**Strategic Issue:**
Support the role of libraries in preparing Idahoans to be college and career ready

In 2010, the Idaho State Board of Education set a goal that 60 percent of Idaho citizens between the ages of 25 and 34 would have a postsecondary degree or certificate by the year 2020. The Idaho Commission for Libraries and the Idaho library community immediately joined countless businesses, agencies, and other organizations who are working toward this statewide goal.

Reaching the 60 percent goal will require focused effort, investment, and improvement at all levels of our education system. Idaho libraries should be recognized for the role they play to ensure more children enter kindergarten with early literacy skills, in providing positive learning experiences for students during the summer and other out-of-school time, and supporting student learning through library resources and the guidance of trained librarians.

Use of Idaho public libraries has never been higher. In fiscal year 2015, there were more than 8.6 million visits to Idaho public libraries. In fiscal year 2014, Idaho libraries had the 5th highest per capita circulation of children’s materials and attendance of children’s programs in the nation. Attendance at young adult programs ranked 7th in the nation per capita, increasing 139 percent in the past five years. Many credit the increased use by teens to the “Make It at the Library” program, which launched five years ago.

While there are many positive indicators, there is still much work to be done. Idaho lags behind the rest of the country on several key educational markers:

- Idaho ranks 50th in the proportion of students who graduate from high school on time and go directly to college and 49th in per–student spending.

- More than 7 in 10 students (77%) attend schools receiving Title 1 funds.
• Since 1993, the Hispanic student population in Idaho has more than doubled, from 16,697 students to 48,855 in 2014. The recent increase in the Hispanic population matters because a large achievement gap exists between Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students and between low-income students and higher-income students.

• In reading and math, more than 6 in 10 of Idaho 4th and 8th graders have not reached the level of “proficient,” as defined by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

• Idaho’s high school graduation rate now stands at 78.9 percent, ranking below the national average of 83.2 percent.

• Idaho is one of seven states that provide no state funding for preschool or any other early education programs.

• Idaho school districts are not required to offer kindergarten programs, nor are children required to attend kindergarten. The compulsory starting age for education in Idaho is seven years old.

• Only 35 percent of three- and four-year-old children in Idaho are enrolled in some form of preschool or enriched day care. The national average is 47 percent.

• In the fall of 2013, only 54 percent of Idaho kindergarteners were ready to read upon entering school based on the Idaho Reading Indicator scores. Fewer than half (45%) of low-income kindergarteners and fewer than one-third (29%) of Hispanic kindergarteners were ready to read when entering kindergarten.

Action Steps for Trustees

1. Keep up with local and statewide education issues. Subscribing to the free Idaho Ed News weekly update is a quick way to browse through education news. See https://www.idahoednews.org/.

2. Consider hosting a meeting at the library to share what your library is doing to help prepare students in your community for college and careers. Invite your local school board members, principals, superintendents, and school librarians. After you have shared what you are doing, brainstorm ways you can work more closely together to advance educational opportunities in your community.

3. Share information with service clubs, policymakers, and others about what your library is doing to help with this statewide goal. Share the video ICfL created on this topic (go to YouTube & search for Idaho Commission for Libraries) or graphics like the one below to help tell the story.

TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF LIBRARIES

6,000 HOURS Awake time we all have annually, including youth

1,000 HOURS The average U.S. student attends school annually (with 100% attendance)

5,000 HOURS Available to impact, educate and enhance the learning of students beyond the status quo

80% HOURS OF OPPORTUNITY

20% FORMAL CLASSROOM LEARNING