014	Blackfoot	9-12	Postsecondary Preparation
Blackfoot Community Charter Learning Center	2000	Blackfoot	K-8	Brain-Based, Multi-Age
Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy	2013	Fort Hall	K-6	Language Immersion
Coeur d' Alene Charter Academy	1999	Coeur d'Alene	6-12	College Prep
Compass Public Charter School	2005	Meridian	K-12	Compass Method
Conner Academy (formerly The Academy)	2006	Pocatello	K-8	Harbor
Falcon Ridge Public Charter School	2005	Kuna	K-8	Harbor
Heritage Academy	2011	Jerome	K-8	Schoolwide Enrichment
Heritage Community Charter School	2011	Caldwell	K-8	Classical, Dual-Language
Idaho College and Career Readiness Academy	2014	Statewide	9-12	Career Technical
Idaho Connects Online	2009	Statewide	6-12	Virtual
Idaho Science and Technology Charter School	2009	Blackfoot	4-8	Science & Technology
Idaho Virtual Academy	2002	Statewide	K-12	Virtual
INSPIRE Connections Academy	2005	Statewide	K-12	Virtual
iSucceed Virtual High School	2008	Statewide	9-12	Virtual
Kootenai Bridge Academy	2009	Coeur d'Alene	11-12	Virtual, Credit Recovery
Legacy Charter School	2011	Nampa	K-8	Harbor
Liberty Charter School	1999	Nampa	K-12	Harbor
Monticello Montessori Charter School	2010	Ammon	K-6	Montessori
North Idaho STEM Charter Academy	2012	Rathdrum	K-12	STEM
North Star Charter School	2003	Eagle	K-12	International Baccalaureate
North Valley Academy	2008	Gooding	K-12	Core Knowledge
Palouse Prairie Charter School	2009	Moscow	K-8	Expeditionary Learning
Richard McKenna Charter School	2002	Mountain Home	K-12	Montessori K-8, Virtual Alt. HS
Rolling Hills Public Charter School	2005	Boise	K-8	Harbor
Sage International School of Boise	2010	Boise	K-12	International Baccalaureate
Syringa Mountain School	2014	Ketchum	K-6	Waldorf Inspired
Taylor's Crossing Public Charter School	2006	Idaho Falls	K-12	Harbor
The Village Charter School	2011	Boise	K-8	7 Habits & Leadership
Victory Charter School	2004	Nampa	K-12	Harbor
Vision Charter School	2007	Caldwell	K-12	Classical
White Pine Charter School	2003	Idaho Falls	K-8	Core Knowledge
Xavier Charter School	2007	Twin Falls	K-12	Classical

Approximately 16,060 students are served by the PCSC's portfolio schools. About 4,865 of these are enrolled in virtual charter schools. The PCSC's portfolio saw an increase of about 520 brick-and-mortar charter school students since 2014; virtual school enrollment dropped by about 60 students. Idaho also offers 14 district-authorized charter schools. The total number of public charter school students in Idaho is approximately 20,220.

In December 2014, the PCSC placed a temporary moratorium on the approval of additional transfer petitions until such time as the PCSC had the capacity to meet its statutory obligations and adequately service its existing portfolio, new charter petitioners, and transfer petitioners. We are pleased to report that, in August 2015, the PCSC was able to lift this moratorium. We thank the Idaho State Board of Education and Idaho's Legislature for approving the additional staff positions that allowed us to reopen our doors to transfer proposals, as well as provide additional services to both proposed and operating schools.

Who We Are

The PCSC's seven members hail from all around the state. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor (3 members), Senate Pro Tempore (2 members), or Speaker of the House (2 members). They serve 4 year terms; statute provides for a 2-term limit. Officers are elected every two years in the spring.

The PCSC office is staffed by the Office of the State Board of Education and includes 4 FTE, an increase of 1.5 FTE (60%) from FY15: Director Tamara Baysinger, Charter Schools Program Manager Kirsten Pochop, Accountability Program Manager Jennifer Barbeau, and an Administrative Assistant.

The PCSC's fiscal year 2016 budget is \$468,000, an increase of 41% from fiscal year 2015. The majority of this increase reflects additional personnel and facility costs. The PCSC's FY16 revenue represents a combination of authorizer fees and state funds appropriated as part of the State Board of Education's budget. No substantial increase in funding is anticipated for FY17.

In its October 2013 Authorizing Roadmap, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers provided a comparison of PCSC resources compared to those of similar authorizers. Below, that comparison has been updated to reflect FY15 data.

Authorizer	# of Schools	FTE	Budget
CO CSI	32	16	\$2,042,567
HI PCSC	34	18	\$1,400,000
Denver Public Schools	55	15	\$1,328,000
Idaho PCSC	36	4	\$468,000

Although our resources remain limited, we are pleased to report that the addition of 1.5 FTE has already enabled us to improve and broaden the services our staff is able to offer to petitioning groups, portfolio schools, and the Commission itself. We are now able to spend more time visiting with school leaders, developing resources, providing training opportunities, and considering both hard data and "soft" observations to better understand the impact of each school on its students and community. The additional personnel will prove especially critical as we seek a thorough understanding of all schools scheduled for renewal consideration in 2017.

OUR COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Alan Reed
Idaho Falls
Term: 2014 - 2018

Vice-Chair Gayle O'Donahue
Nampa
Term: 2012 - 2016

Commissioner Evan Frasure
Pocatello
Term: 2015 - 2019

Commissioner Kelly Murphey
Castleford
Term: 2014 - 2018

Commissioner Wanda Quinn
Coeur d'Alene
Term: 2012 - 2016

Commissioner Brian Scigliano
Boise
Term: 2012 - 2016

Commissioner Gayann DeMordaunt
Boise
Term: 2015 - 2019

We also thank former Commissioner Esther Van Wart (term ended 5/15)

School Performance Evaluation

The PCSC bases its evaluation of school performance on the performance certificate and performance framework. These documents were developed in accordance with 2013 legislation, through a collaborative process that invited the input of stakeholders over a five-month period. Performance certificates set forth the rights and duties of each school and the PCSC as its authorizer. Performance frameworks establish the specific criteria schools are expected to meet in order to qualify for periodic charter renewal pursuant to Idaho statute.

The PCSC's performance framework is divided into four sets of measures: academic, mission-specific, operational, and financial. Renewal decisions should be based primarily on the academic and mission-specific results, but will also be informed by operational and financial outcomes.

The academic portion of the framework was designed to dovetail with Idaho's Star Rating System (SRS). At the time, it was believed that the SRS would remain in use, with some modifications to accommodate the ISAT by SBAC and better reflect the achievements of alternative schools. However, the State Department of Education has since discontinued use of the SRS. This, in addition to the absence of growth data due to the statewide assessment change, has severely curtailed the PCSC's ability to provide academic performance data within the framework.

For the 2014-2015 school year, only three to four of the original fifteen academic measures in the framework can be applied (3 for elementary schools, 4 for high schools). The scope of the remaining measures is considerably reduced from the categories of state and federal accountability, proficiency, growth, and college and career readiness that the framework was designed to address. Additionally, there is presently no clear state goal for student achievement such as §33-5209A(2), Idaho Code, requires our measurable performance targets to meet.

We look forward to working with other state education leaders to ensure that, over the long term, our portfolio schools can be evaluated in a thorough, fair, meaningful, and consistent manner.

Annual Performance Reports

Each PCSC portfolio school receives an annual performance report reflecting its outcomes on measures within the performance framework. Schools are encouraged to use this information for strategic planning and to ensure that any identified weaknesses are addressed in advance of renewal consideration, which takes place in Year 3 of operations, then every 5 years thereafter (or as otherwise stated in initial performance certificates).

Data contained in the reports was gathered primarily through Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE) reports, independent fiscal audits, and State Department of Education records. In 2014-2015, most PCSC portfolio schools needed to submit only three, additional reports to the PCSC.

Schools were provided with draft reports in December 2015. Following a response period, final reports were published in January 2016. Individual schools' annual performance reports, including scoring details and explanatory notes as applicable, are available on the PCSC's website at chartercommission.idaho.gov.

Typically, annual reports include scores on multiple, individual measures, which are then tallied to establish an accountability designation in each of three categories: academic & mission specific (combined), operational, and financial. Due to the limited availability of academic data for 2014-2015, however, no academic & mission specific accountability designations are included in this report.

This report does offer comparisons of PCSC portfolio schools' academic proficiency rates with those of neighboring schools and the state as a whole. Demographic data is provided for additional context. However, it is important to bear in mind that proficiency rates, while important, cannot paint a complete picture of a school's academic quality.

Summary of 2015 Performance Outcomes

The following chart provides an “at a glance” summary of each PCSC portfolio school’s performance outcomes in the areas of academics, operations, and finance.

Each academic subject, Math and English Language Arts (ELA), is shaded according to whether the school’s proficiency rate exceeded or fell short of the state’s proficiency rate. Light gray shading indicates that the school’s results were higher than the statewide proficiency rate; dark gray indicates lower results.

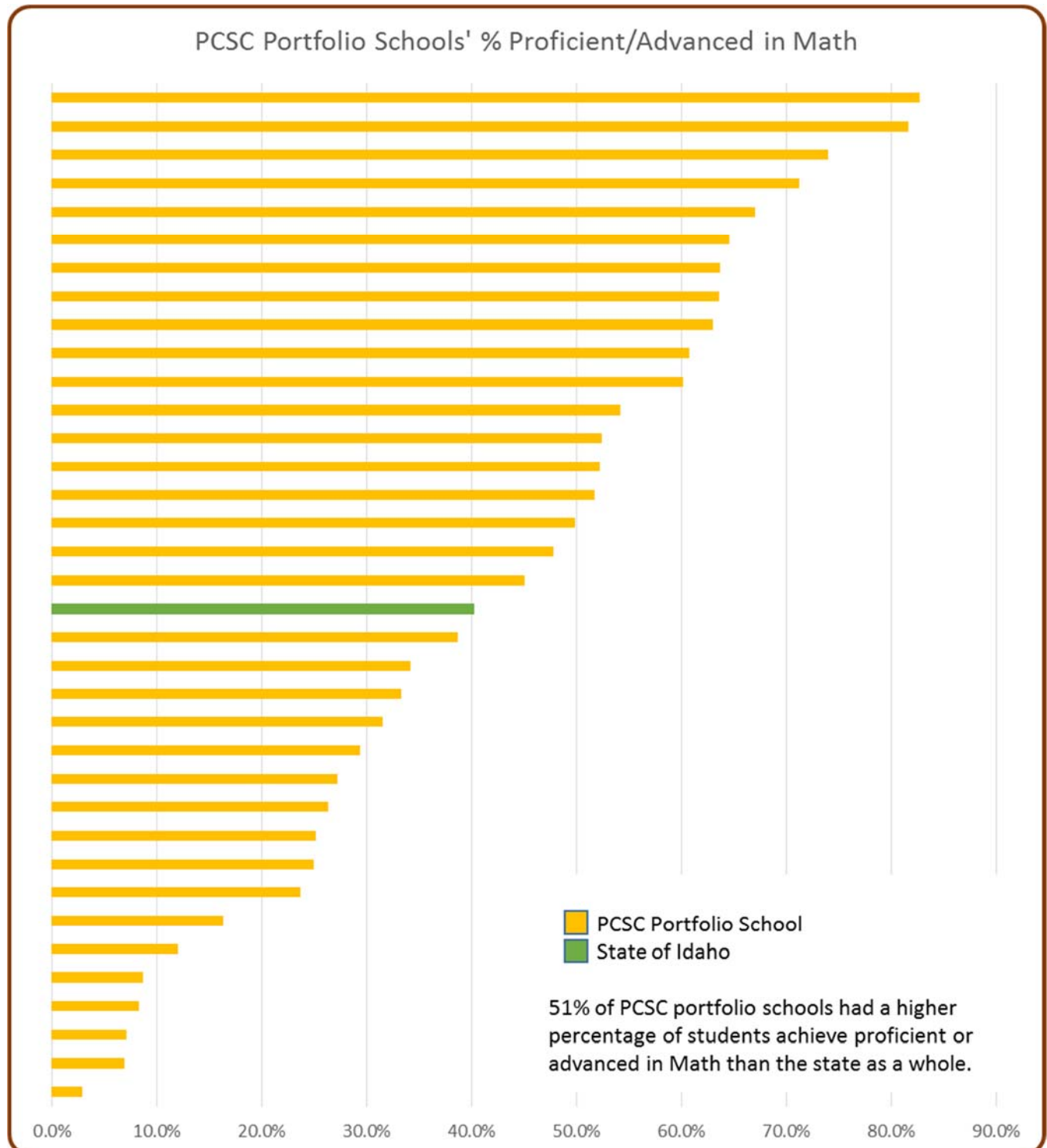
In the operational and financial categories, results are color-coded by schools’ accountability designations as detailed in their individual annual performance reports. The four accountability designations are honor (blue), good standing (green), remediation (yellow), and critical (red).

To ensure masking of individually identifiable student data, schools are alphabetically arranged within each of two groups: those that exceeded the state’s math proficiency rate, and those that fell below it. For schools that offer both general and alternative programs, only general population results are reflected in this chart. Virtual schools are highlighted in beige.

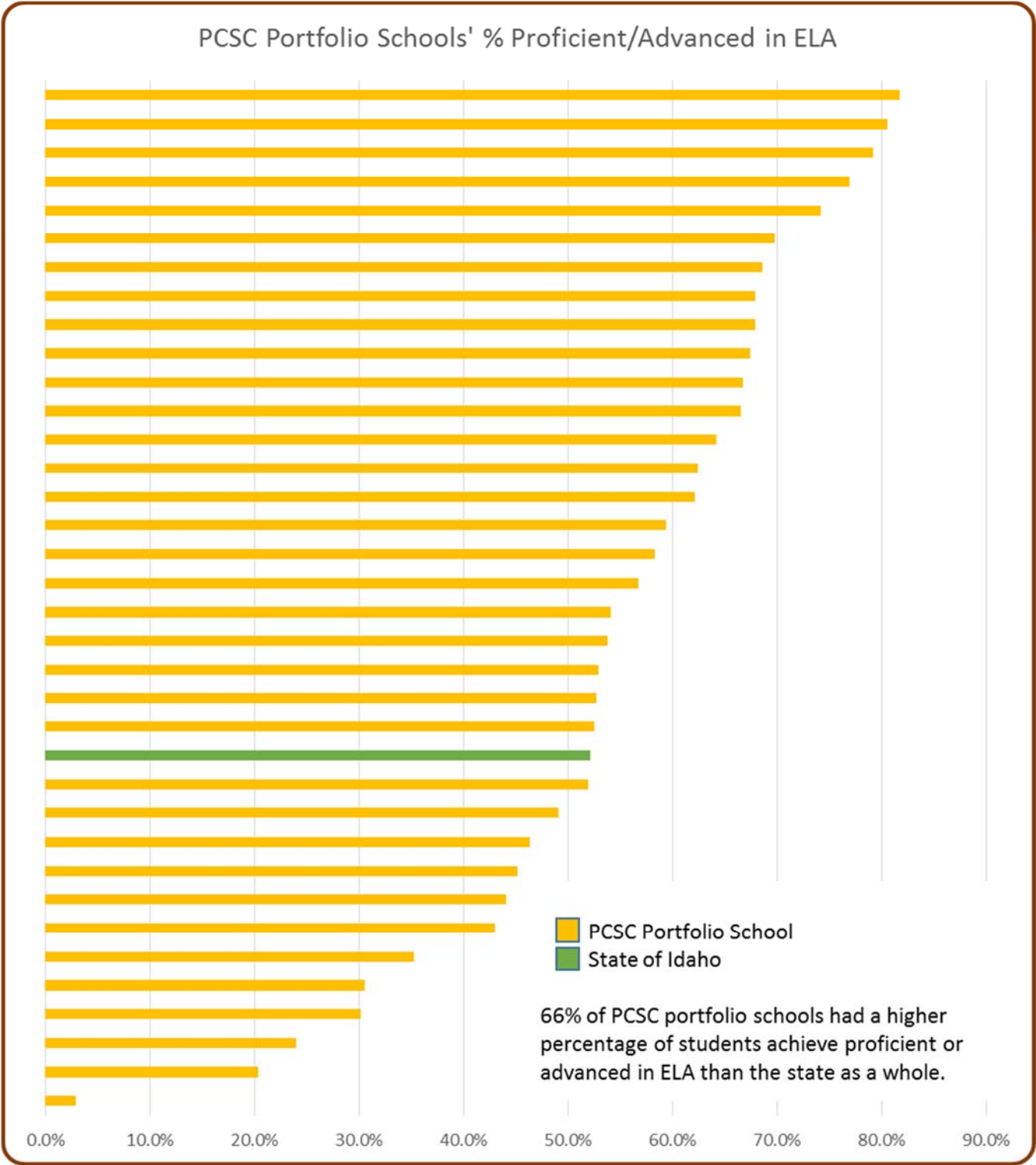
PCSC PORTFOLIO SCHOOL	MATH	ELA	OPERATIONAL	FINANCIAL
American Heritage Charter School				
Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy				
Compass Public Charter School				
Connor Academy				
Falcon Ridge Public Charter School				
Legacy Charter School				
Liberty Charter School				
Monticello Montessori Charter School				
North Idaho STEM Charter Academy				
North Star Charter School				
Palouse Prairie Charter School				
Rolling Hills Public Charter School				
Sage International School of Boise				
Taylor's Crossing Public Charter School				
Victory Charter School				
Vision Charter School				
White Pine Charter School				
Xavier Charter School				
Another Choice Virtual School				
Bingham Academy				
Blackfoot Charter Community Learning Center				
Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy				
Heritage Academy				
Heritage Community Charter School				
Idaho College and Career Readiness Academy				
Idaho Connects Online				
Idaho Science and Technology Charter School				
Idaho Virtual Academy				
INSPIRE Connections Academy				
iSucceed Virtual School				
Kootenai Bridge Academy (Alternative)				
North Valley Academy				
Richard McKenna Charter School				
Syringa Mountain School				
The Village Charter School				

Academic Outcomes

2015 standardized test results represent the first set of data that the state has published based on the ISAT by SBAC. For this reason, schools' results cannot be compared to outcomes from prior years. This report focuses instead on comparisons of PCSC portfolio schools' ISAT proficiency rates to those of their surrounding districts and the state as a whole. Data is available for two subject areas: Math and English Language Arts (ELA).

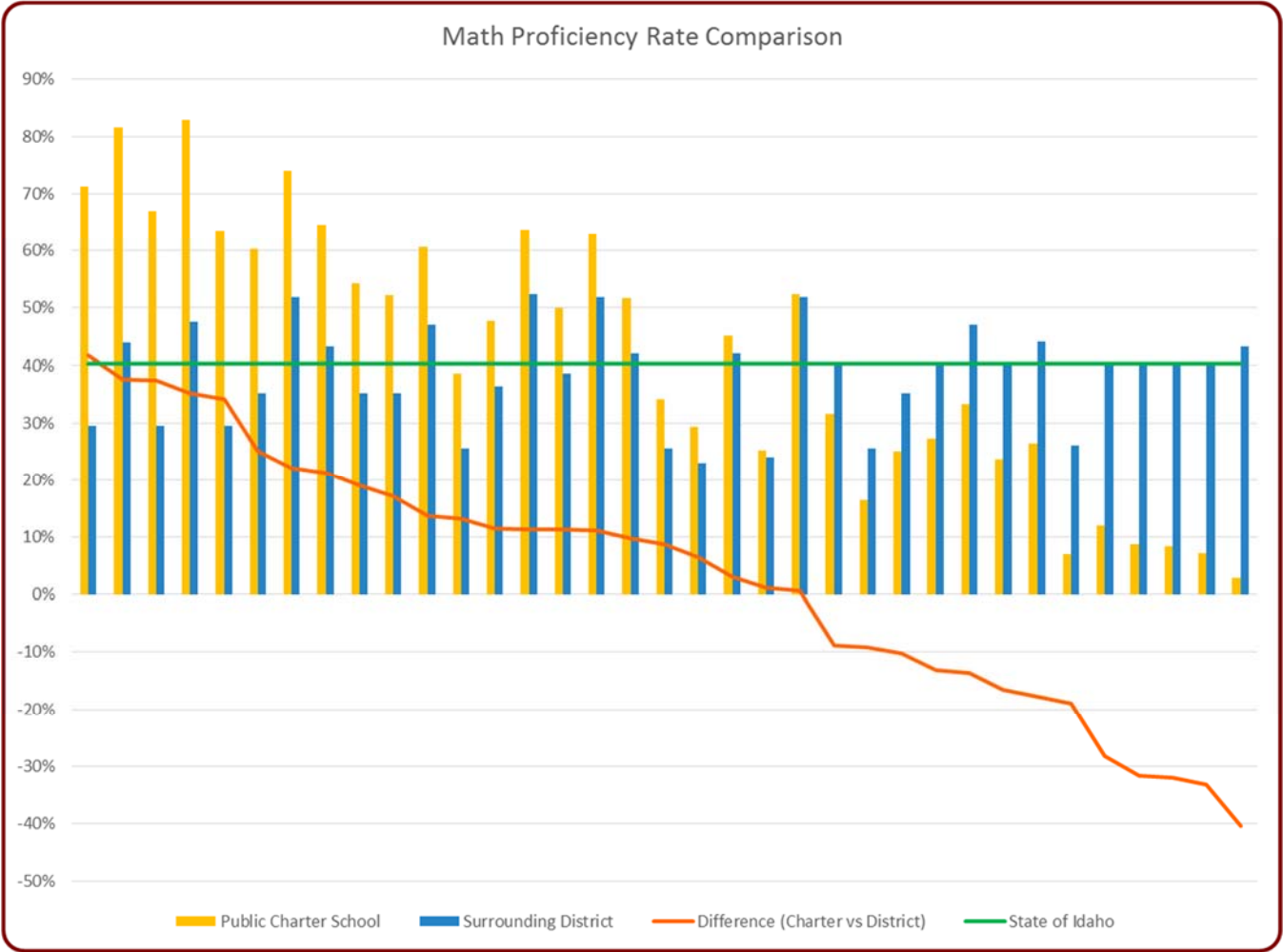


Although there are some exceptions, it can be generally observed that ELA proficiency rates tend to be higher than Math proficiency rates at both public charter and traditional public schools. Very low proficiency rates at a small number of schools indicate a need for further investigation into the reasons for such outcomes and what action school leaders are taking to address identified deficiencies.



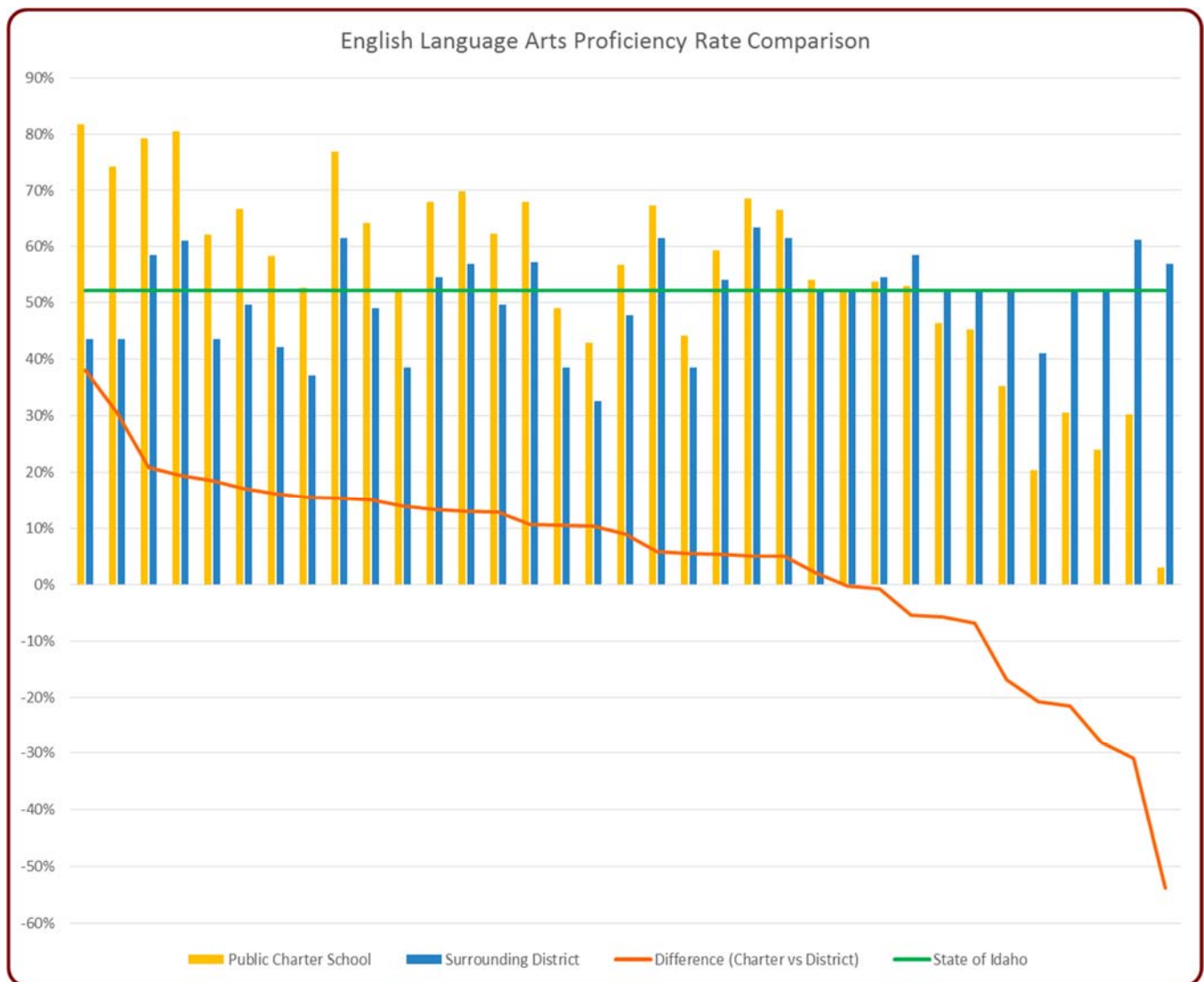
In the following charts, PCSC portfolio schools' proficiency rates are compared to those of neighboring or similar schools. The "surrounding district" data represented by the blue columns describes other public schools that are located in the same geographical area. In the case of virtual schools, which serve multiple districts or the entire state, the State of Idaho is used for comparison in place of the "surrounding district."

The columns are arranged by degree of difference between the public charter schools' proficiency rates and those of their surrounding districts. As indicated by the orange line, charter schools toward the left side of the chart have proficiency rates exceeding those of the district, while charter schools toward the right side have proficiency rates lower than those of the district.



63% of PCSC portfolio schools surpass their surrounding districts' proficiency rates in math, and 69% of PCSC portfolio schools surpass their surrounding districts' proficiency rates in ELA. However, 31% of PCSC portfolio schools have math proficiency rates that are 10 - 40 percentage points lower than their surrounding districts. Seventeen percent of PCSC portfolio schools have ELA proficiency rates that are 17 - 54 percentage points lower than their surrounding districts.

Additional detail, including contextual information such as demographic data and school type (virtual, alternative, etc.) is provided later in this report.



Comparison Data by Geographic Area

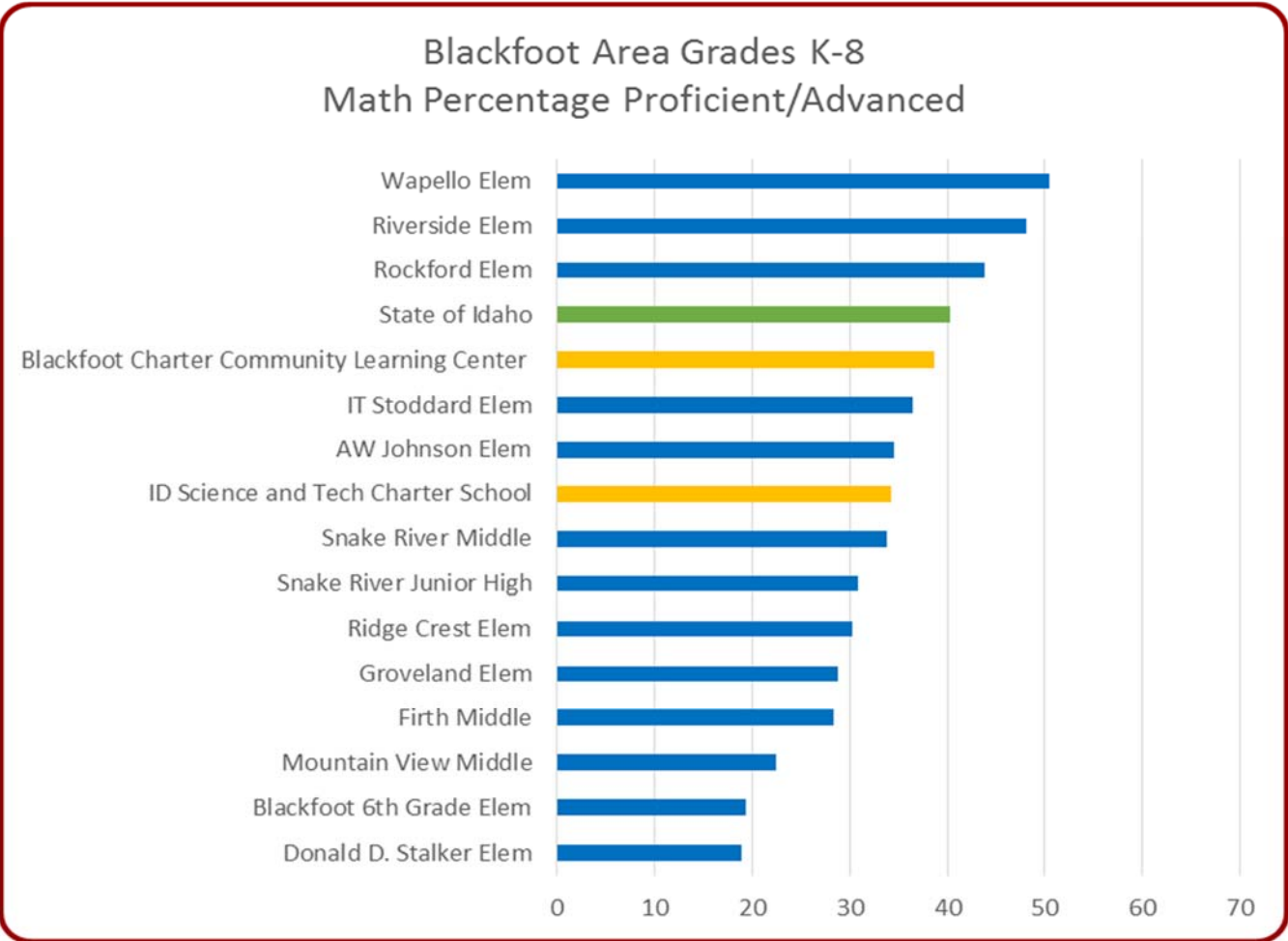
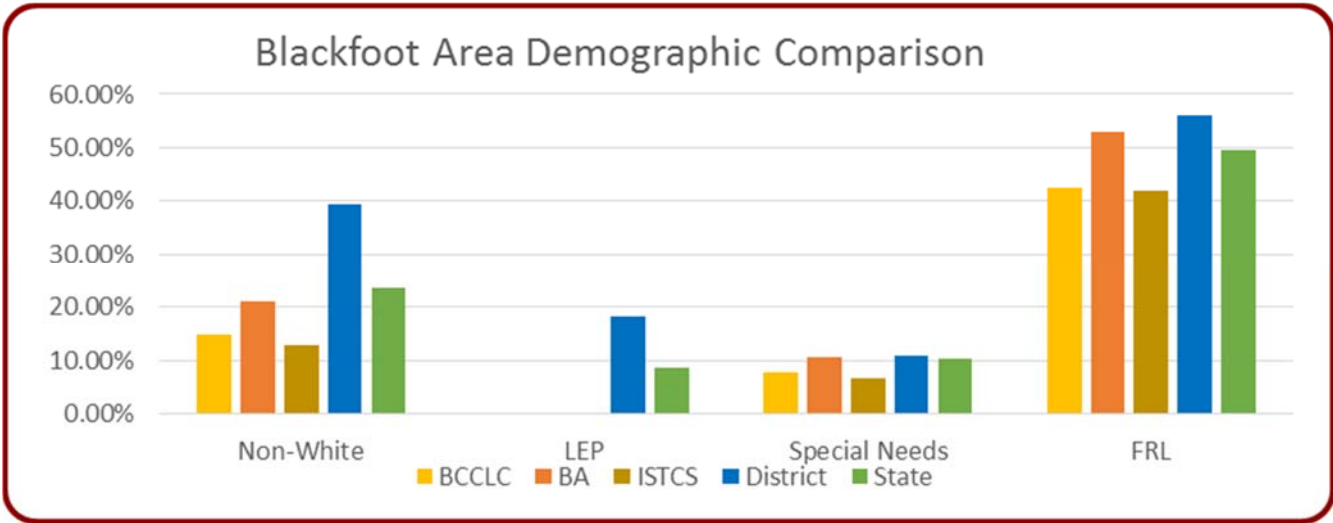
The following pages provide additional detail comparing individual PCSC portfolio schools' ISAT results and demographics to those of other schools located in geographical areas they serve.

Each PCSC portfolio school is compared to other area schools serving similar grade levels. Virtual schools are compared with other virtual schools. For public charter schools that offer both general and alternative programs, only the general population results are shown. Alternative program results are addressed in individual schools' annual performance reports, which are available on the PCSC website.

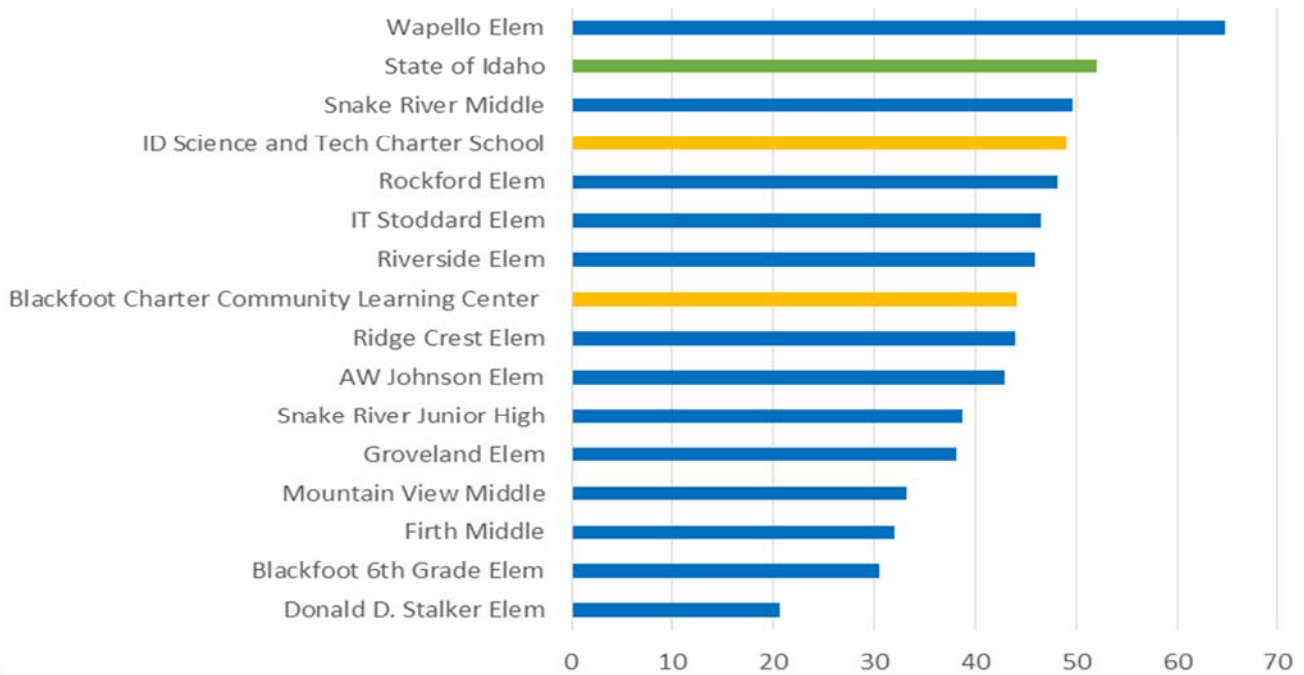
In the demographic charts, each PCSC portfolio school is compared to the State of Idaho and the district in which it is physically located. It should be noted that some public charter schools have primary attendance areas that cross school district boundaries. Additional detail is available in these schools' individual reports.

Blackfoot Area Comparison Data

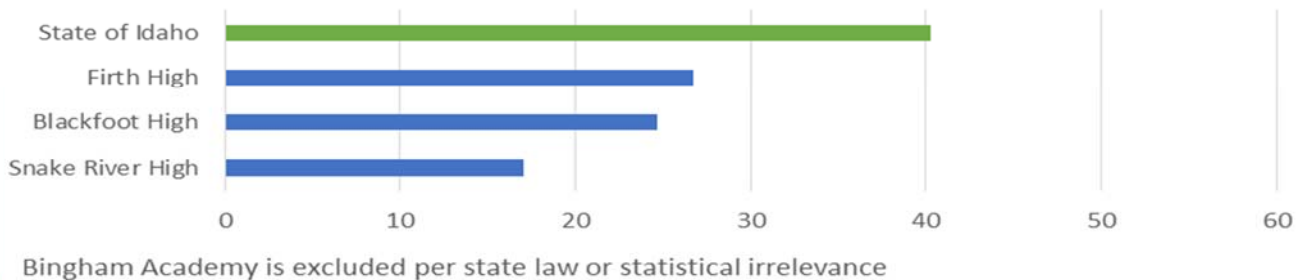
The PCSC authorizes three schools in the Blackfoot area: Blackfoot Charter Community Learning Center (K-8), Idaho Science and Technology Charter School (4-8), and Bingham Academy (9-12).



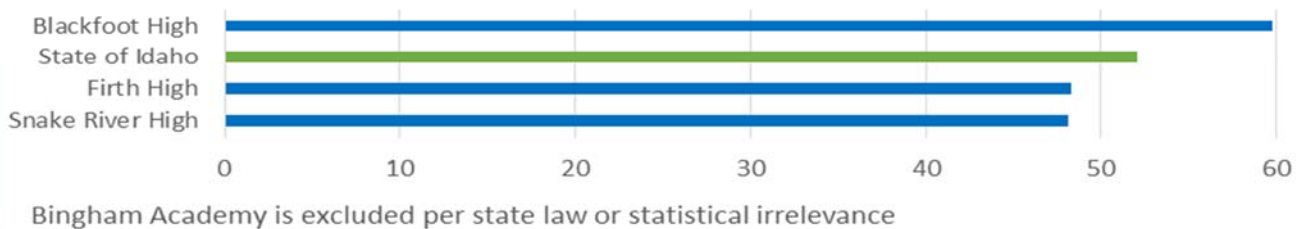
Blackfoot Area Grades K-8 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced



Blackfoot Area Grades 9-12 Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced

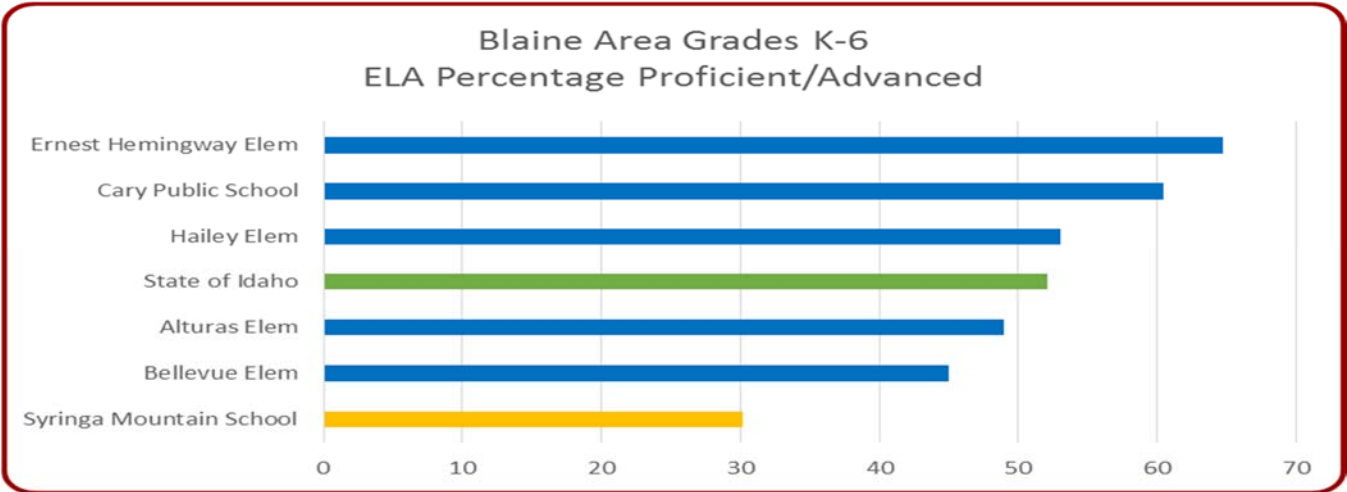
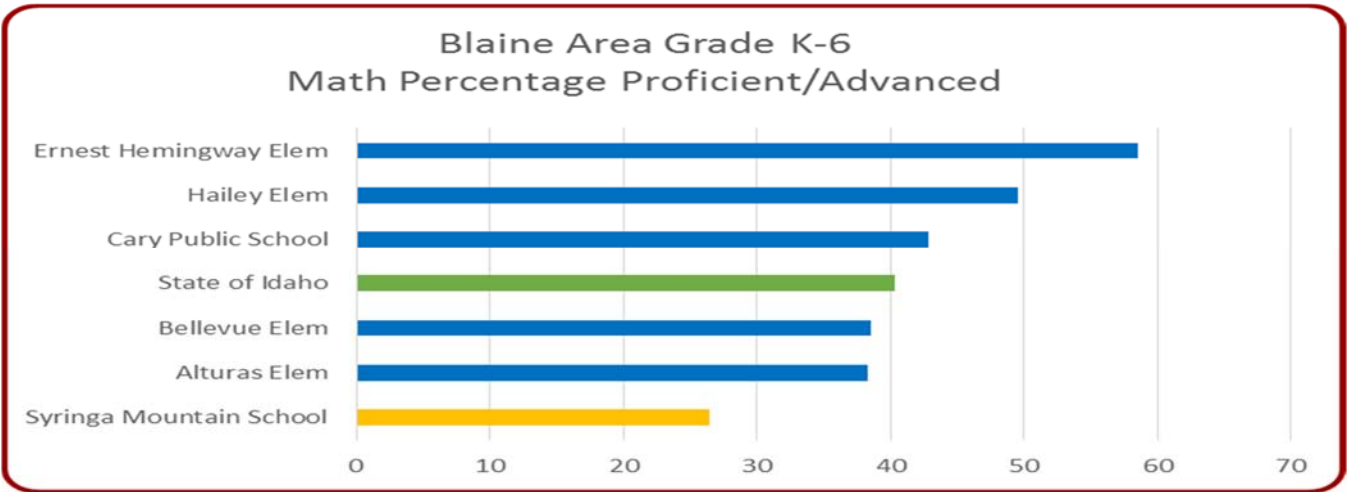
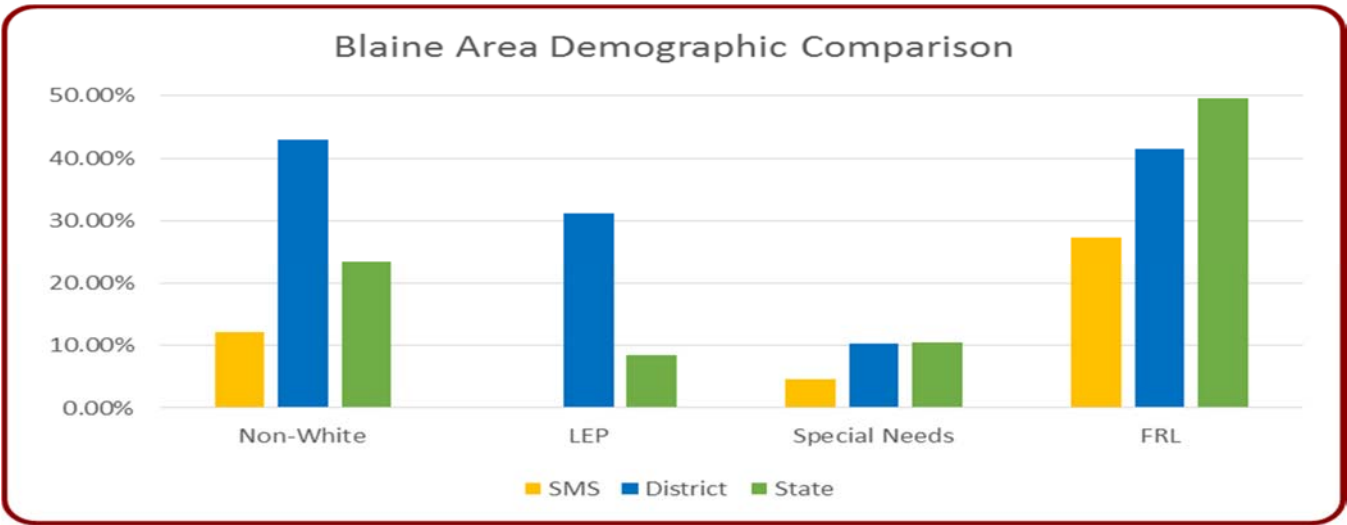


Blackfoot Area Grades 9-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced



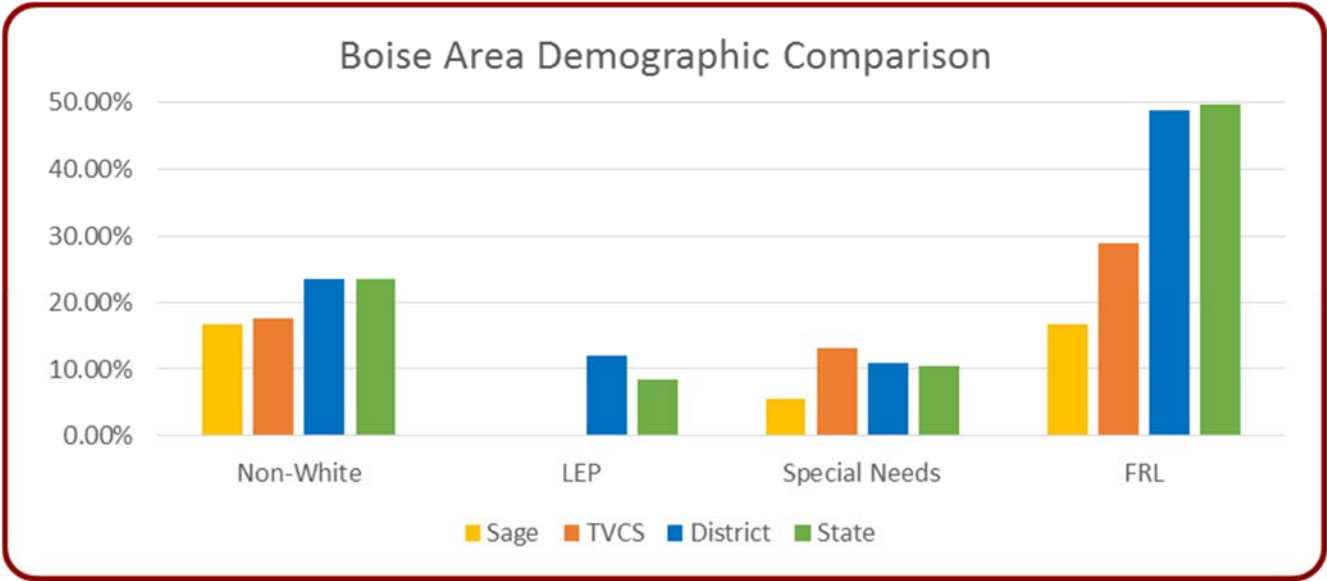
Blaine Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Blaine area: Syringa Mountain School (K-6).

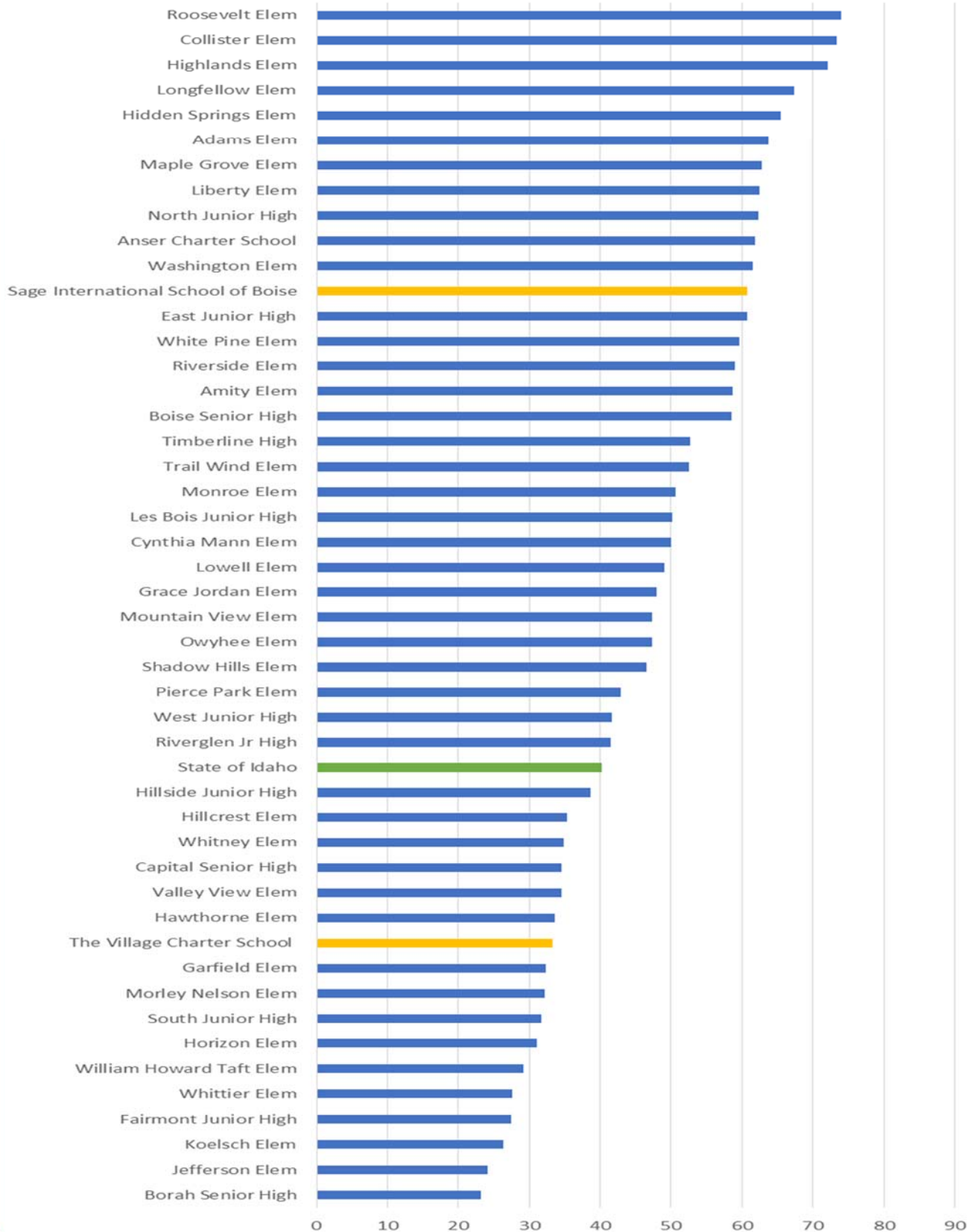


Boise Area Comparison Data

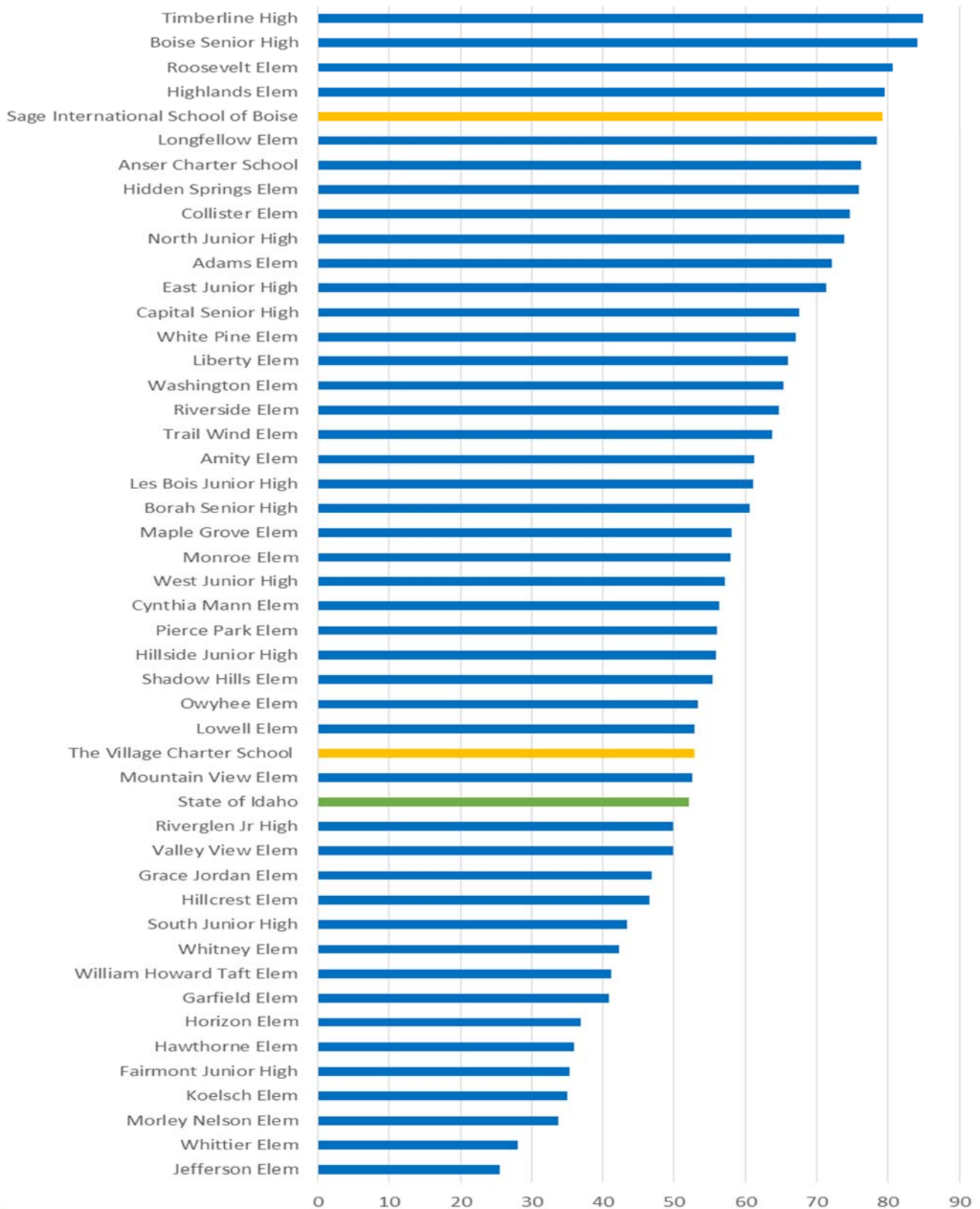
The PCSC authorizes two schools in the Boise area: Sage International School of Boise (K-12), and The Village Charter School (K-8).



Boise Area Grades K-12 Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced

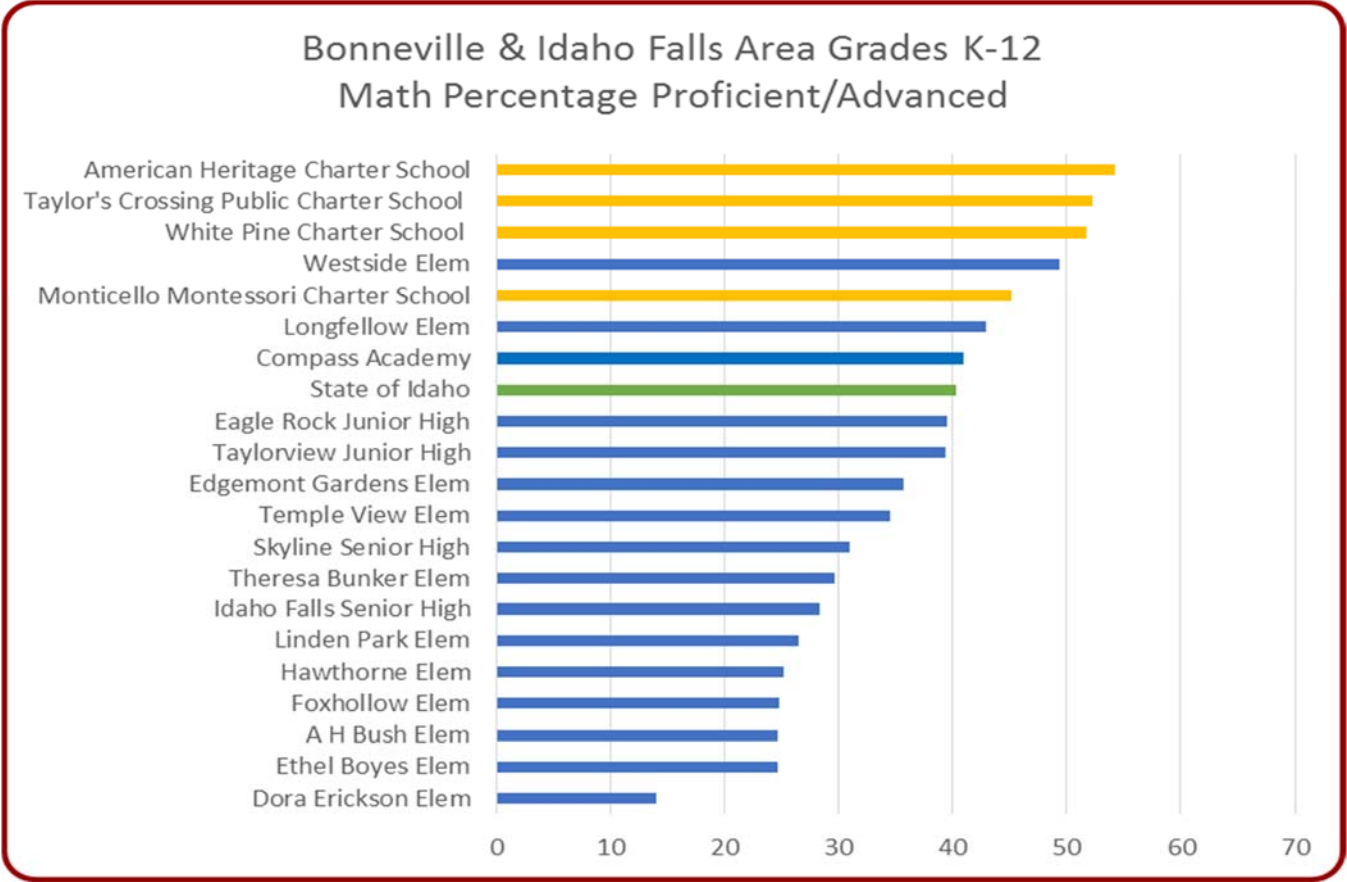
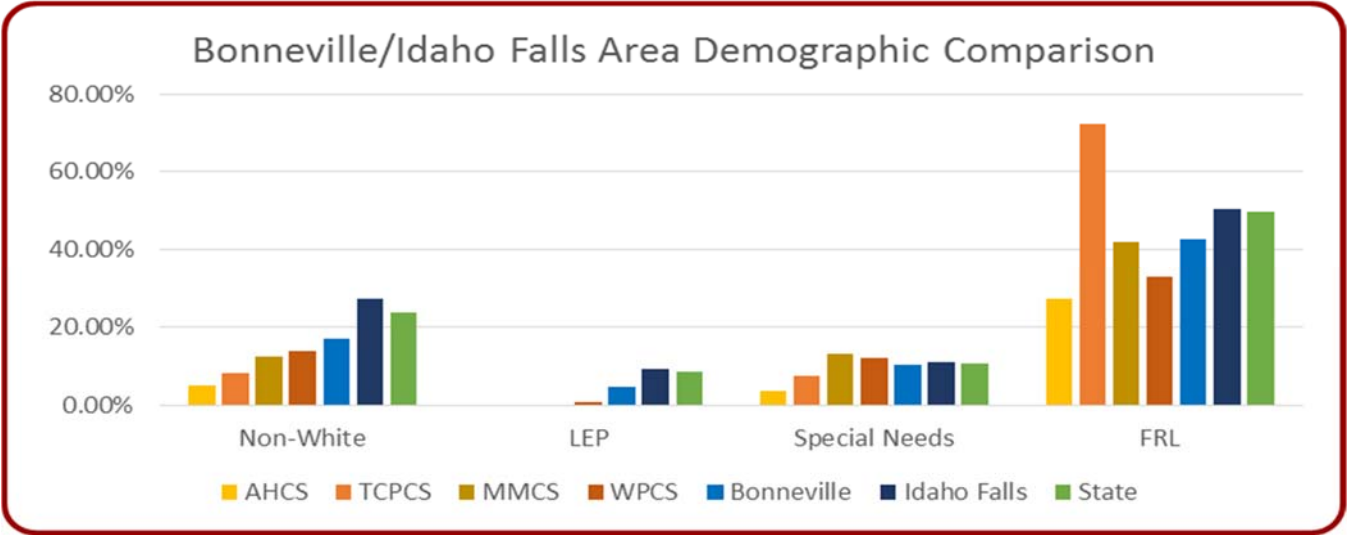


Boise Area Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced

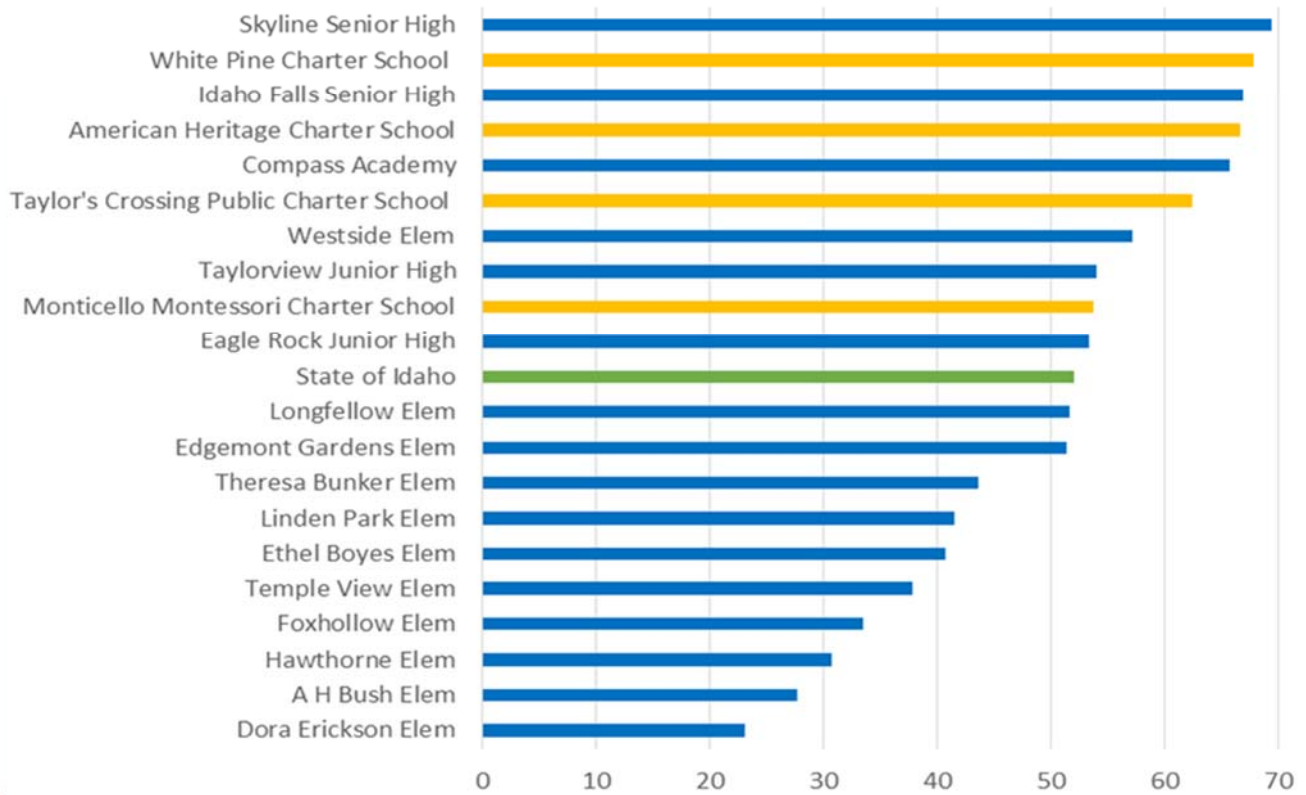


Bonneville/Idaho Falls Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes four schools in the Bonneville/Idaho Falls area: Taylor’s Crossing Public Charter School (K-12), White Pine Charter School (K-8), Monticello Montessori Charter School (K-8), and American Heritage Charter School (K-12).

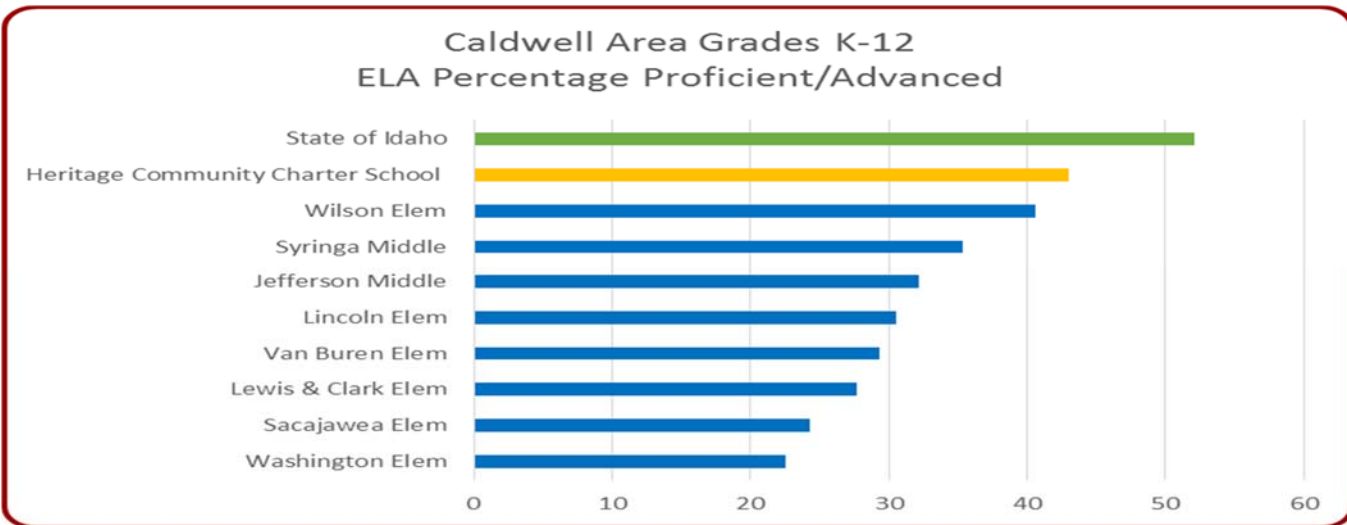
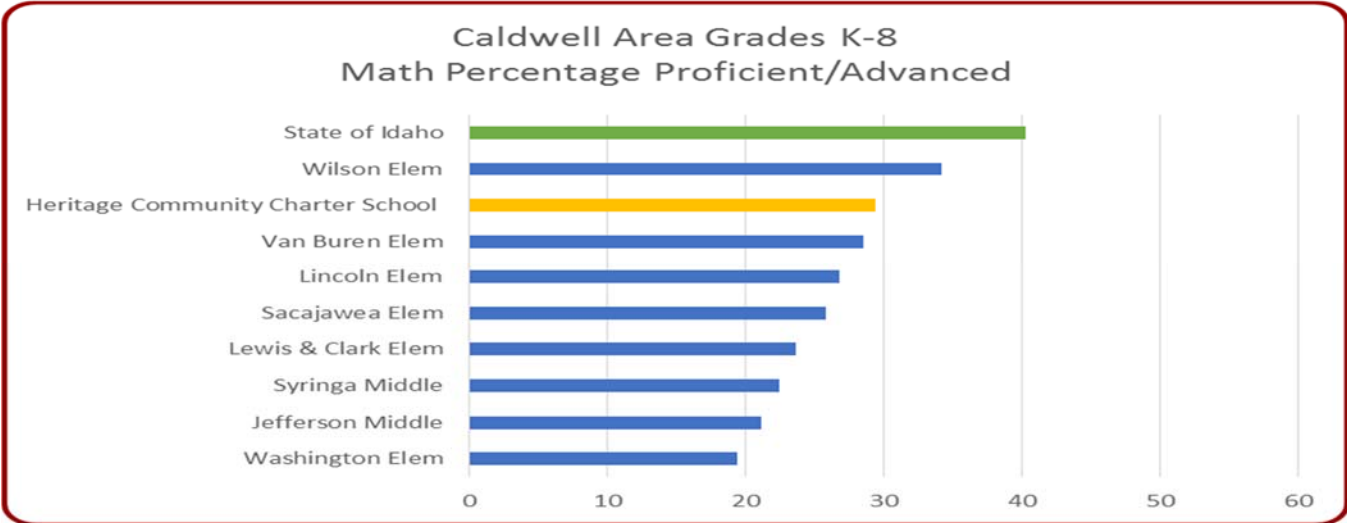
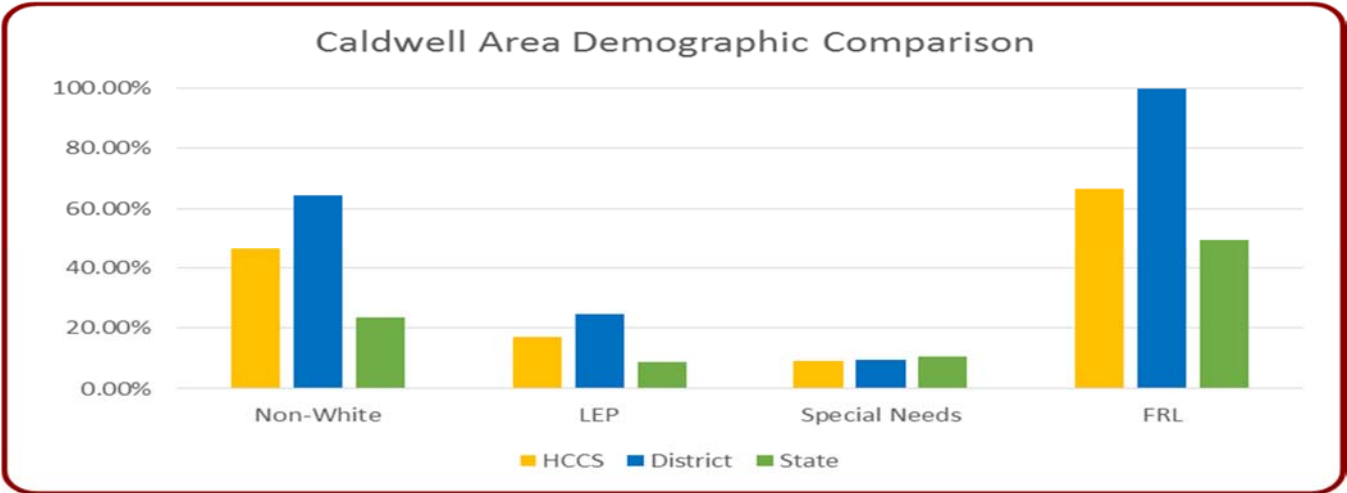


Bonneville & Idaho Falls Area Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced



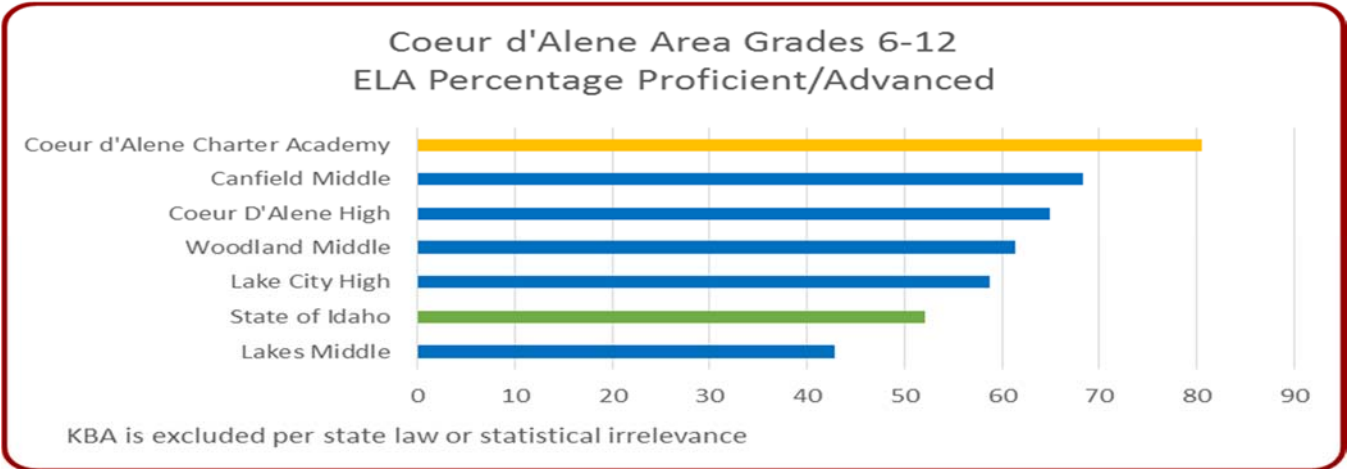
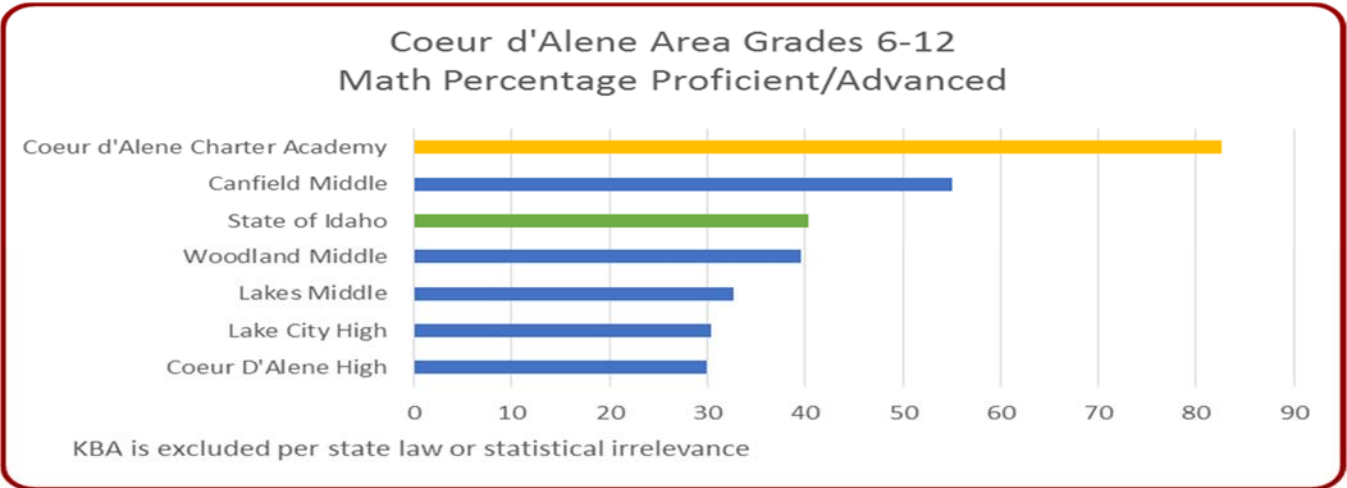
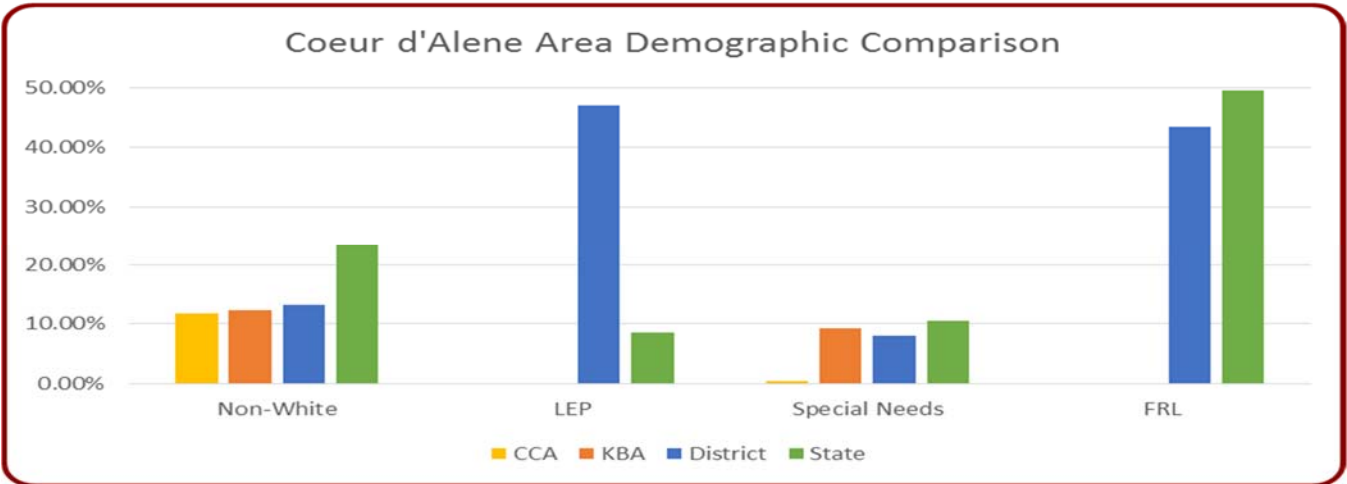
Caldwell Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Caldwell area: Heritage Community Charter School (K-8).



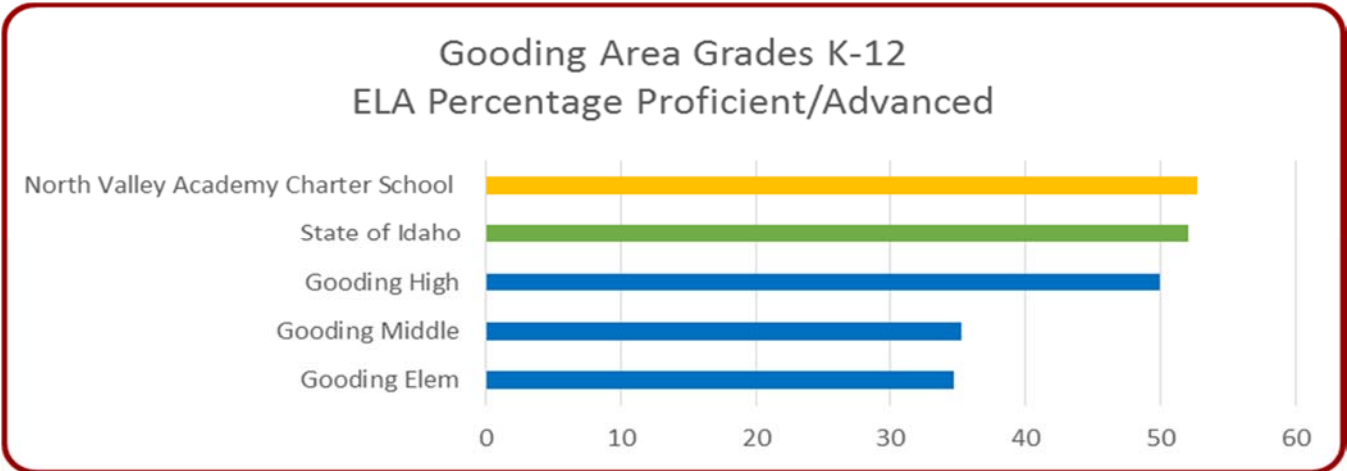
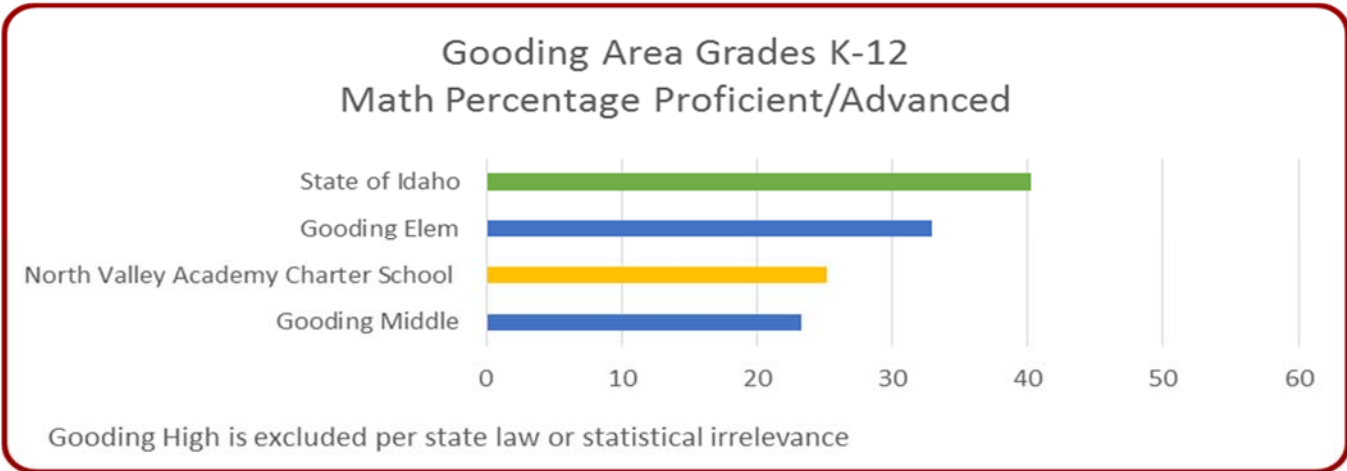
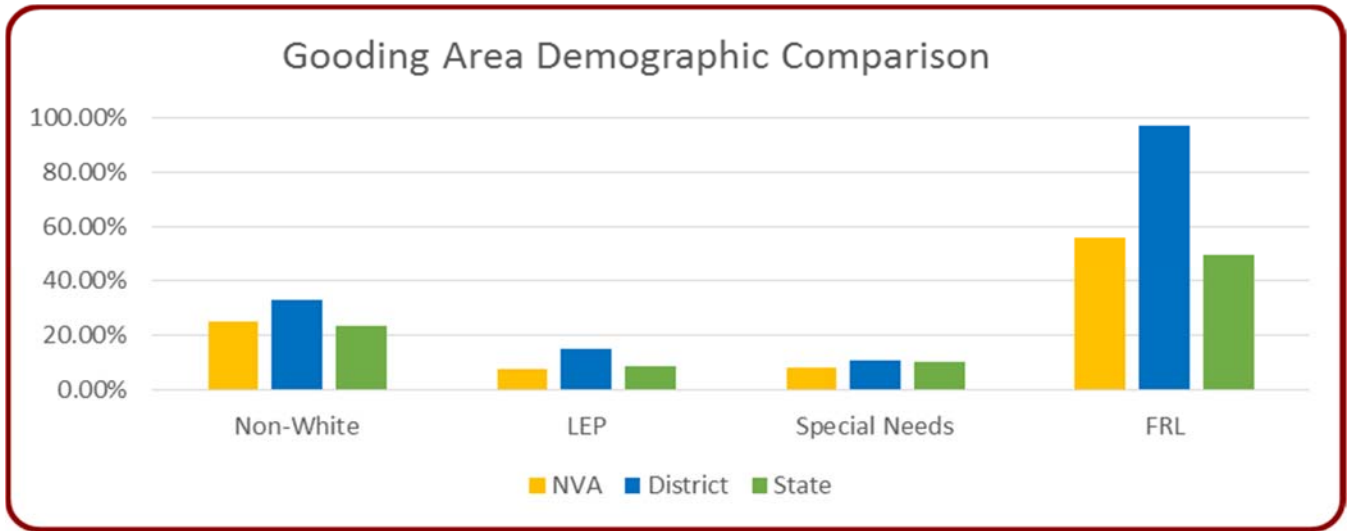
Coeur d'Alene Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes two schools in the Coeur d'Alene area: Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy (6-12) and Kootenai Bridge Academy (11-12). KBA is an alternative, virtual school that serves provides credit recovery services to students from several nearby districts and has a strong on-site component.



Gooding Area Comparison Data

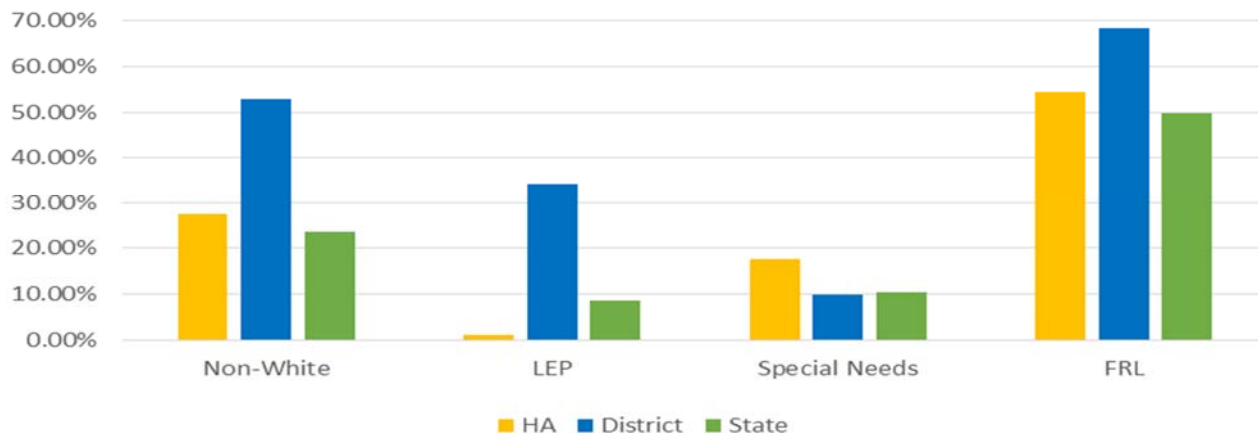
The PCSC authorizes one school in the Gooding area: North Valley Academy (K-12).



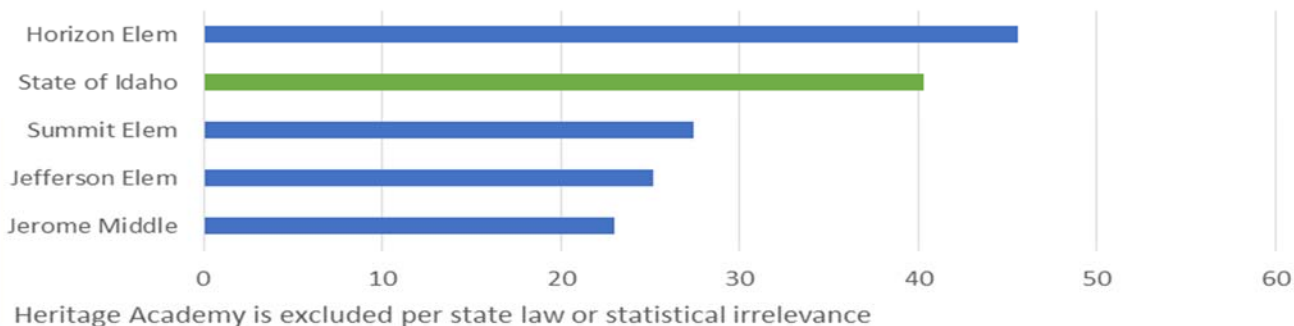
Jerome Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Jerome area: Heritage Academy (K-8).

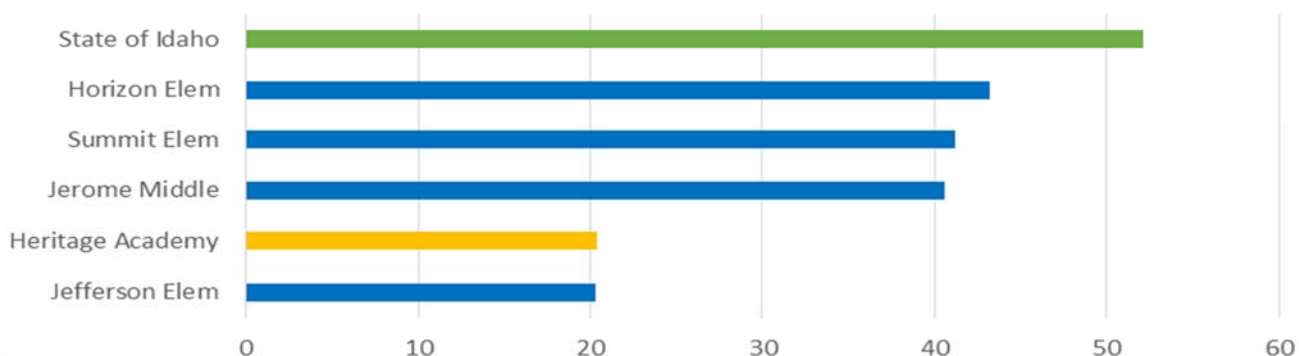
Jerome Area Demographic Comparison



Jerome Area Grades K-8
Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced

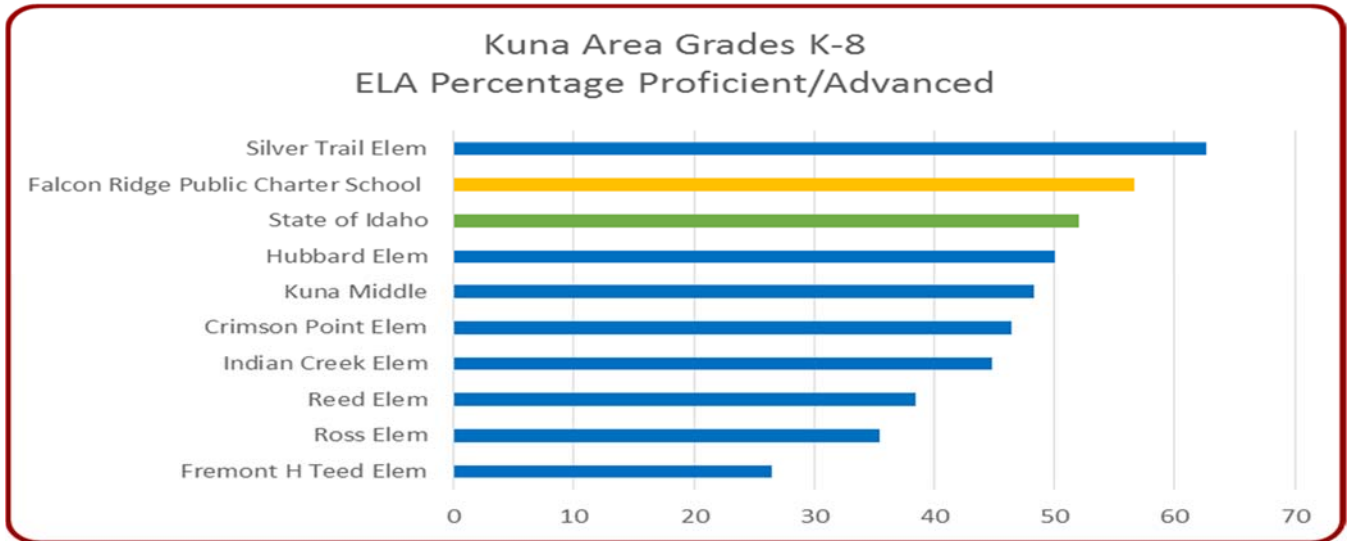
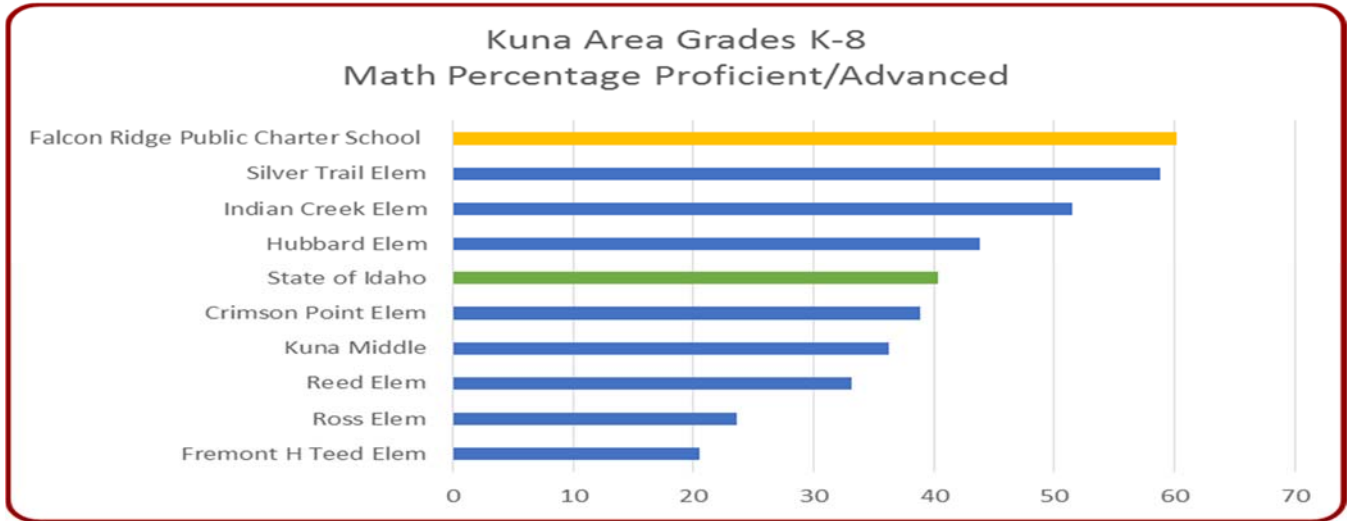
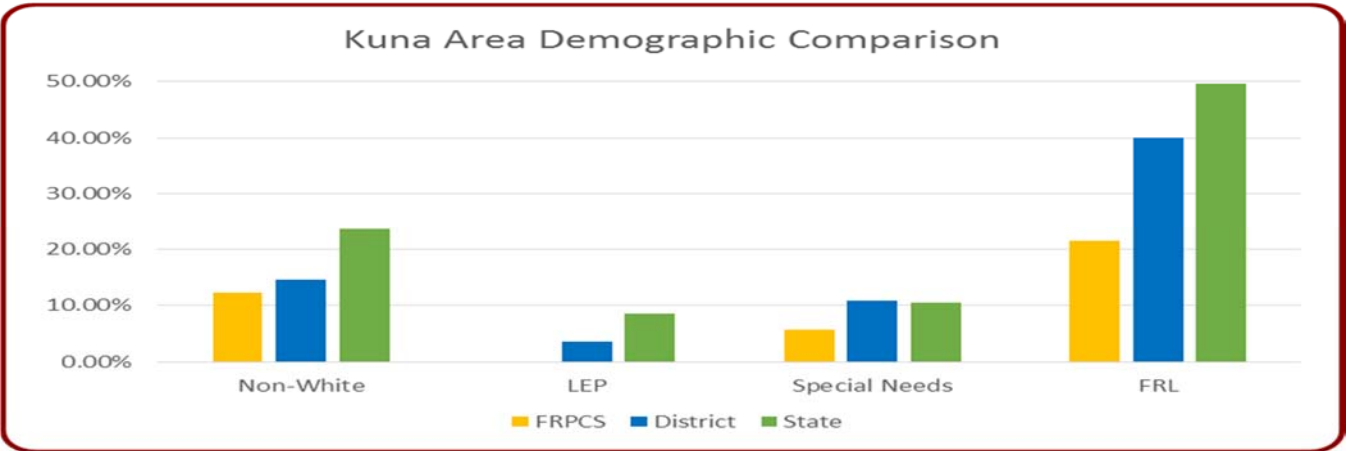


Jerome Area Grades K-8
ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced



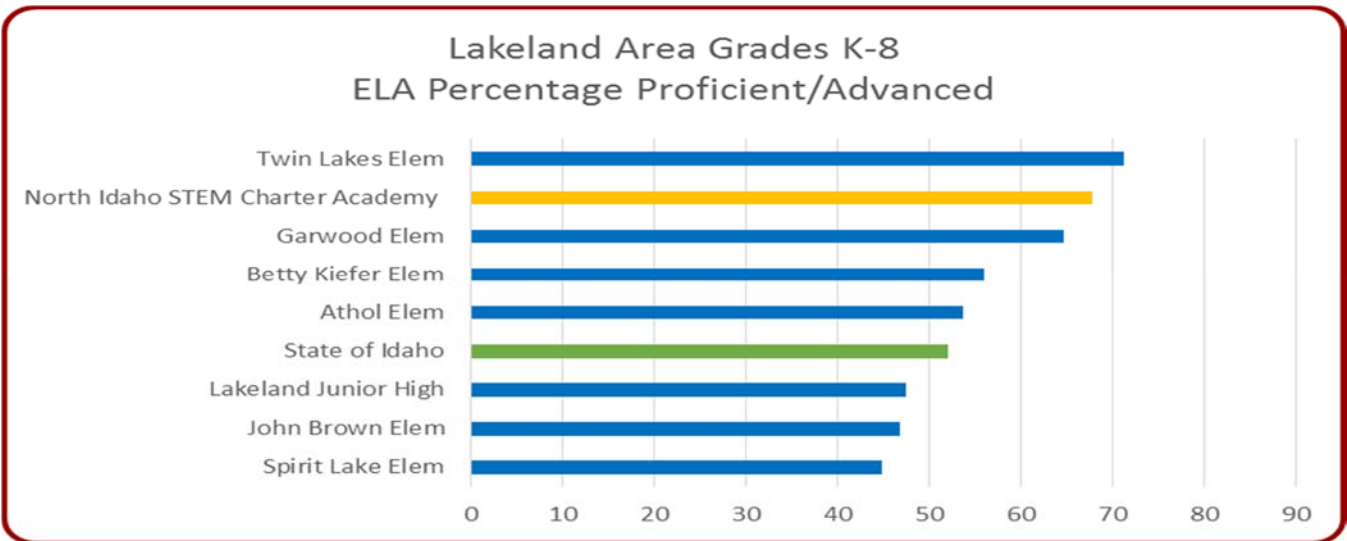
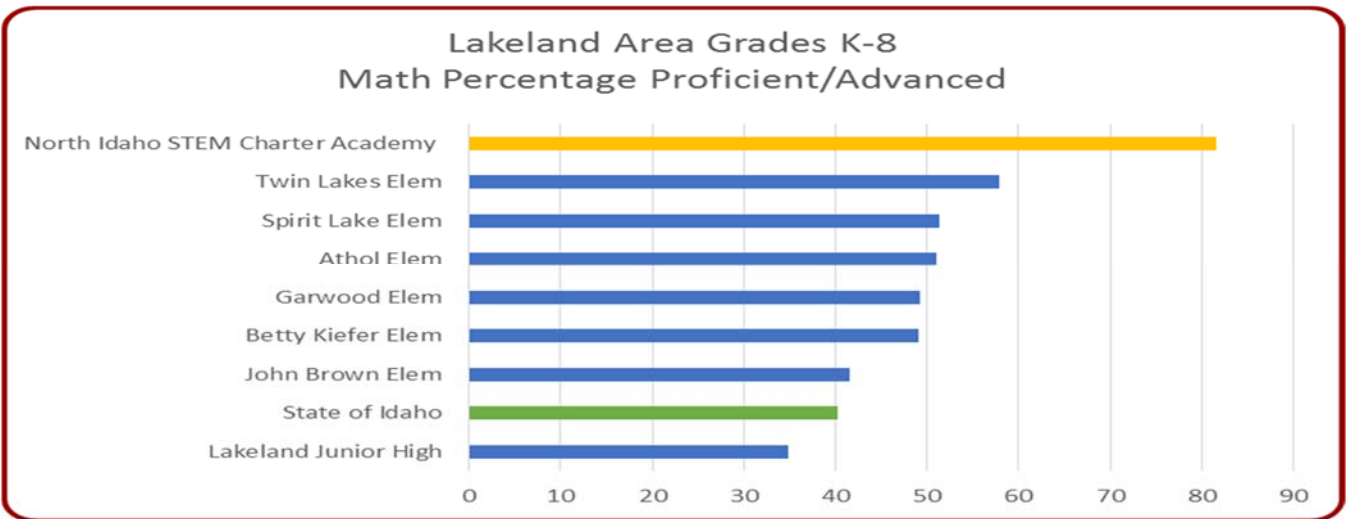
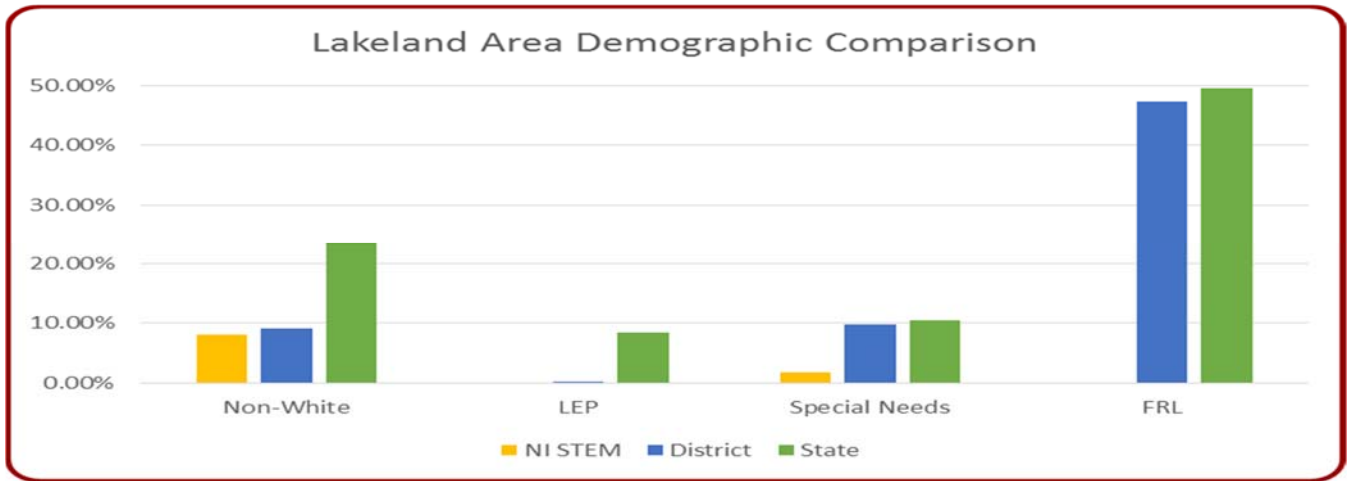
Kuna Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Kuna area: Falcon Ridge Public Charter School (K-8).



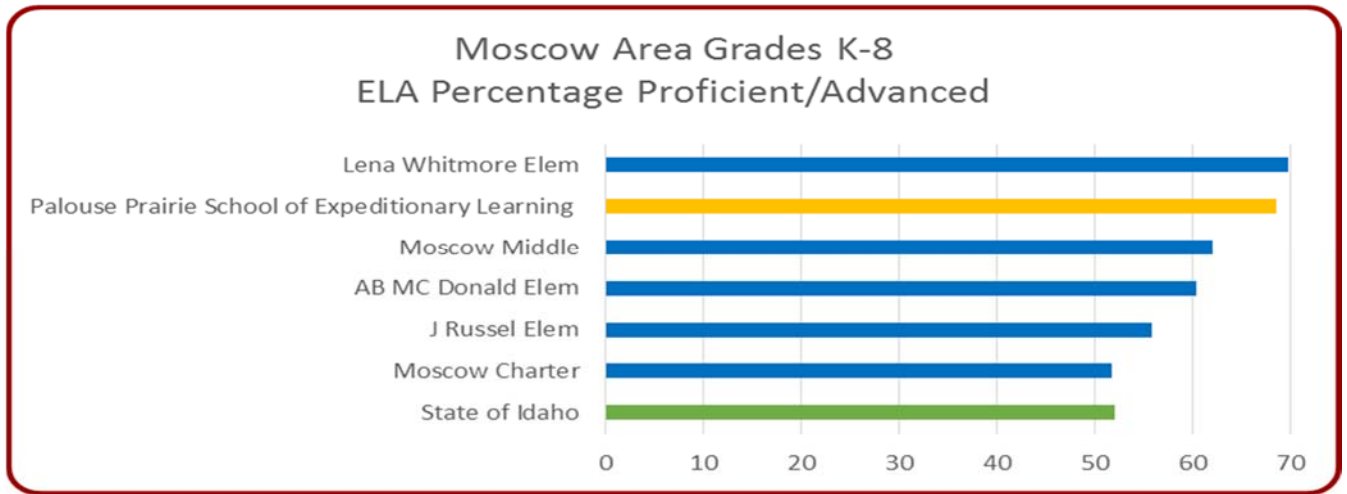
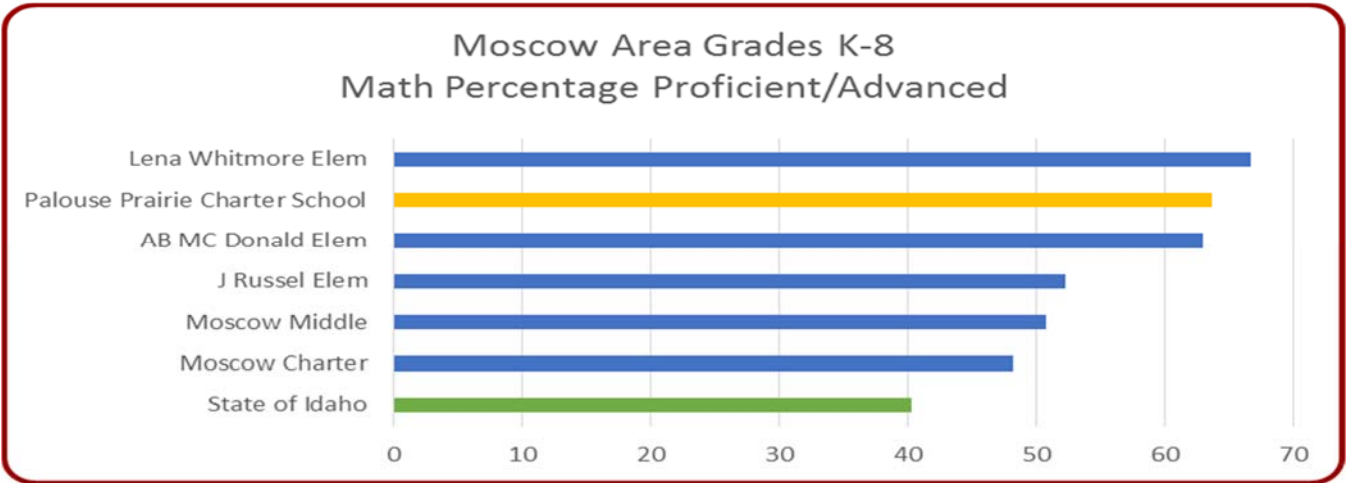
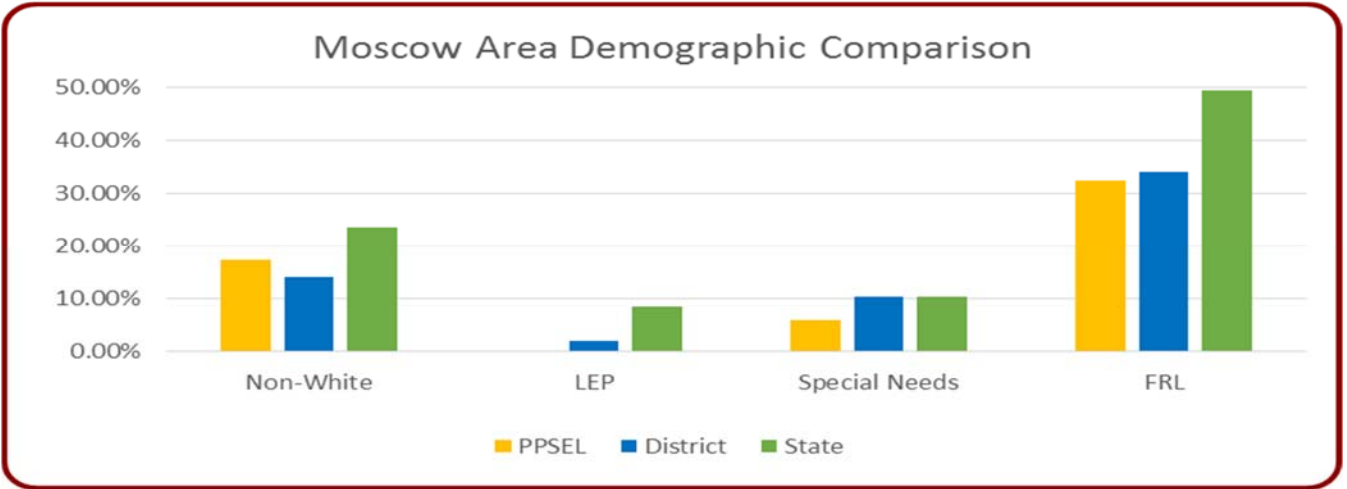
Lakeland Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Lakeland area: North Idaho STEM Charter Academy (K-9).



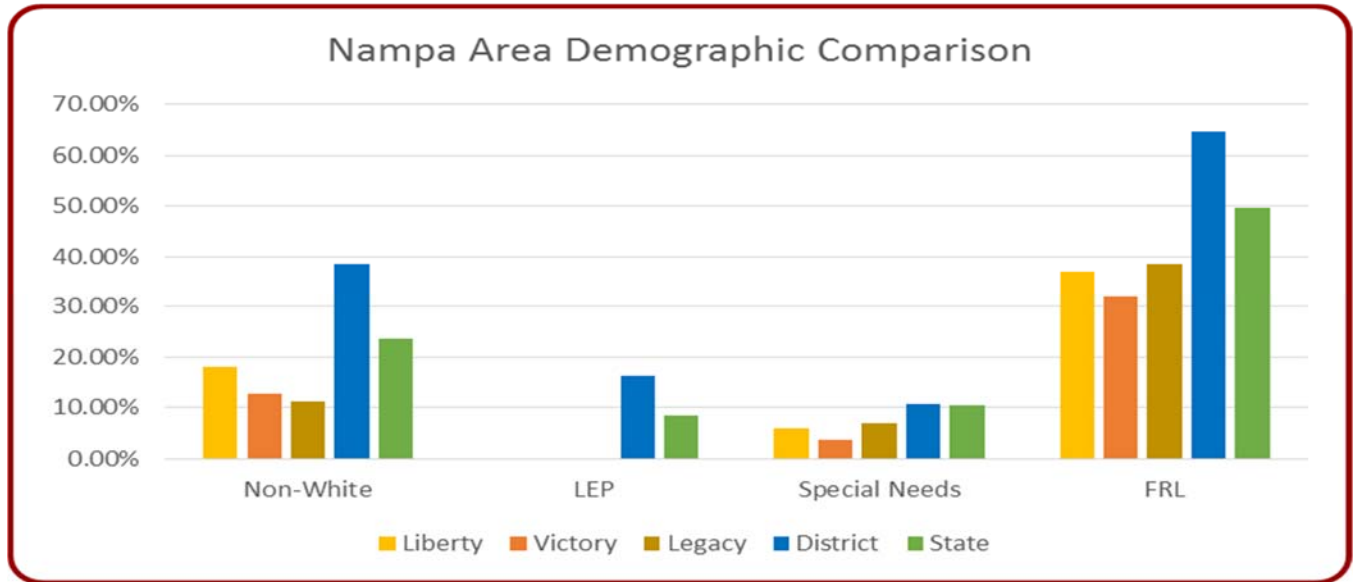
Moscow Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Moscow area: Palouse Prairie Charter School (K-8).

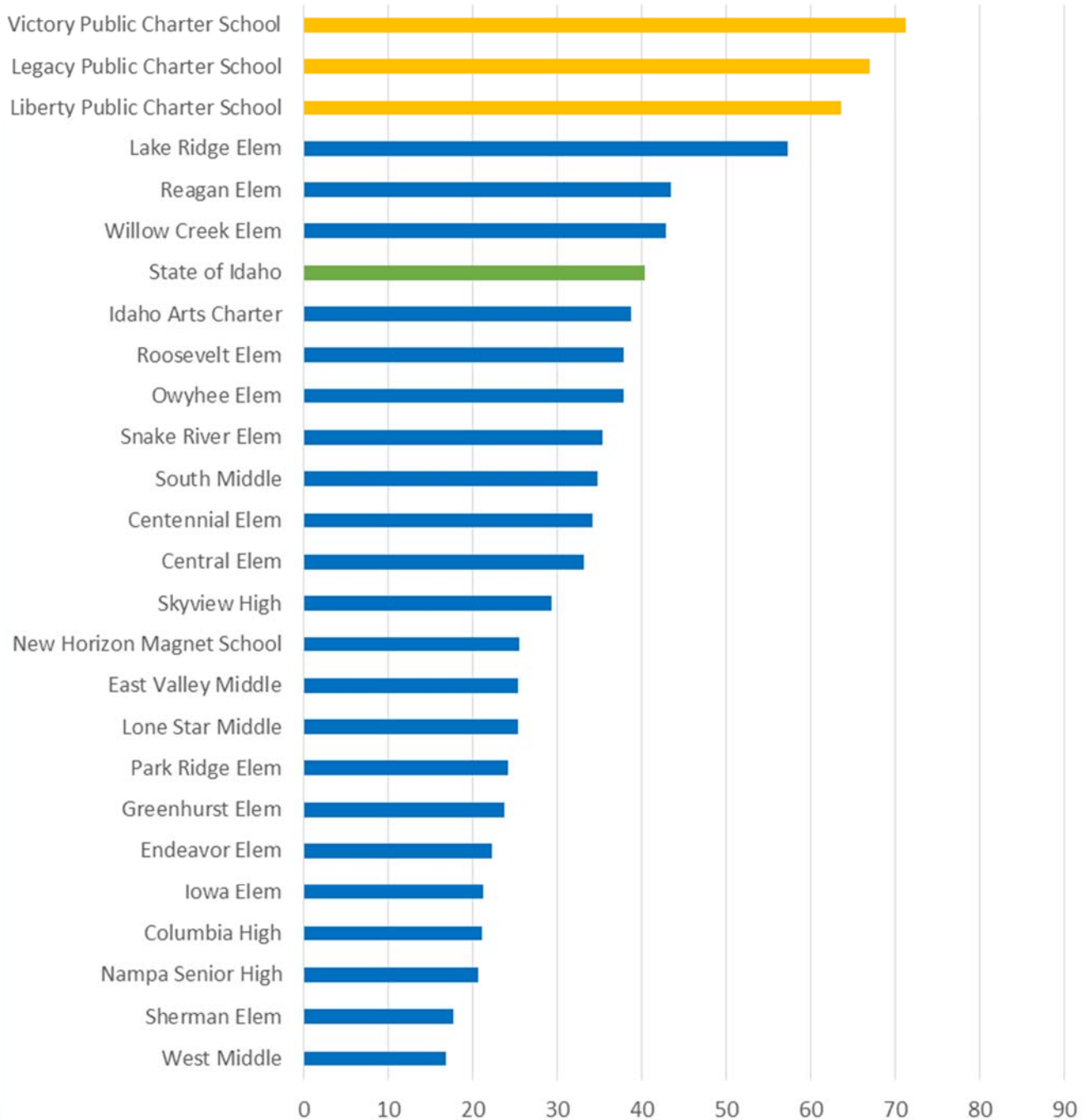


Nampa Area Comparison Data

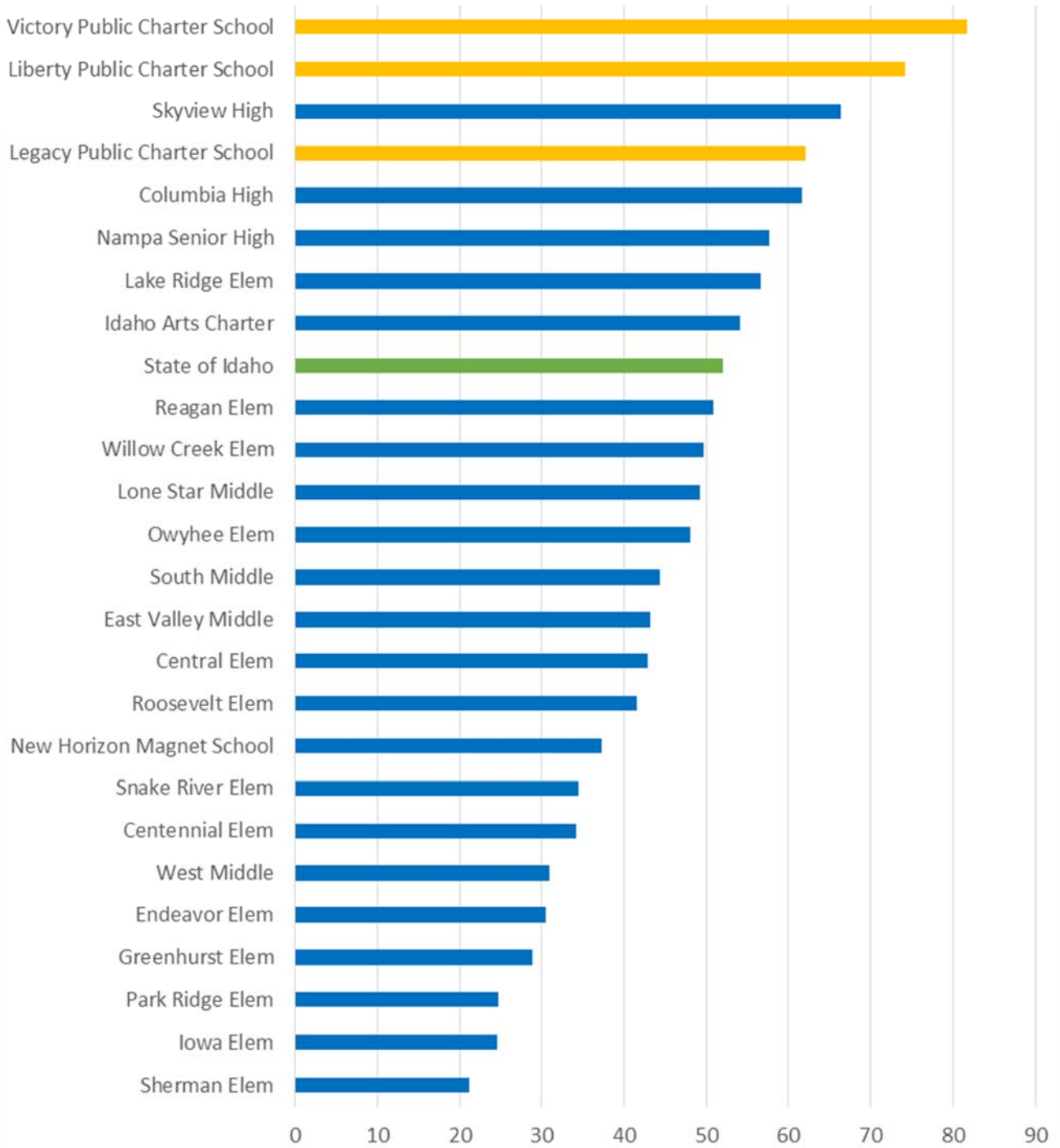
The PCSC authorizes three schools in the Nampa area: Liberty Charter School (K-12), Victory Charter School (K-12), and Legacy Charter School (K-8).



Nampa Area Grades K-12 Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced

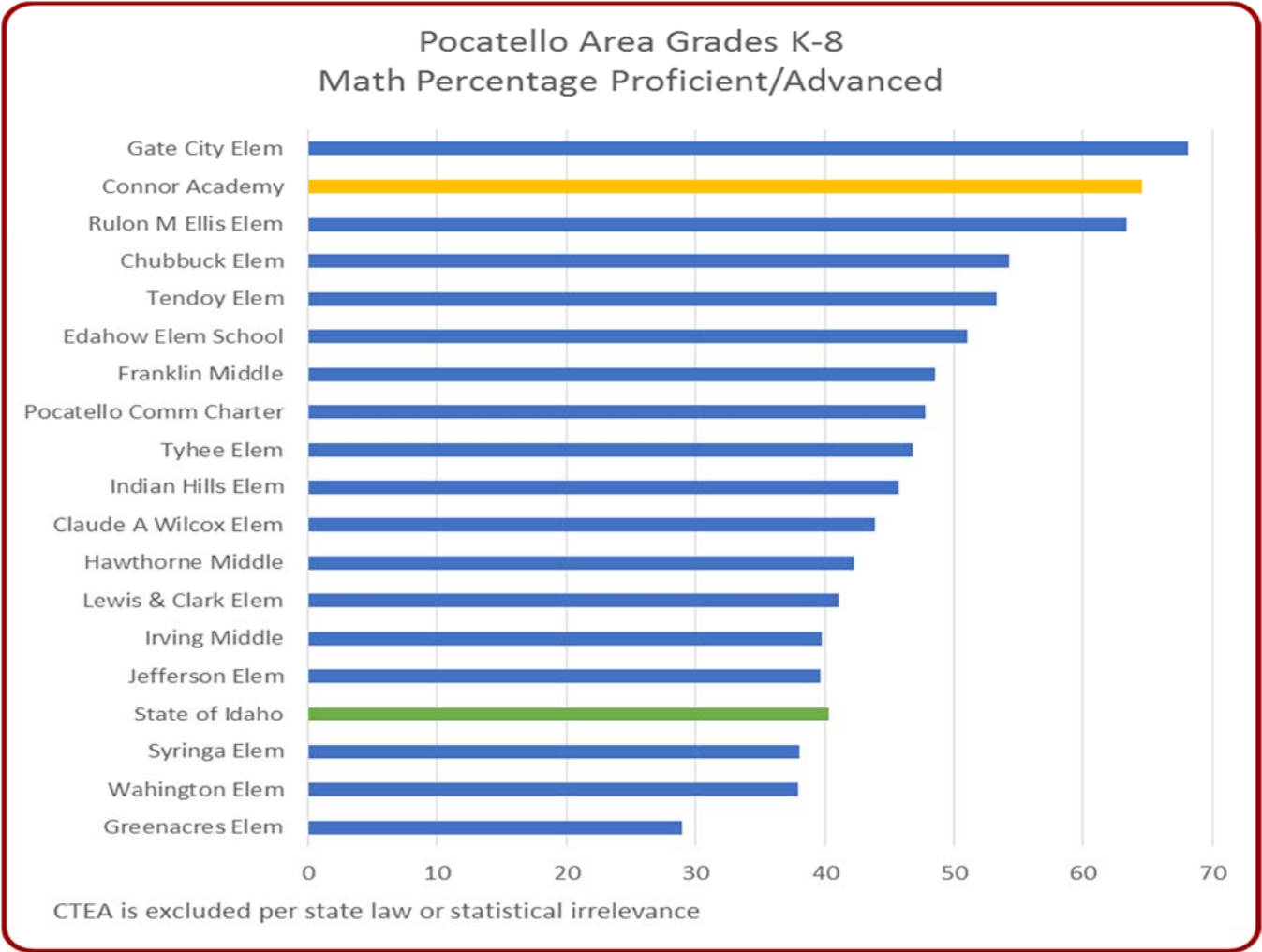
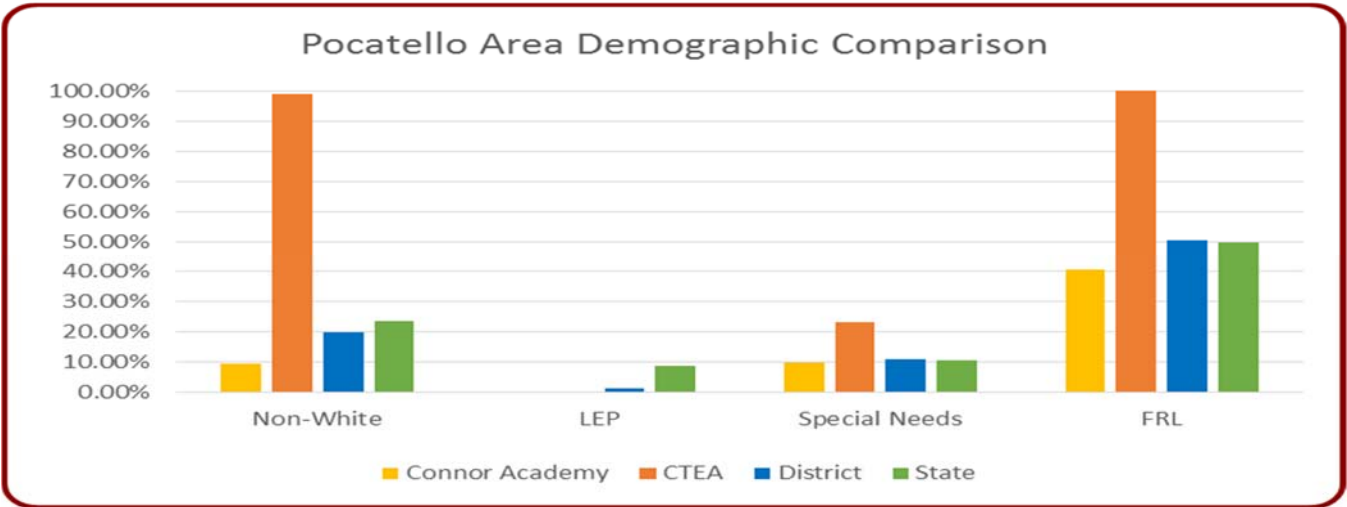


Nampa Area Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced

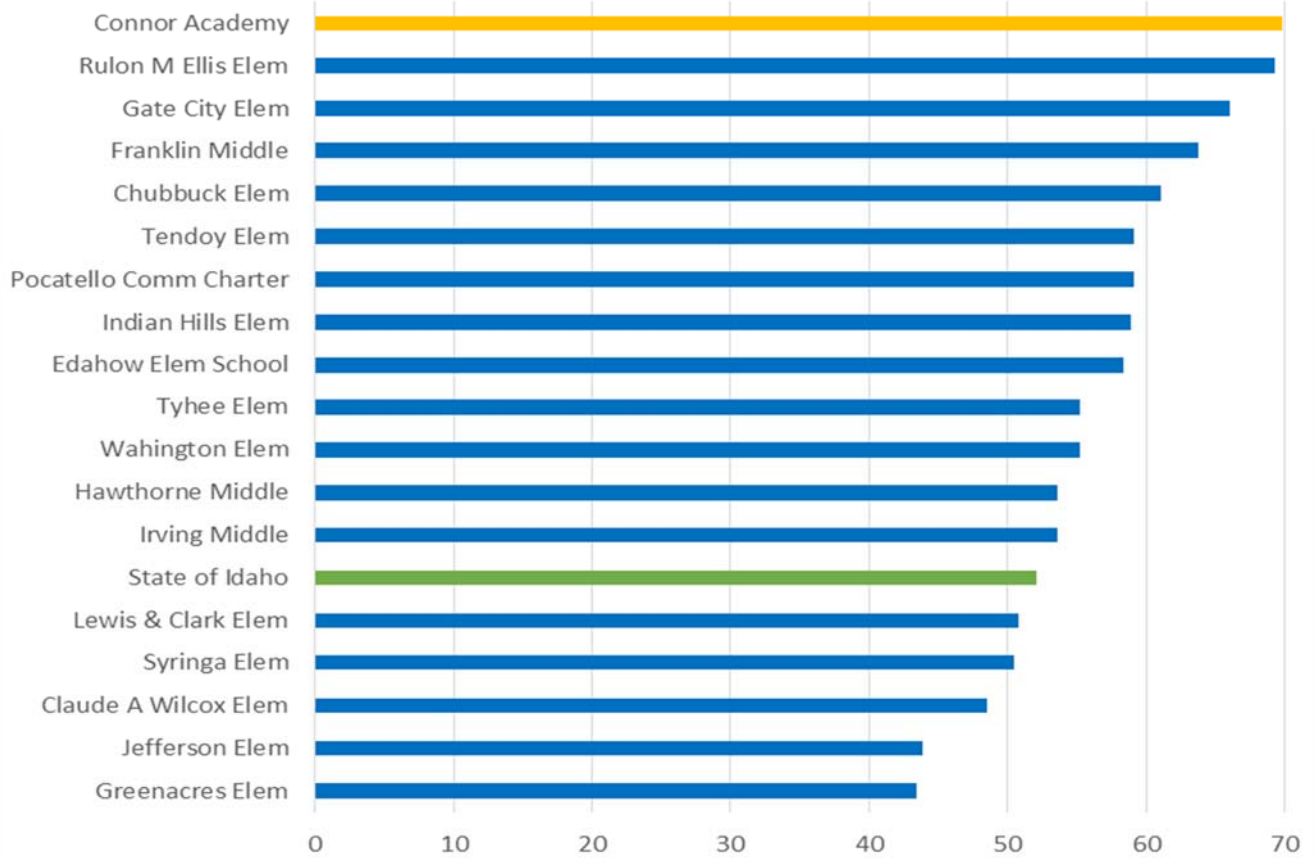


Pocatello Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes two schools in the Pocatello area: Connor Academy (K-8), formerly known as The Academy, and Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy (K-8).



Pocatello Area Grades K-8 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced

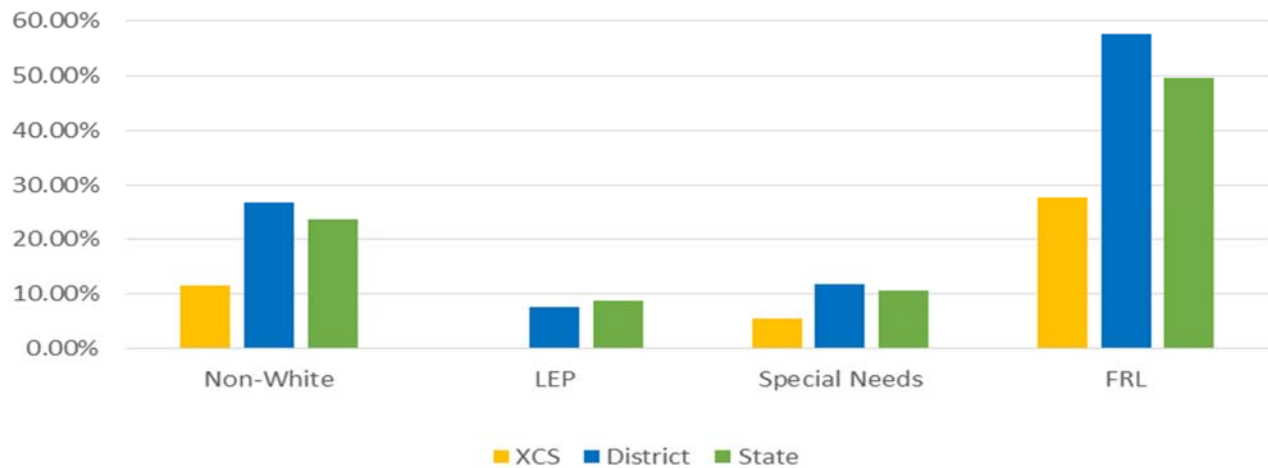


CTEA is excluded per state law or statistical irrelevance

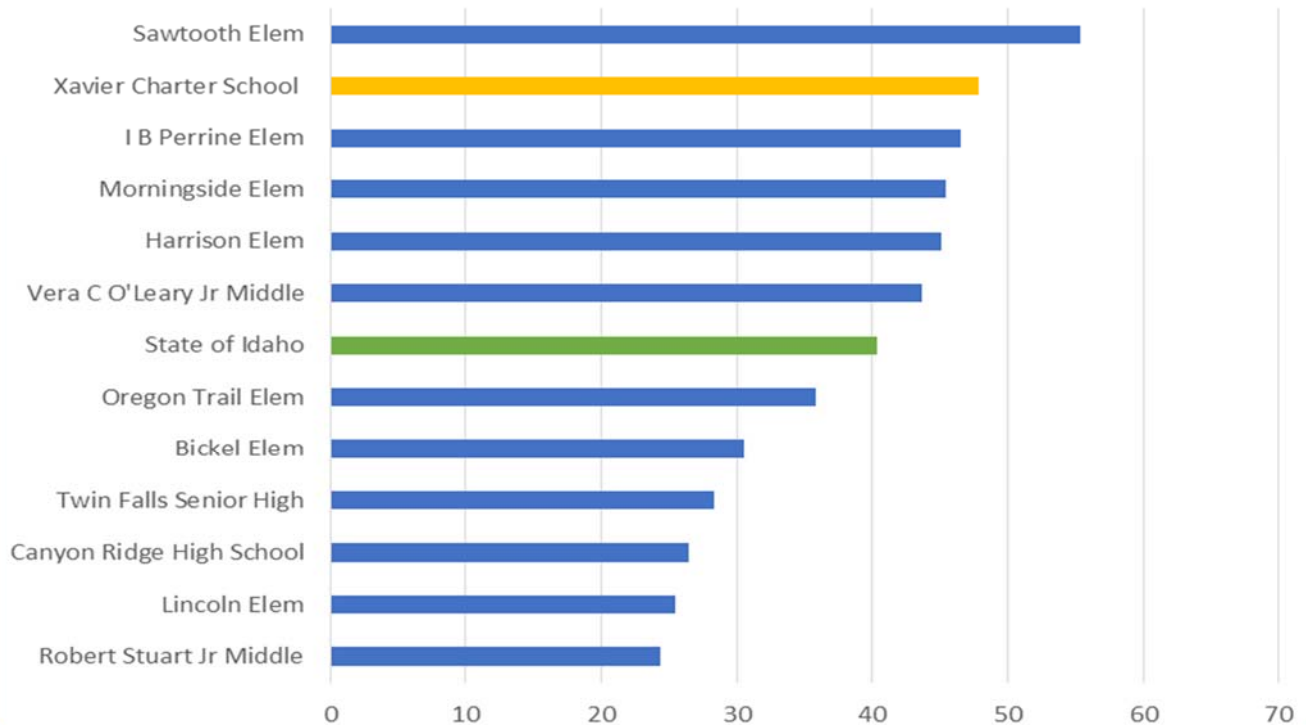
Twin Falls Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Twin Falls area: Xavier Charter School (K-12).

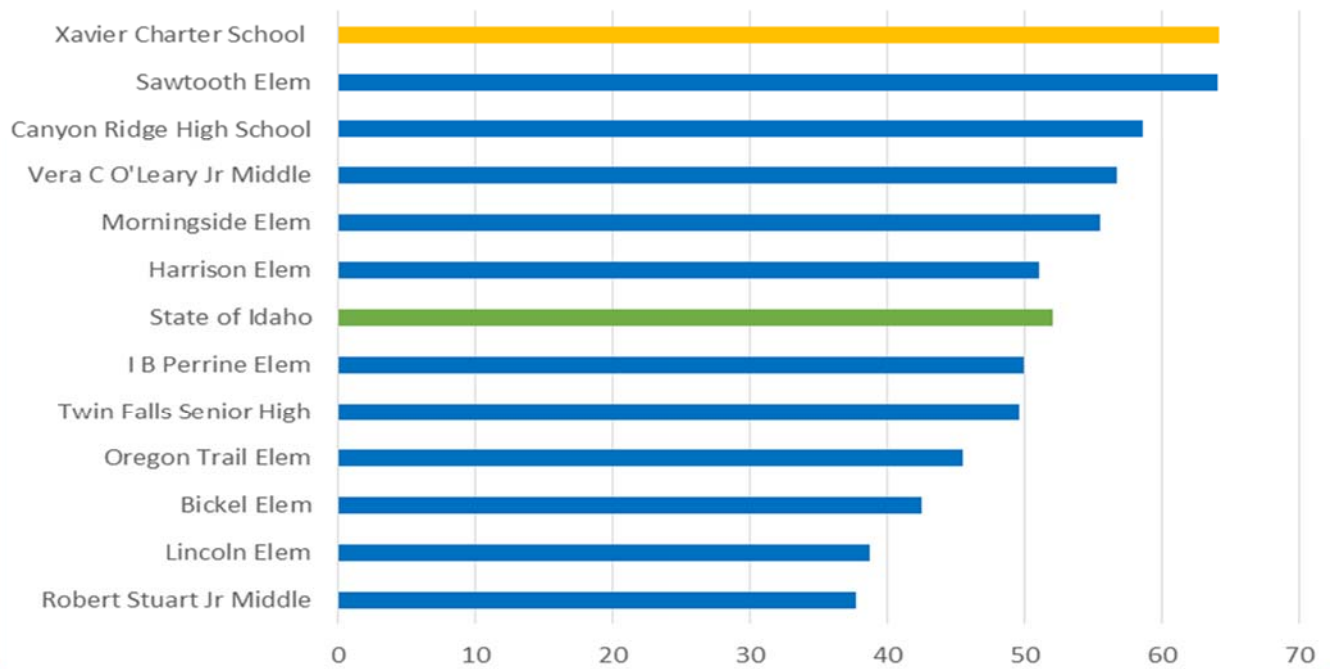
Twin Falls Area Demographic Comparison



Twin Falls Area Grades K-12 Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced



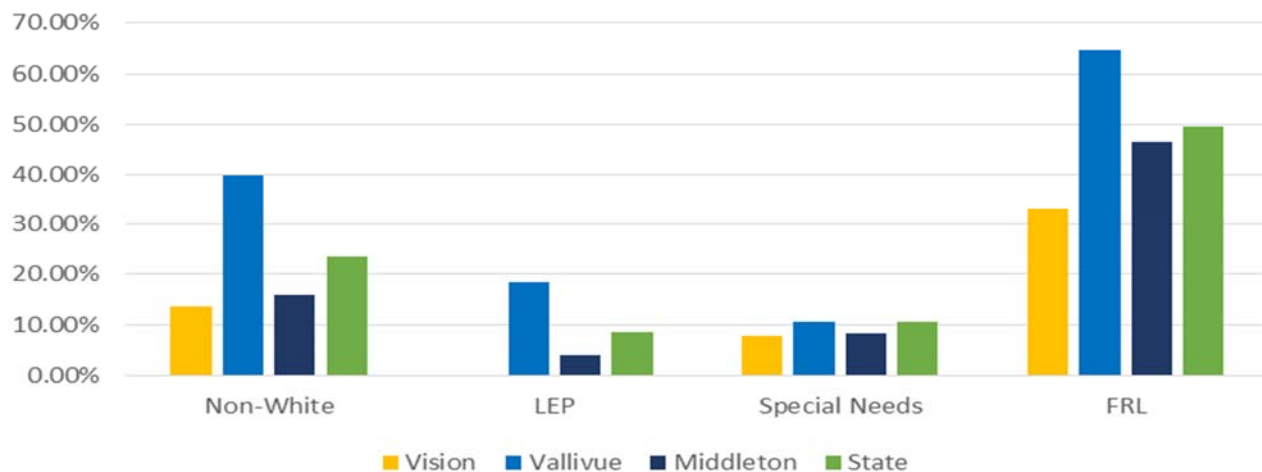
Twin Falls Area Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced



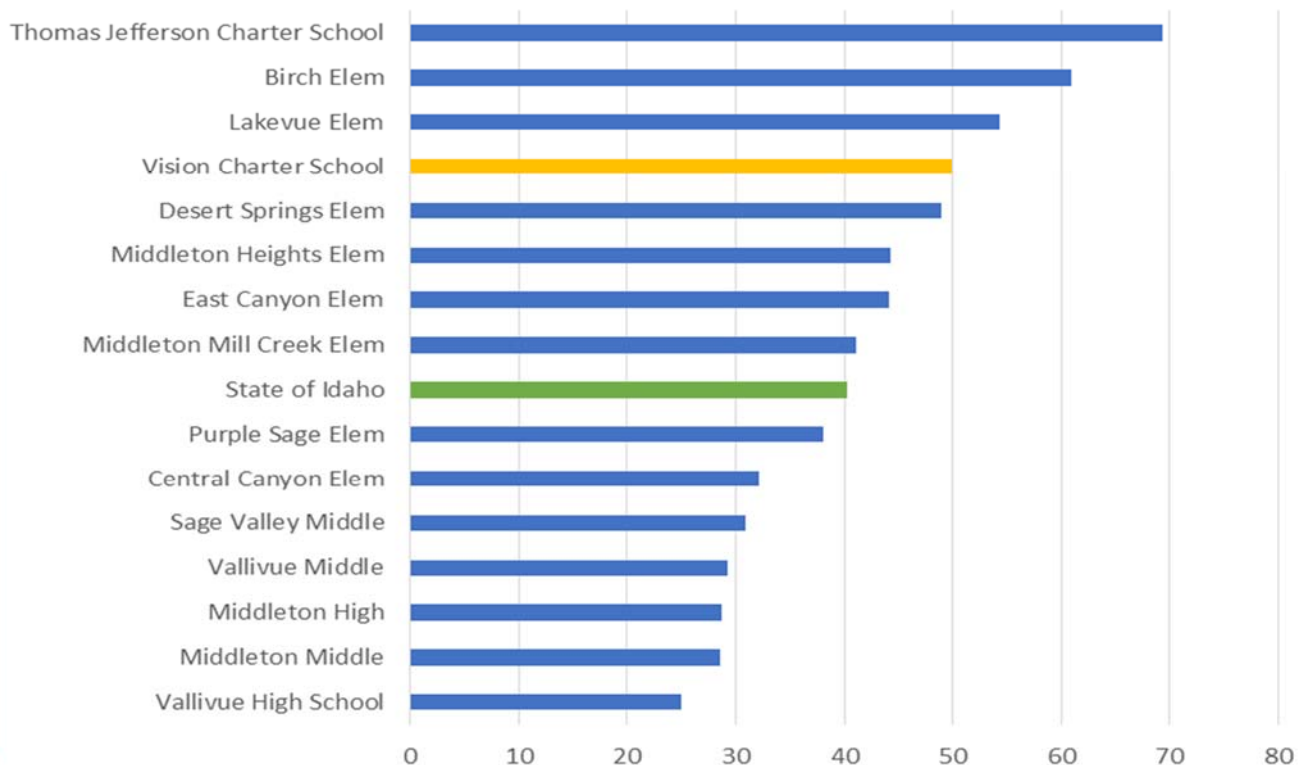
Vallivue/Middleton Area Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes one school in the Vallivue/Middleton area: Vision Charter School (K-12).

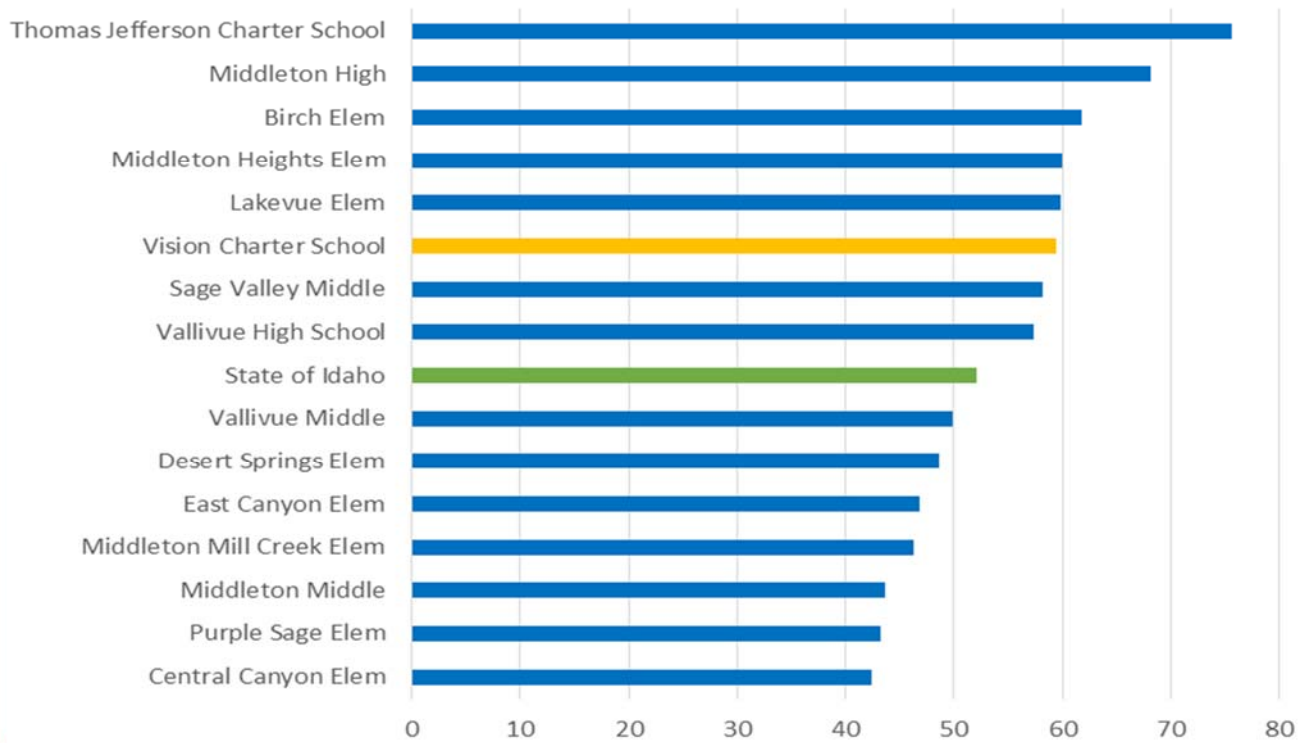
Vallivue/Middleton Area Demographic Comparison



Vallivue/Middleton Area Grades K-12
Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced

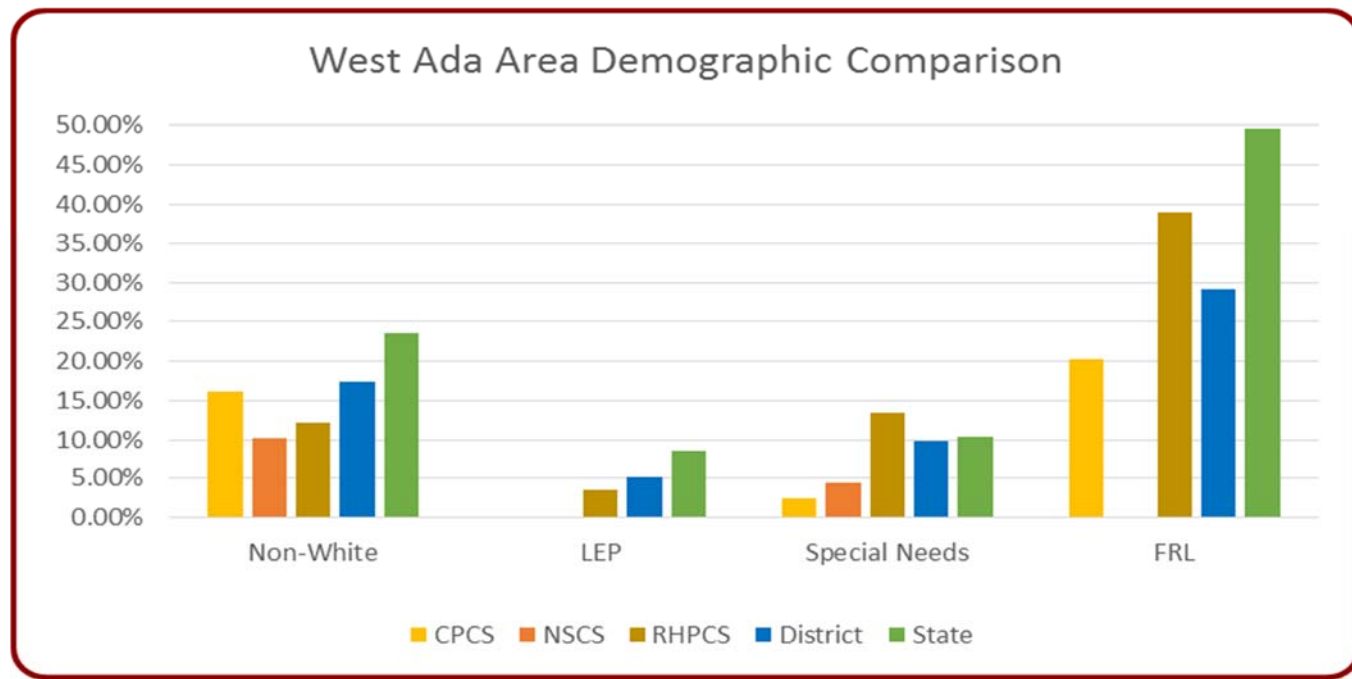


Vallivue/Middleton Area Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced

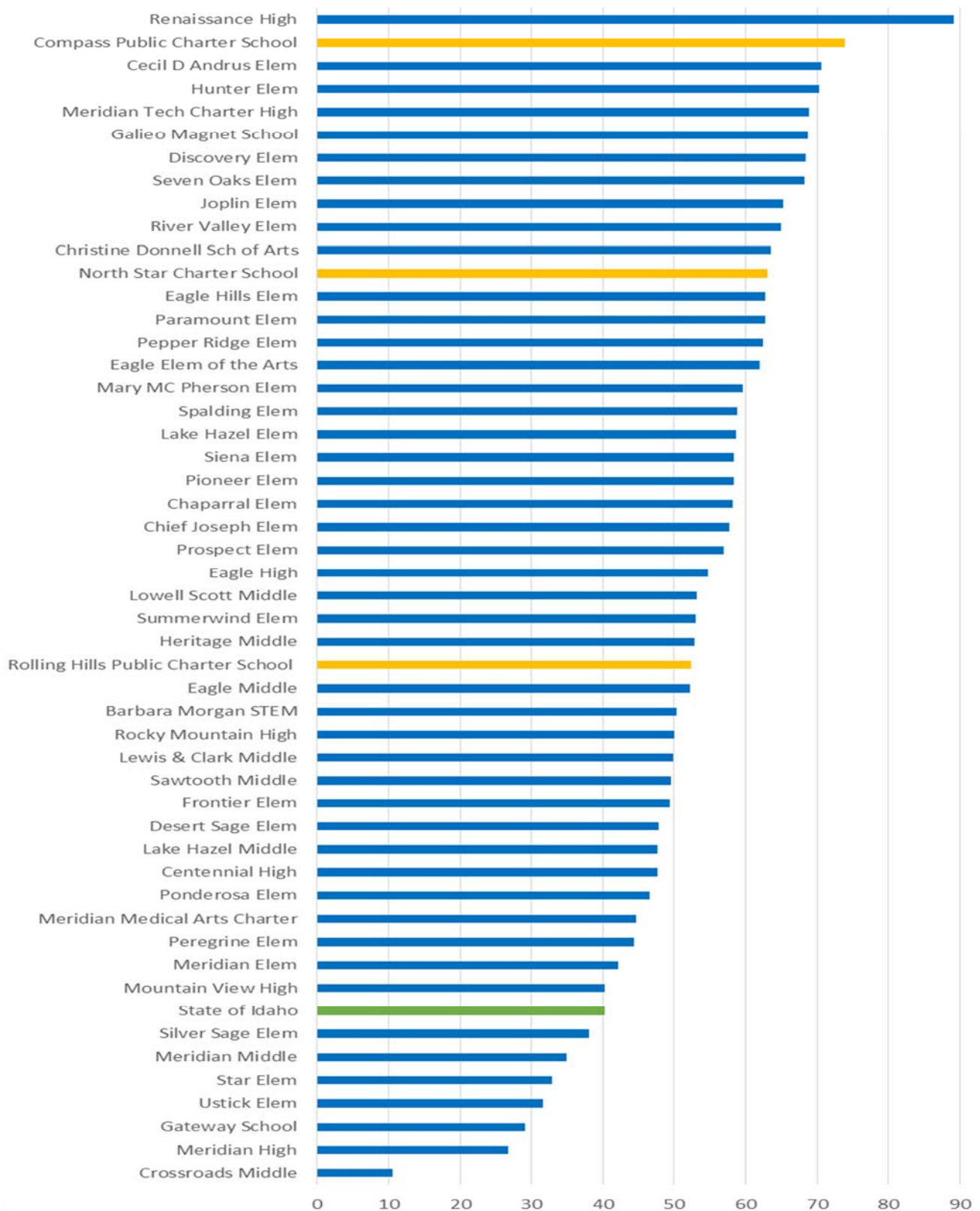


West Ada Area Comparison Data

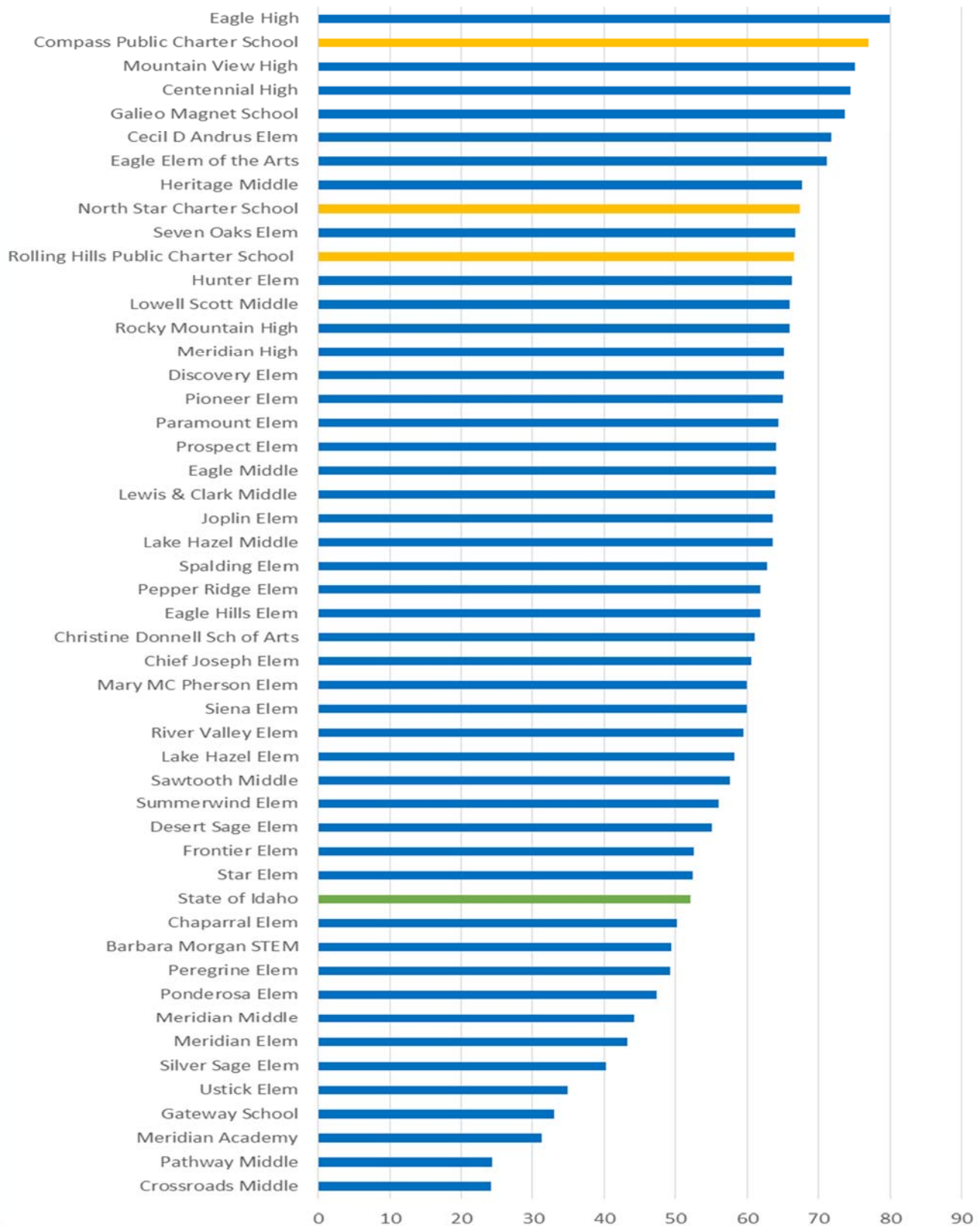
The PCSC authorizes three schools in the West Ada area: Compass Public Charter School (K-12), North Star Charter School (K-12), and Rolling Hills Public Charter School (K-8).



West Ada Area Grades K-12 Math Percentage Proficient/Advanced

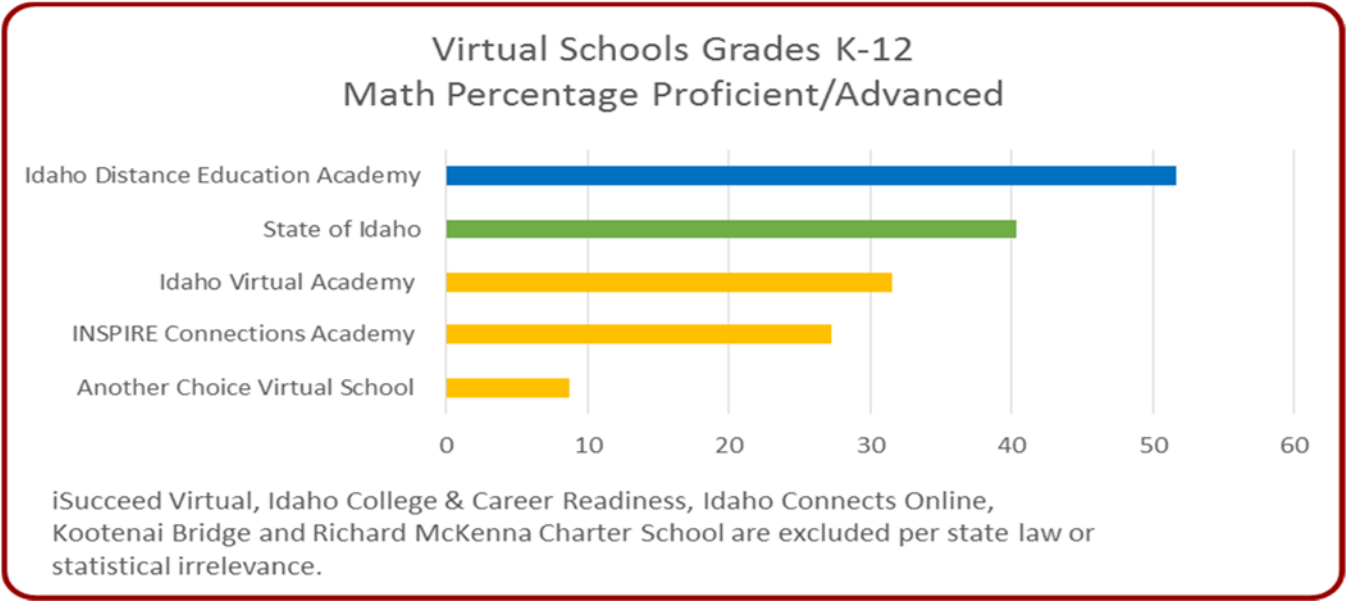
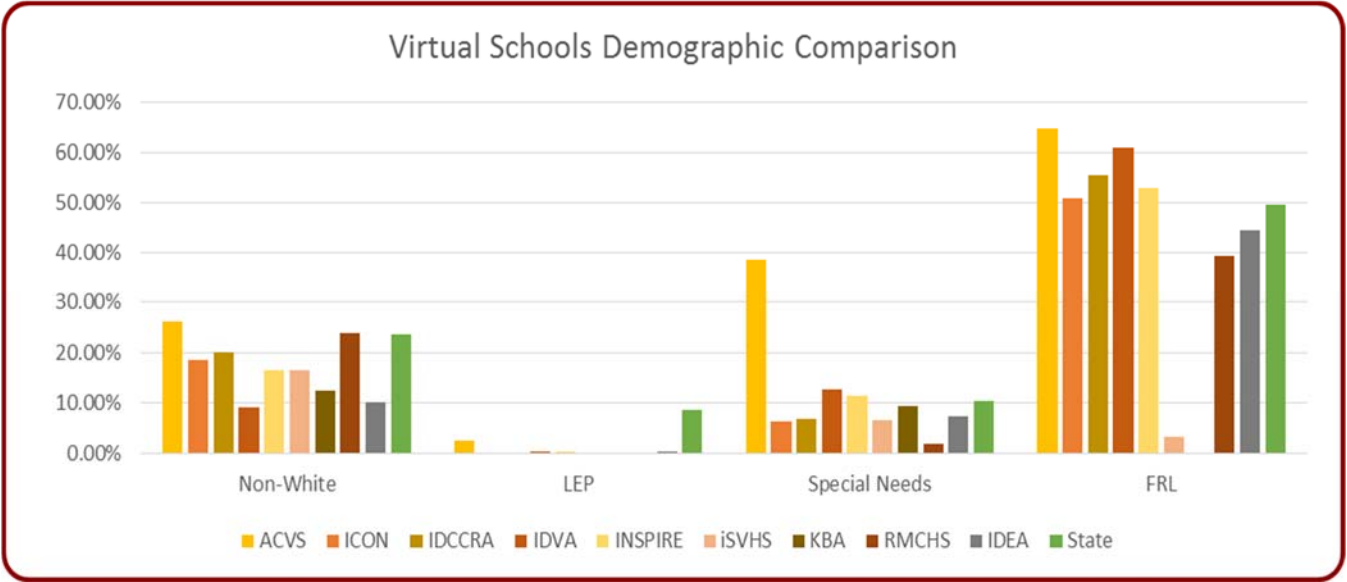


West Ada Area Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced

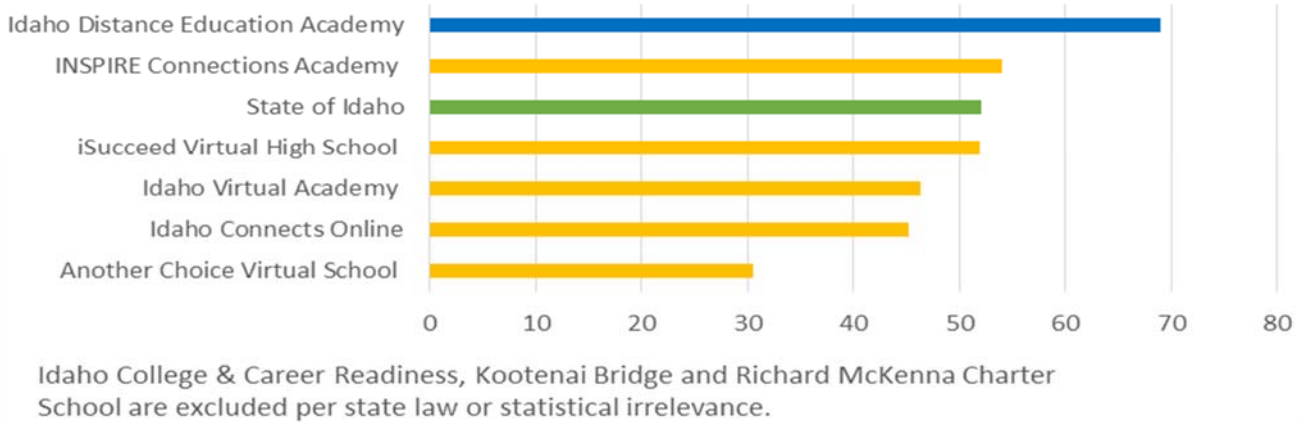


Virtual School Comparison Data

The PCSC authorizes eight virtual schools: Another Choice Virtual School (K-12), Idaho Connects Online (9-12), Idaho College and Career Readiness Academy, Idaho Virtual Academy (K-12), , INSPIRE Connections Academy (K-12), iSucceed Virtual High School (9-12), Kootenai Bridge Academy (11-12), and Richard McKenna Charter High School (9-12). ACVS and KBA serve students across multiple districts; the other schools serve students statewide. KBA and RMCHS’s virtual programs serve alternative student populations. Idaho Distance Education Academy (K-12) is a district-authorized virtual school, and is included here for comparison purposes.



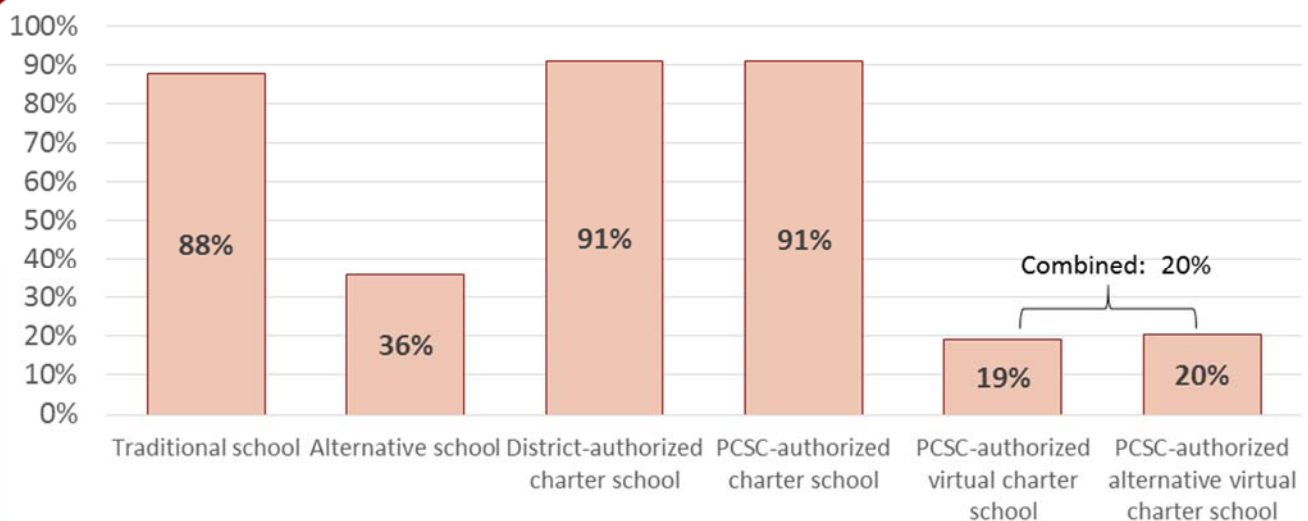
Virtual Schools Grades K-12 ELA Percentage Proficient/Advanced



Graduation Rates

The Idaho State Board of Education published the following comparison of high school graduation rates in January 2016. The chart reflects the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) required by the federal government for the Class of 2014. Due to a significant difference in methodology, these rates cannot be compared with those of 2013.

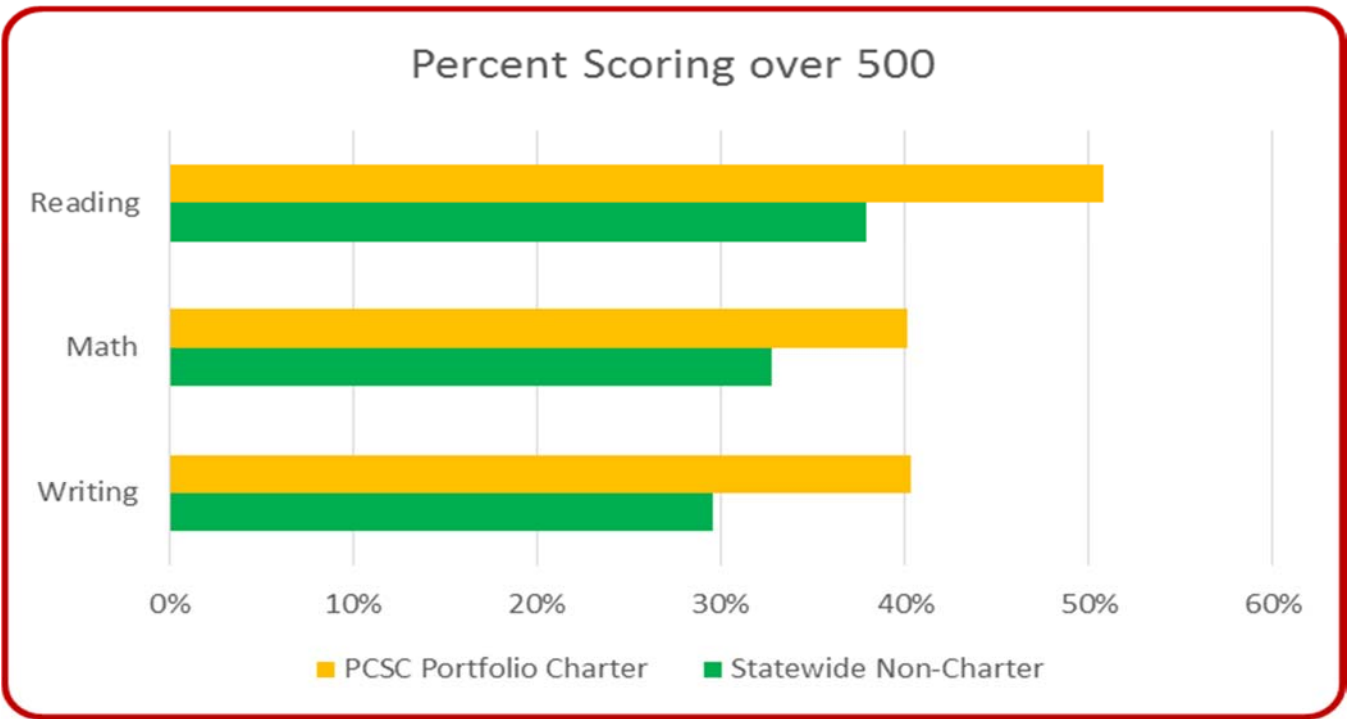
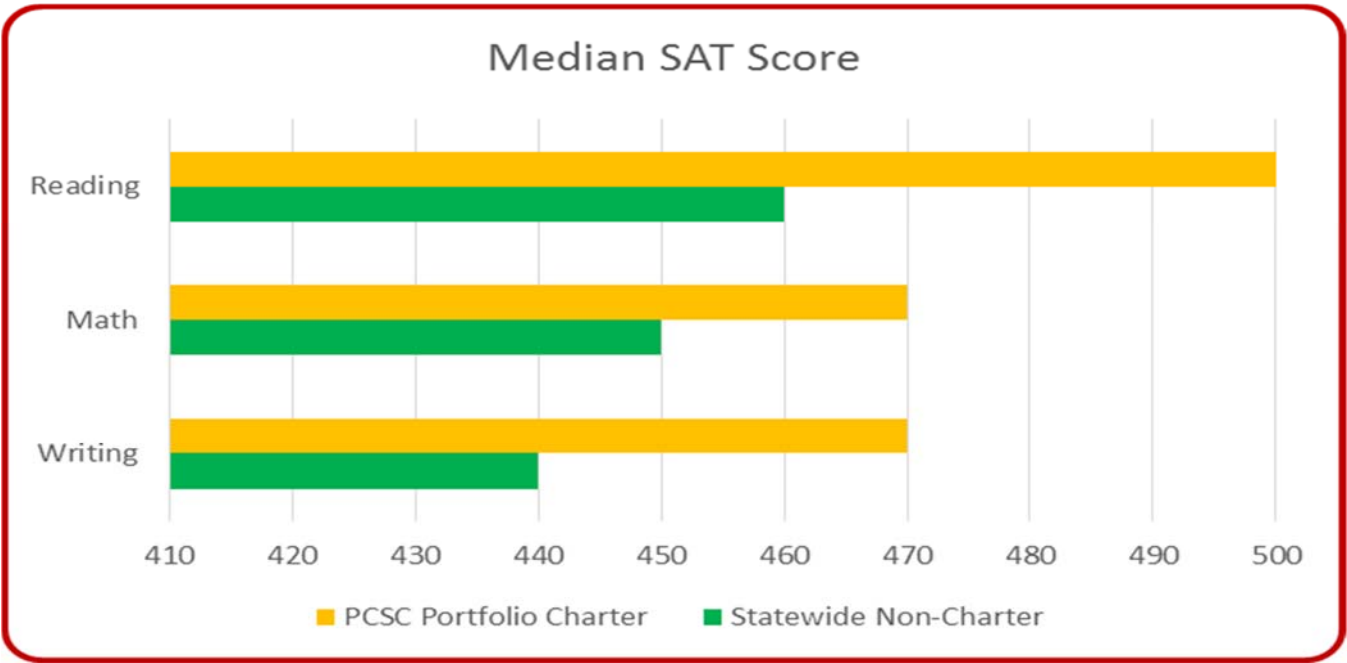
Brick-and-mortar charter schools in the PCSC's portfolio had slightly higher graduation rates than traditional public schools. Virtual schools had significantly lower rates. It may be that students who transfer to virtual schools are more likely to be behind their cohorts than students who transfer to other types of schools. This is a question that needs to be examined. Additionally, virtual schools were less likely than other types of schools to collect required exit data for their students. Students for whom exit data was not collected must be counted as if they did not graduate on time, unless they were recorded as enrolling at another Idaho school.



SAT Results

SAT results offer additional perspective regarding schools' academic outcomes. Students scoring over 500 on the SAT are considered "college ready."

The following charts compare SAT results for PCSC portfolio schools to those of non-charter schools statewide. The data reflects all 11th and 12th grade students who took the SAT during the 2014-15 school year. In cases where a student tested more than once, only the highest score is used. The non-charter category included 17,788 students; the PCSC portfolio category included 648 students.



Operational Outcomes

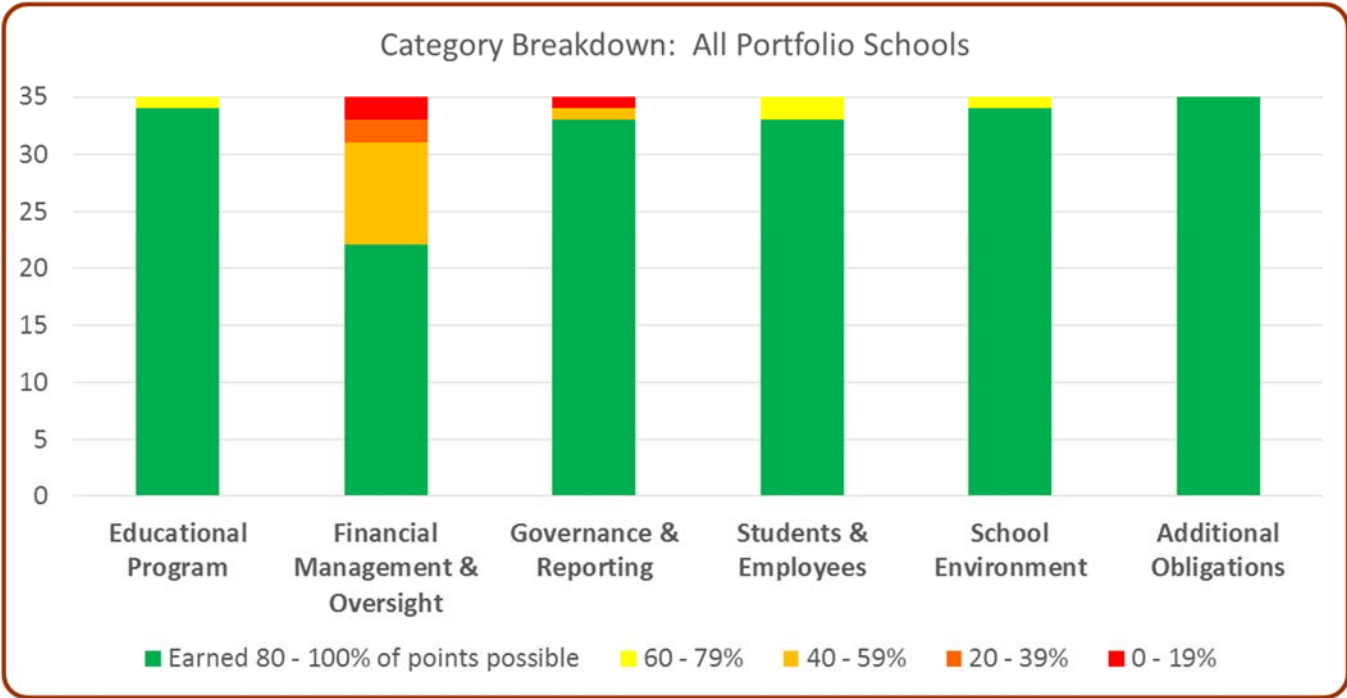
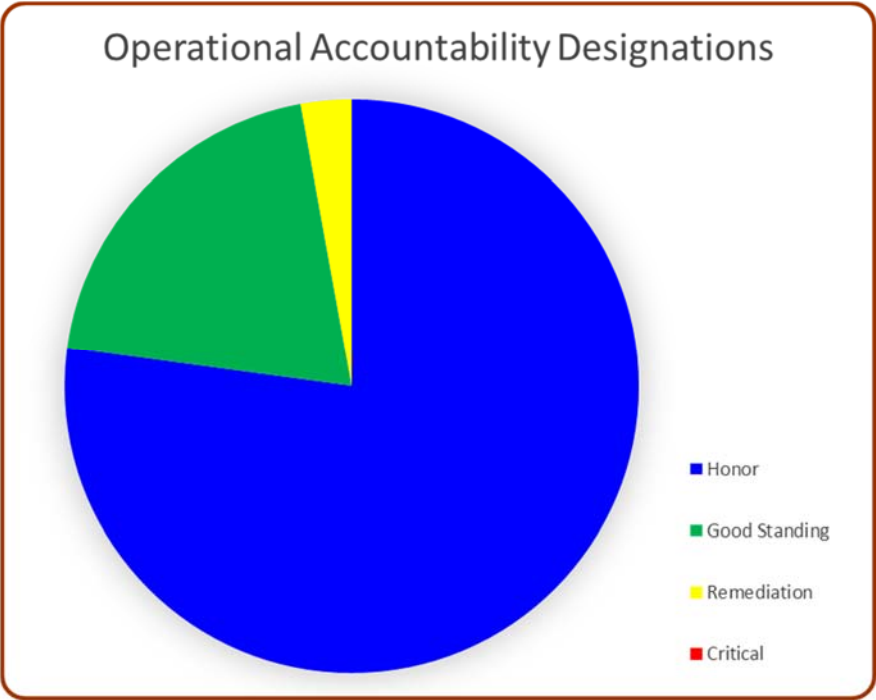
The operational section of the framework assesses a range of management and compliance outcomes.

Most of the measures are designed to reflect not only a school’s level of compliance, but also the expediency with which any occasions of non-compliance were resolved.

For example, a school that had special education findings during the year, but proceeded to correct them, will score higher than a school that failed to correct such findings. Similarly, a school that turned in one late report will score higher than a school whose reports were consistently tardy.

Most schools that lost points on operational measures struggled with late reporting, failure to meet transparency requirements, and/or fiscal audit findings.

In the majority of cases, improved results appear to be attainable by increased attention to due dates and professional development for board members and business management personnel.



Financial Outcomes

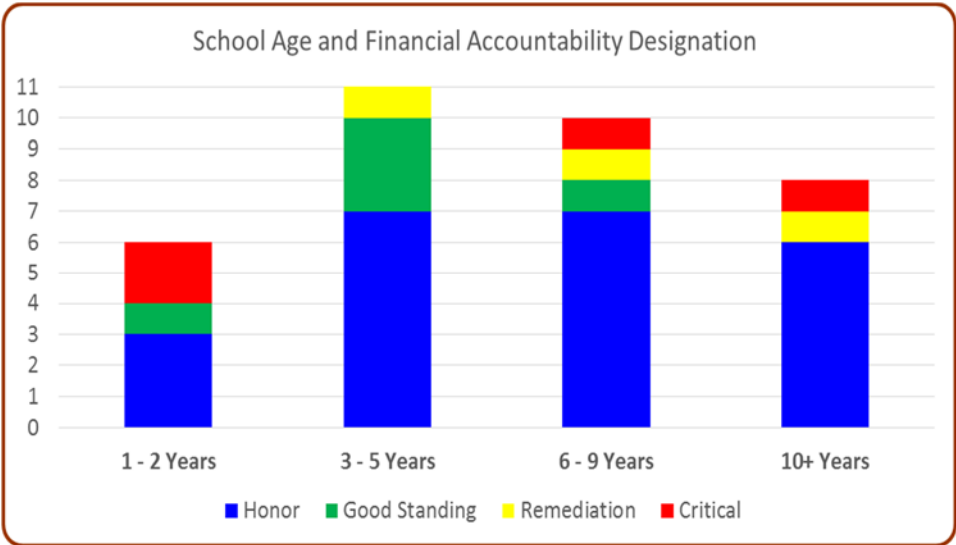
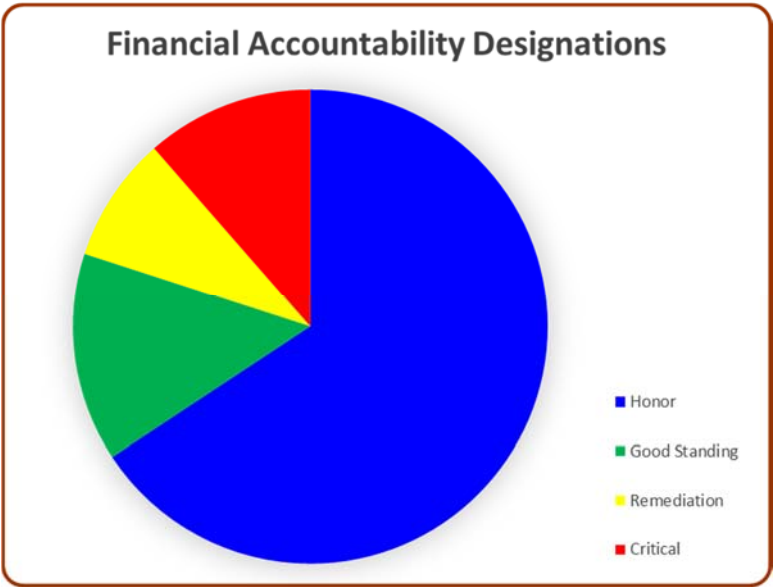
Idaho’s public charter schools received \$94,231,644 in state funding during FY15.

Finances represent one of the most common areas in which public charter schools struggle, both in Idaho and nationwide. The Center for Education Reform’s 2011 “The State of Charter Schools” report indicated that about 47% of charter school closures occurred for financial or facility reasons, compared to 19% for academic and 34% for operational or other causes. More recent reports indicate a shift toward closures based on academic shortcomings.

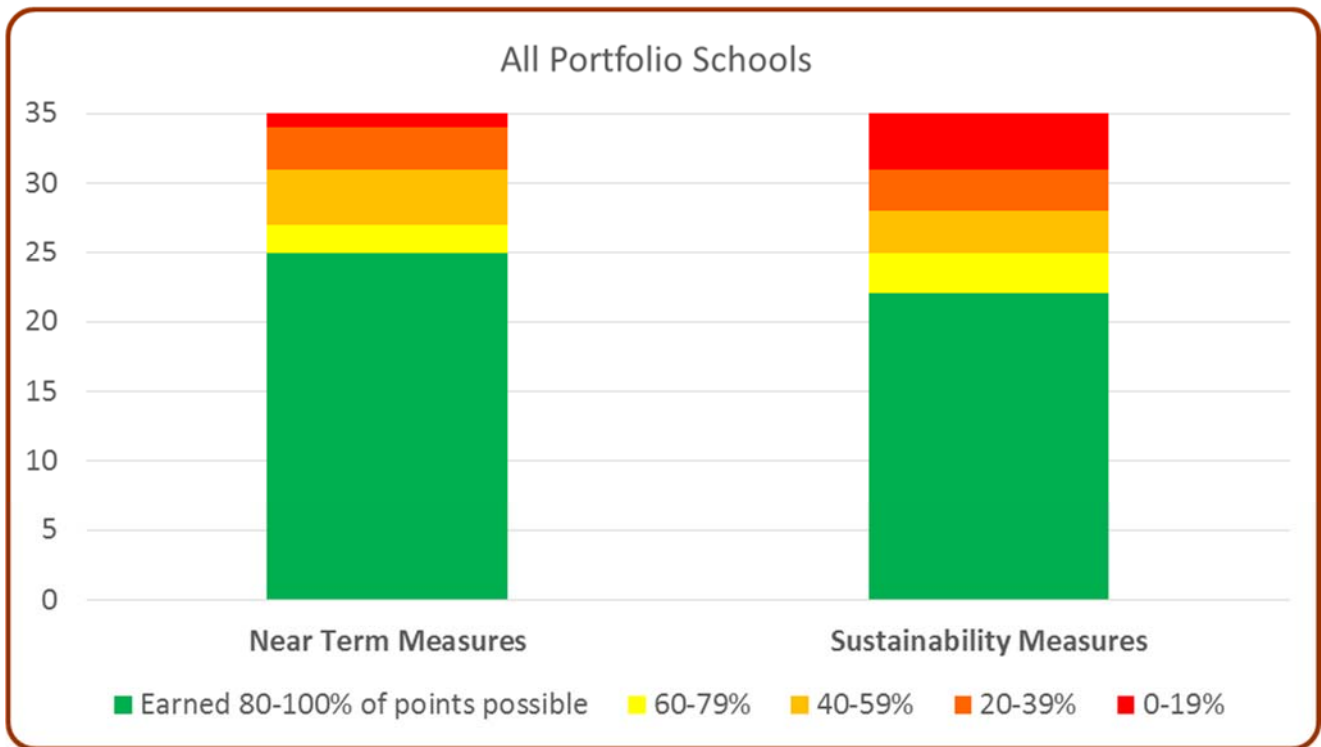
The PCSC’s performance framework evaluates schools’ near-term financial health and long-term viability. “Near-term” generally refers to the fiscal year following the audit, while “sustainability” refers to the school’s viability two or more years in the future. Data is taken mostly from independent fiscal audits, in addition to unit calculation worksheets and ISEE reports.

While the financial measures in the framework serve as an excellent starting place for evaluating schools’ financial status, context is critical for full understanding of a school’s viability. The data provided here represents scores only; contextual information is available in schools’ individual reports.

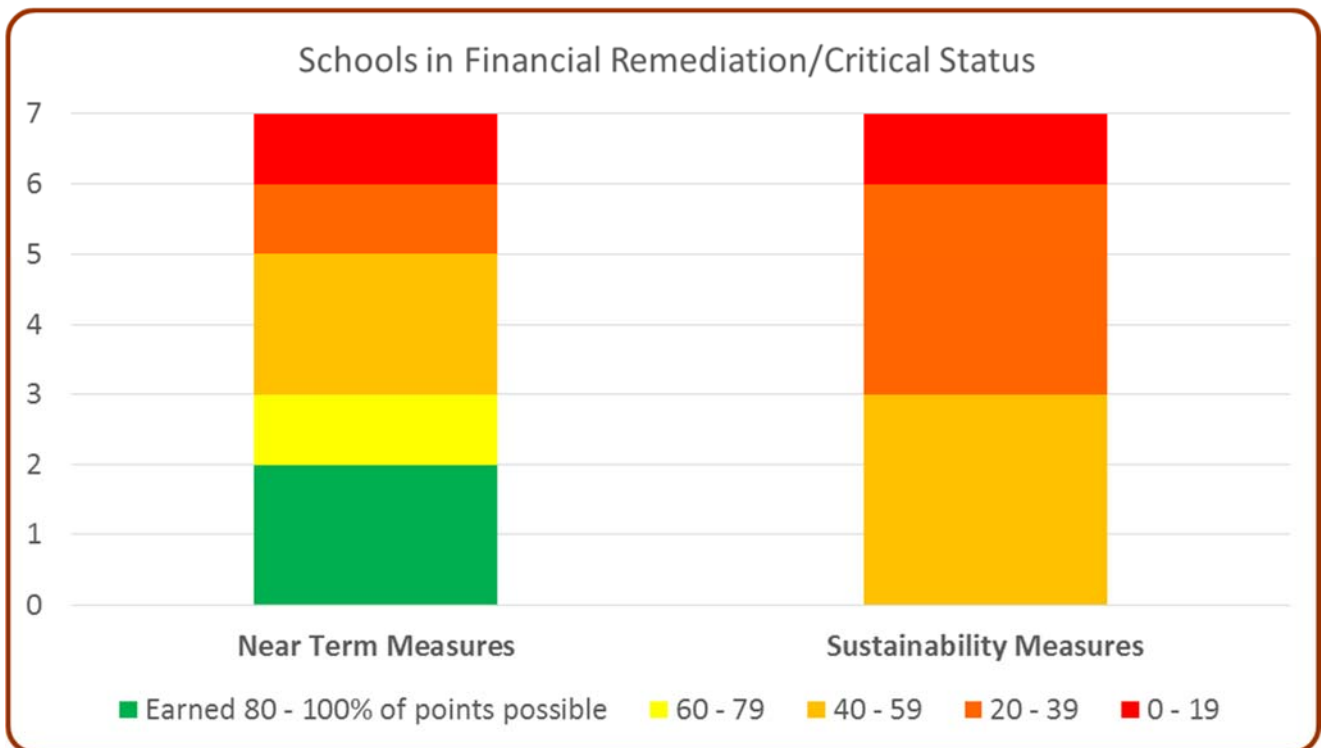
The financial status of PCSC portfolio schools ranges widely. A minority of schools face substantial concern, while 80% are presently in Honor or Good Standing status.



School maturity may be a factor in financial stability. Older PCSC portfolio schools appear more likely to be more financially stable than younger schools. However, longitudinal data will need to be collected in order to determine whether schools’ financial status tends to improve over time. It should be noted that financially weak schools are much more likely to close during their early years of operation.



The majority of PCSC portfolio schools score well on near-term measures. Financial sustainability is of somewhat greater concern, with nearly one-third of schools earning fewer than 60% of points possible in this category.



Nearly all of the seven schools falling into the accountability designations of Remediation and Critical face both near-term and sustainability concerns. Review of individual schools' reports provides contextual information.

Demographics

Minority ethnicity, Limited English Proficiency, Special Needs, and Free & Reduced Lunch populations tend to be underrepresented at PCSC portfolio schools by comparison to both state and district levels. Due largely to small sample sizes, inadequate data is available to identify the reasons for these demographic disparities.

However, in the interest of moving toward a more representative public charter school population, the PCSC has redoubled its efforts to urge new petitioners to provide student transportation and food service; locate their schools in diverse, “walkable” communities whenever possible; tailor recruitment efforts to reach all demographic groups; and budget adequately for provision of student services.

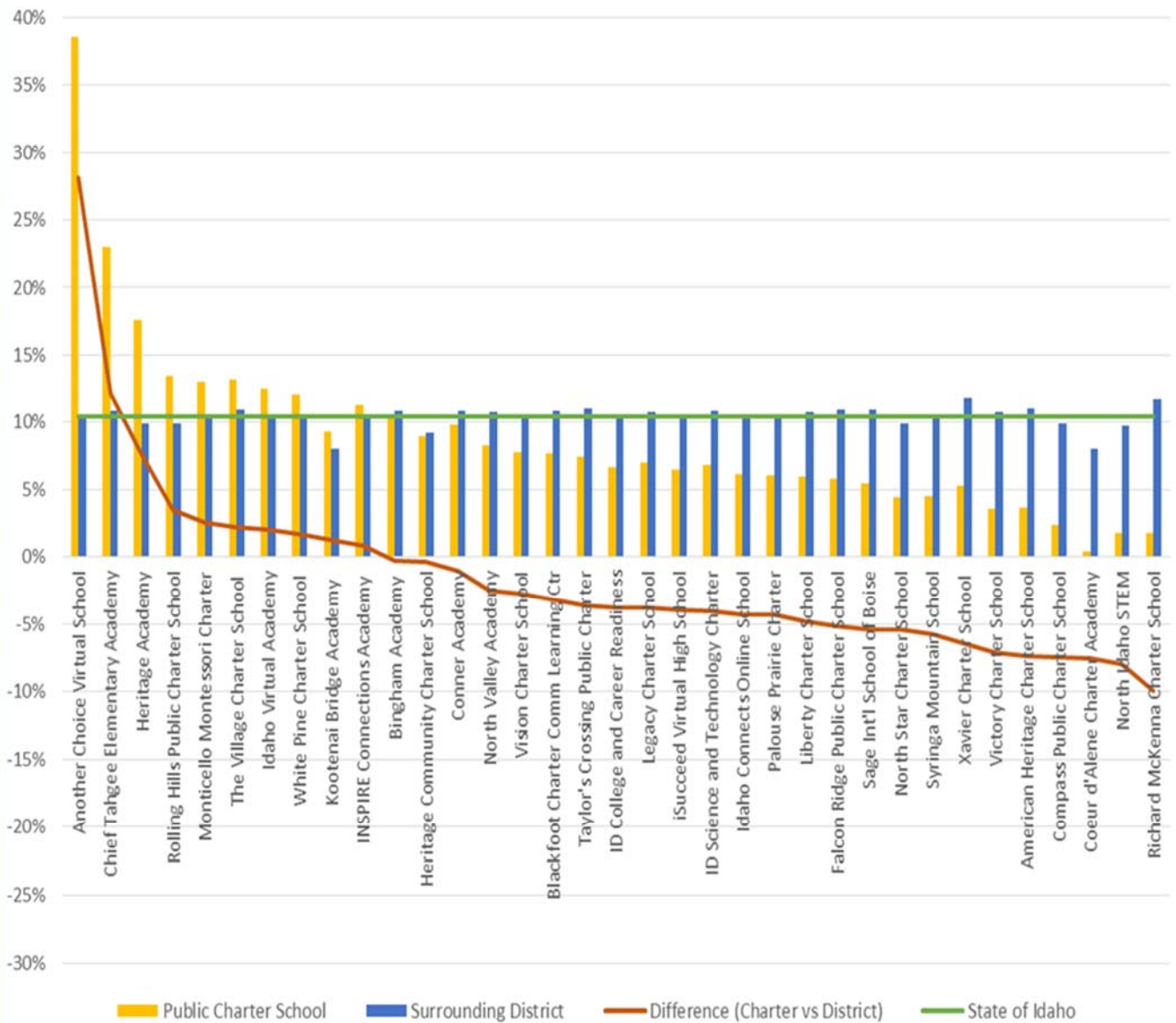
There are notable exceptions to the overall low diversity in Idaho’s public charter schools, including a virtual school whose special education population is 28 percentage points higher than that of the state, as well as a brick and mortar school whose student population is nearly 100% non-white.

We applaud the efforts of those public charter schools that have gone well beyond basic legal requirements in an effort to recruit minority and underserved populations. The PCSC encourages the entire public charter school community to join in an effort to ensure that all students – regardless of language, ethnicity, economic status, or special needs – feel welcome to enroll and are assured of receiving high quality services at any Idaho public charter school.

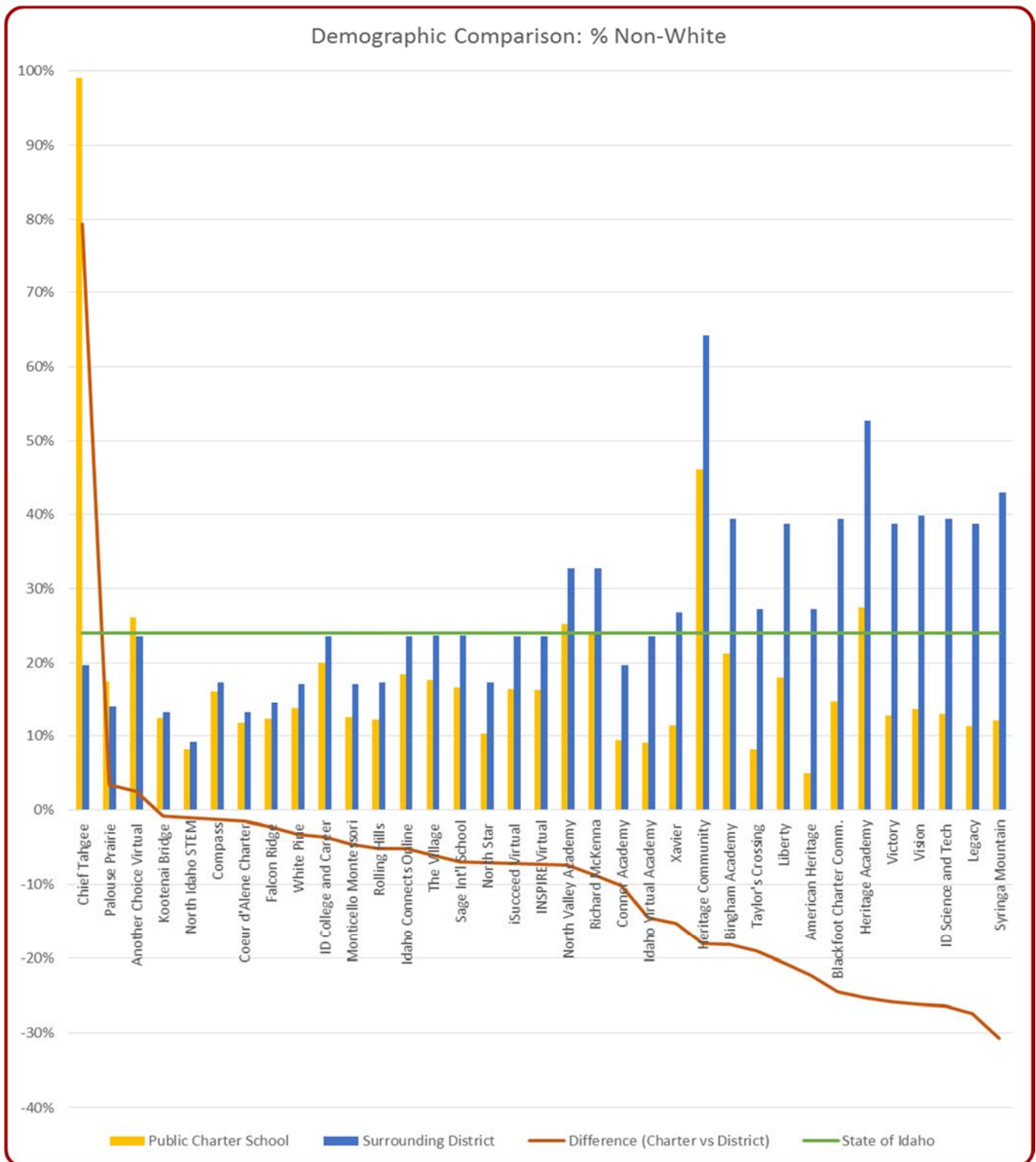
The following charts compare PCSC portfolio schools’ student demographics to those of the districts in which they are located. In the case of virtual schools, the “surrounding district” is considered the state as a whole.

The columns are arranged by degree of difference, indicated by the orange line, between the public charter schools’ populations and those of their surrounding districts.

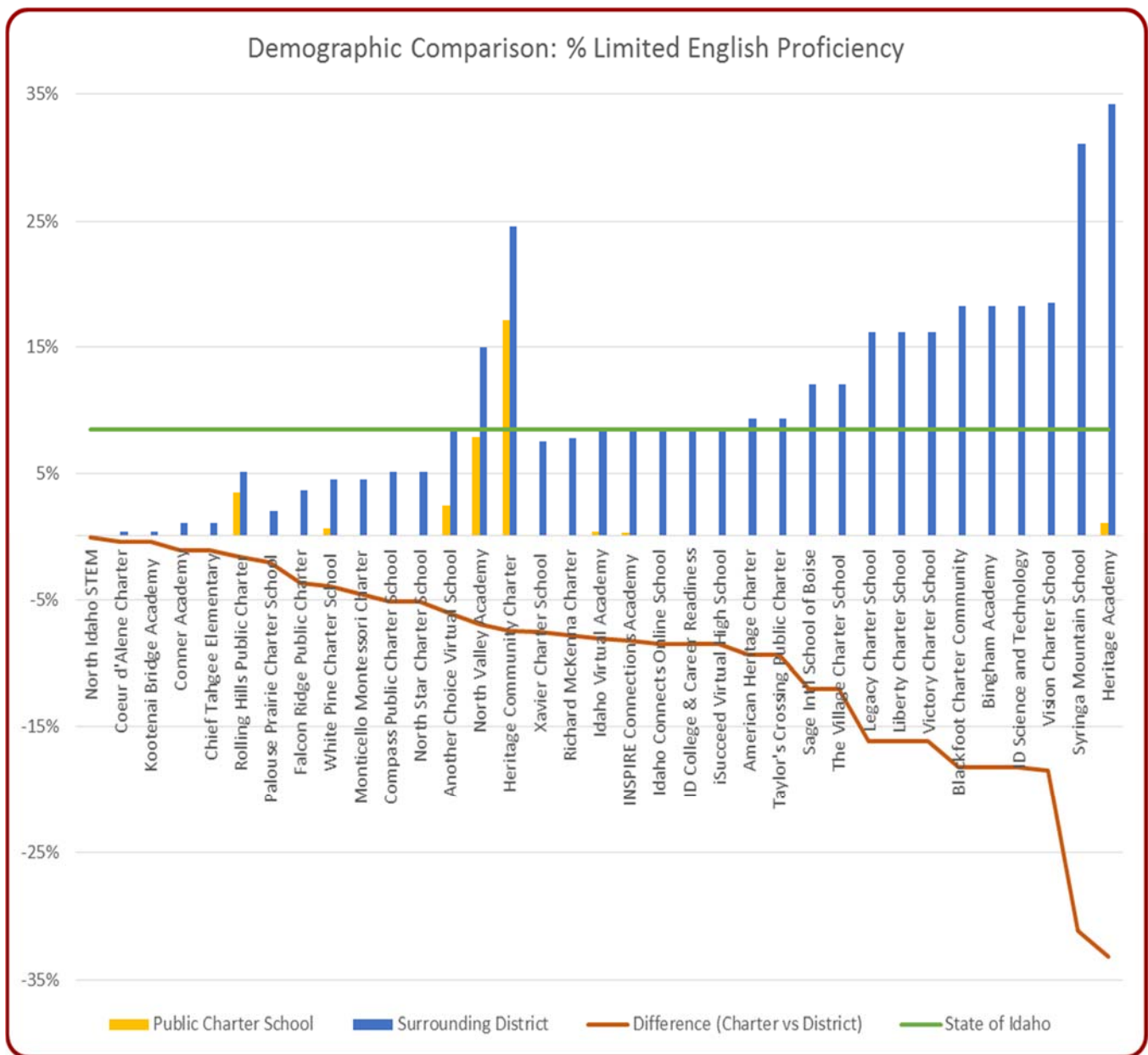
Demographic Comparison: % Special Needs



State law provides that public charter schools are obliged to provide the same special education services as all other public schools. 34% of PCSC portfolio schools serve special needs populations within 3 percentage points of their surrounding districts. 11% of PCSC portfolio schools serve a higher percentage of special needs students than their surrounding districts.

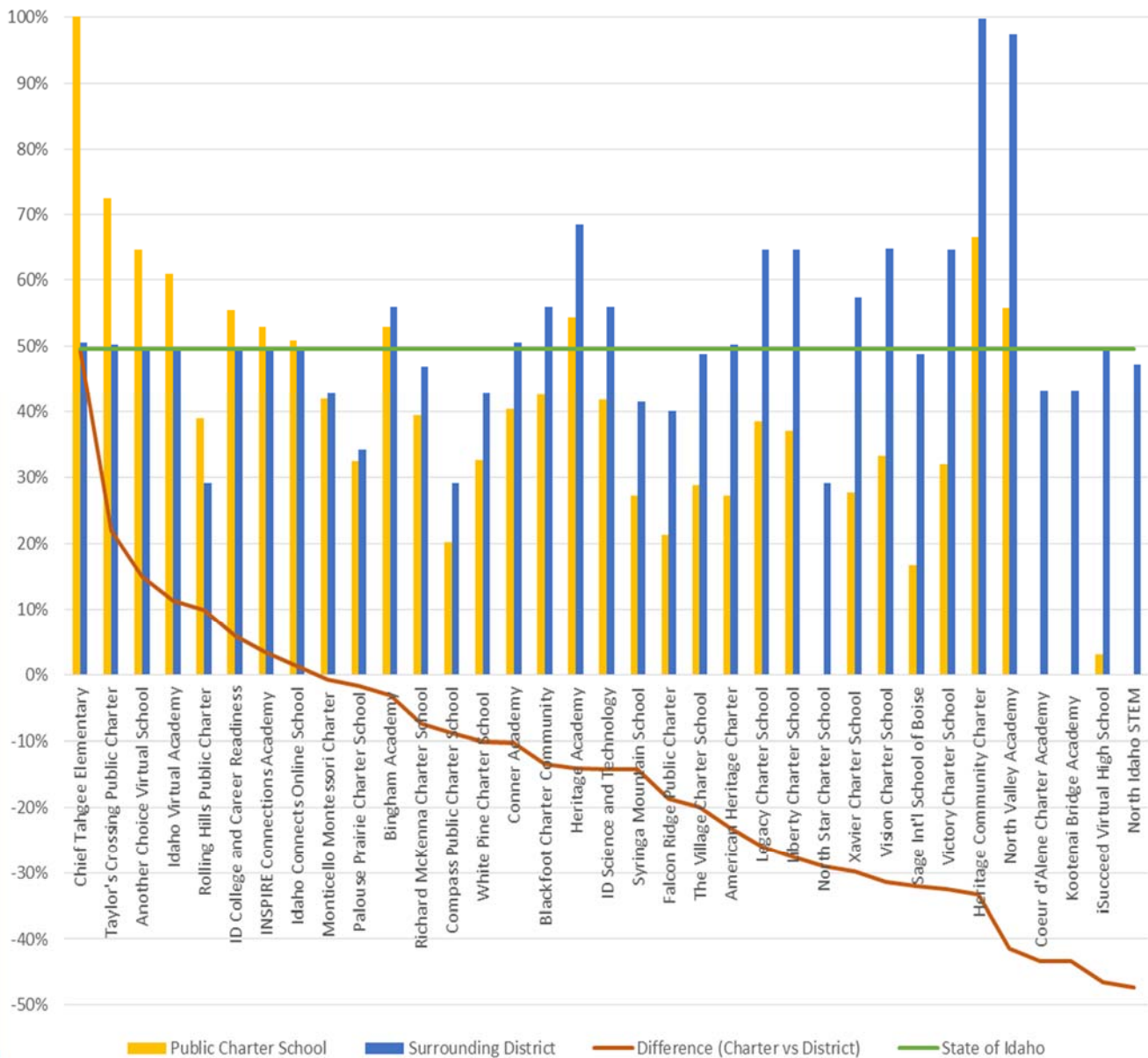


State law provides all students with equal opportunity to attend public charter schools, regardless of ethnicity. However, non-white groups are underrepresented at 94% of PCSC portfolio schools; in 79% of these schools, the difference exceeds three percentage points. The PCSC urges the charter community to continue and broaden its efforts to ensure that students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds know they are welcome to enroll.



Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) are the most underrepresented group in PCSC portfolio schools. State Department of Education data indicates that 83% of PCSC portfolio schools enroll no LEP students, though identification of, and provision of services for, these students is required by state law. Public charter schools are encouraged to not only increase their multi-language marketing efforts, but also to consider cultural differences when advising their communities of enrollment opportunities.

Demographic Comparison: % Free & Reduced Lunch



66% of PCSC portfolio schools serve at least three percentage points fewer students qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) than their surrounding districts. The PCSC applauds those portfolio schools who enroll higher FRL populations than their surrounding districts and encourages all schools to provide services such as transportation and food service in order to ensure that charter school attendance is a viable option for low income families. The majority of PCSC portfolio schools do offer bussing, and many provide meals either with or without federal funding for that purpose.

Looking Ahead

In 2016, the PCSC looks forward to building on the foundations it has laid beginning with the 2013 charter legislation, which significantly clarified the role of an authorizer and Idaho's expectations of its public charter schools.

During an extensive, on-site evaluation in 2014, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) confirmed the PCSC's direction and focus. NACSA also provided recommendations to further assist the PCSC in implementing national best practices for authorizing. The PCSC has prioritized these recommendations and implemented many of them, including developing additional tools to assist petitioning groups, adopting policies related to oversight and renewal, and designing meaningful annual performance reports for schools.

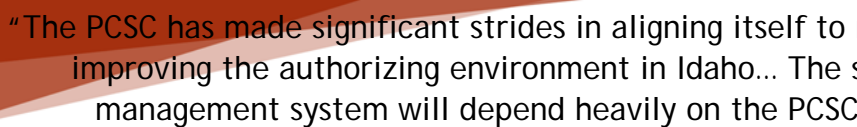
In the coming months, the PCSC will focus on preparing both itself and its portfolio schools for renewal decisions, the first of which will be made in spring 2017. The performance certificate and framework will form the basis of renewal decision-making.

All PCSC portfolio schools have been apprised annually of their outcomes relative to the standards contained in the certificate and framework. During this pre-renewal year, the eleven schools scheduled for renewal consideration in 2017 will receive additional guidance and opportunity to provide data demonstrating their performance outcomes. We will also encourage schools to share their plans for disseminating their successes for the benefit of additional students.

Following thorough and contextually-cognizant examination of schools' academic, operational, and financial outcomes, the PCSC may renew charters for an additional five years of operation. Alternatively, charters may be conditionally renewed dependent upon specific criteria for improvement. The PCSC may also elect to non-renew persistently underperforming schools, which would then close at the end of the school year.

Since its inception in 2004, the PCSC has approved a broad spectrum of charter petitions. The resulting schools have brought to life the dreams of grassroots groups including parents, educators, and business leaders. They have included proven educational models previously unavailable in Idaho, newly-coined educational philosophies, virtual options, schools tailored to at-risk students, and college preparatory pathways.

Now, we look forward to working with these schools toward understanding which have performed as intended and which should make way for stronger, better options among Idaho's schools of choice. The PCSC invites all its stakeholders to join in earnest communication and evaluation of outcomes while bearing in mind, above all, the interests of the students they serve.



"The PCSC has made significant strides in aligning itself to national best practices and improving the authorizing environment in Idaho... The success of the performance management system will depend heavily on the PCSC's ability to implement the certificate and framework with fidelity, as well as providing clear and ongoing communication to schools regarding expectations."

NACSA Authorizer Evaluation Report, August 2014