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National foundation applauds Idaho public education's generous return on investment

BOISE – Idaho has been recognized for excellent public education outcomes in a new national education report from The Heritage Foundation that ranks the state at No. 3 in the nation overall, citing low spending numbers and strong academic achievement.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank based in Washington D.C., has released their [Education Freedom Report Card](#), a survey of all 50 states in the areas of school choice, academic transparency, regulatory freedom and spending. States are then assigned an overall rank based on these results.

Idaho performs well in all areas, and the foundation acknowledges the state's academic achievement and dedication to responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. This return on investment, along with a successful commitment to transparency, are two contributing factors in the state's overall No. 3 ranking.

“We keep hearing again and again that we're ‘last in education,’ that we're ‘falling behind other states,’” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “With our schools’ strong performances lately, especially as we successfully address and conquer pandemic learning loss, our amazing teachers and students deserve more credit than they’ve received in some political circles. So it’s great to receive these high rankings from a conservative source that recognizes that Idaho taxpayers get a fantastic return on their investment.”

For years, Idaho has been ranked last in the nation for per-student spending. For the foundation, responsible use of public funds contributes to the state's overall quality rating. The foundation cites Idaho's strong scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests, noting that the state ranks 11th nationwide in its combined average scores for fourth-and eighth grade math and reading. That Idaho keeps spending numbers low while consistently delivering strong academic achievement puts the state ahead of most others in the nation, according to The Heritage Foundation.

The foundation also ranks Idaho high for academic transparency, at No. 4 in the nation, recognizing that the state encourages parents to both be aware of and to have a voice in what is being taught in the classroom. “This demonstrates that Idaho policymakers trust parents to hold schools accountable,” The Heritage Foundation said in a [September press release](#).

The foundation's report card also shows that Idaho is currently outperforming neighboring states. Of those states, only Montana achieves a single higher individual ranking, coming in at No. 2 for transparency. This was the only metric in which any neighboring state exceeded Idaho on the foundation's report card. The closest contender to Idaho in overall rankings is also Montana, coming at No. 8.

[Click here](#) to view Idaho's complete Education Freedom Report Card and [click here](#) to read The Heritage Foundation's press release on Idaho's results.

"The performance of our districts, schools and individual students speaks for itself," Superintendent Ybarra said. "Seeing that achievement recognized is always encouraging, and I think this is a much-deserved moment for our dedicated teachers and staff. You are all truly doing an excellent job, and it shows."

The Heritage Foundation website describes the organization as "a conservative think tank based in Washington D.C. with a primary focus on public policy, free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom and traditional American values."

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