



## The Future Workforce of Idaho

Idaho's labor force and economy are strengthened when the state's high school graduates are prepared for college and are interested in pursuing available jobs in Idaho. Academic preparation is critical, given that many of the projected high growth job openings in Idaho will require a 2-year college degree or more. In Idaho, five of the expected highest growth career fields will be management, education, engineering, computer specialties, and community services. Do Idaho's future workers have the necessary skills to fill positions in these high-growth careers? Are Idaho's future workers interested in jobs in these fields?

Using 2008 ACT results for 6,428 Idaho high school graduates with career interest information, and 2004-2014 Idaho state long-term occupational projections (based on job growth and job replacement), here is what we know so far.

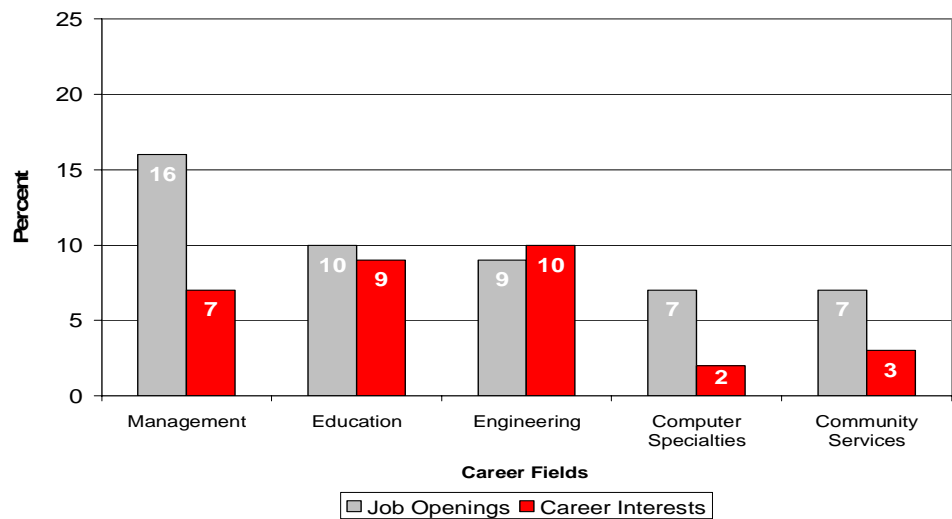
- There is some interest among Idaho high school students in pursuing these high-growth career fields, but not enough to meet the demand.
- Of Idaho students expressing interest in most of these high-growth career fields, nearly three-quarters are ready for first-year college English courses, while less than two-thirds are prepared for college-level social science courses.
- Of Idaho students expressing interest in many of these high-growth career fields, less than one-half are ready for college-level math or science courses.

**Idaho educators should continue to encourage their students to pursue high-growth Idaho career fields.**

### Students' Interests

- Gaps between expected jobs and interested students are apparent for careers in management (convention planners, hotel/restaurant managers, etc.), education (secondary teachers, administrators, etc.), computer specialties (computer programmers, database administrators, etc.), and community services (social workers, school counselors, etc.), with more jobs expected than students interested in jobs in these fields (Figure 1). Idaho may be faced with potential labor shortfalls in fields where skilled individuals are most needed.

**Figure 1: Projected Annual Job Openings and Idaho High School Students' Interests in High Growth Idaho Career Fields<sup>1,2</sup>**

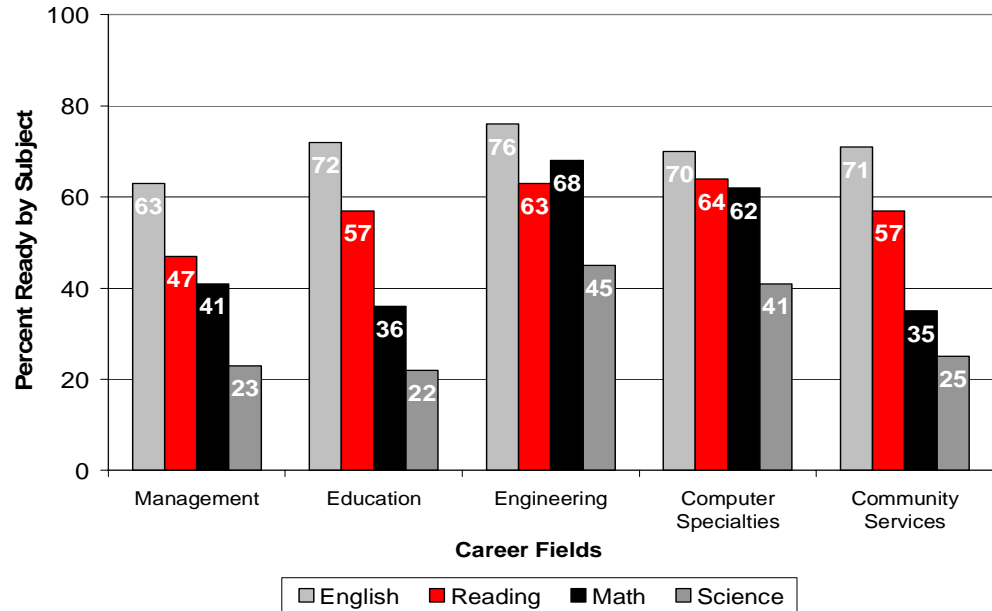


<sup>1</sup>State projections 2004-2014 provided by Idaho Commerce & Labor.

<sup>2</sup>Based on 2008 ACT-tested Idaho students (n = 6,428) with valid career information.

- There are slightly more students interested in the engineering field (architects, mechanical engineers, etc.) than jobs that will be available in this field, but many of these students are not ready to meet or exceed one or more of ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks in English, reading, mathematics, or science, as shown in Figure 2. Students who are interested and college ready are more likely to be successful in the coursework needed to enter this high-growth career field.

**Figure 2: ACT College Readiness Benchmark Performance of Idaho High School Students Interested in High Growth Idaho Career Fields by Subject<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup>Based on 2008 ACT-tested Idaho students ( $n = 6,428$ ) with valid subject scores and career information.

**Idaho educators should continue to encourage their students to achieve the highest level of preparation for college, in order to meet Idaho Workforce demands.**

#### *Students' Skills*

- Students are ready to succeed in entry-level college courses if they meet ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks. In Idaho, approximately three-quarters of students are prepared for first-year college coursework in English for four of the five high-growth career fields. Fewer students interested in these high-growth fields are prepared to succeed in college-level social science courses (indicated by ACT Reading Benchmark), with students pursuing management careers being the least prepared and students pursuing computer specialties and engineering careers being the most prepared.
- Nearly two-thirds or more of students wanting to enter computer specialties and engineering are ready for college-level math courses, while less than one-half of these students are ready for college-level science. One-quarter or less of students pursuing careers in management, education, and community services are ready for college-level science courses.
- Overall, the pattern of readiness for college coursework is similar across the five high-growth career fields: Student preparation is highest for English and social sciences, and lower for math and science. The lower levels of preparation among graduating high school students is alarming, given the high demand for science- and math-intensive careers such as computer programming and teaching.