



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Private school enrollment is strong, even as a slow economy  
leads Boiseans to opt out of some extras**

Consumer spending is slow in Boise and around the country. But many families are still paying extra for private school education, drawn by amenities like a low student-teacher ratio, music and art.

The Foothills School of Arts and Sciences, a private school in downtown Boise, has seen stable enrollment despite the recession. The small secular school, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, has 150 students. It starts in pre-kindergarten, and this year added a ninth grade class.

Foothills is known for its small classes, with a ratio of one teacher for every nine students. About 50 percent of the families at Foothills receive financial aid. The school emphasizes environmental and outdoor education and offers an electives program schoolwide to help students find their personal passions.

Head of School Shawn Shepherd says the school's emphasis on differentiated learning is probably one reason why parents are choosing the private school. Foothills is especially successful at helping children who are strong in some areas and need to work harder in others.

"We have a personalized education at Foothills, a program that takes a hard look at each child and at his or her skills," said Shepherd. "We get to know how the kids learn."

The school emphasizes inquiry-based learning, an education philosophy that drives the children themselves to learn what questions they must ask.

The result: students of all ability levels gain the confidence to ask questions and to find the information they need to succeed.

"The kids here have the confidence to respectfully question what they're learning," said Admissions Director Katy Young. "That confidence helps them adapt to the learning environments they choose when they leave Foothills."

Foothills graduates often go on to leadership positions in the upper grades. In a recent year, every member of the senior class governance team at Boise High School came from Foothills.

The curriculum meets or exceeds national educational standards. That shows in the academic achievement of Foothills graduates, who generally maintain GPAs from 3.0 and up, said Shepherd. A few years ago, more than half of the National Merit Scholars in Boise were Foothills alumni.

Foothills students gain a strong self-awareness about what interests them, and the confidence to ask more questions –skills that will be needed in a changing workforce that is project-based, not job-based, said Shepherd.

"We won't need the people who can line the numbers up the exact way every time," she said. "We need people who see the opportunity, have the communication skills, and know how to make good choices around that information."

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