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Stuck at Home for Spring Break? Idaho State Board of Education Offers All-Inclusive “Vacation to the Future”

(BOISE) — With many families once again forgoing any travel or recreation plans this spring break, the Idaho State Board of Education is inviting parents to take their kids on a “Vacation to the Future” in which they can all explore educational opportunities and pathways, career possibilities, and interactive self-exploration activities offered by the Next Steps Idaho website.

“A spring break staycation is a great time for students and parents alike to imagine, explore, and even virtually experience their educational and career futures with activities they can do together as a family,” said Matt Freeman, the Executive Director of the Idaho State Board of Education. “This might not be the road trip your family originally envisioned this spring break, but the Next Steps Idaho portal allows families to virtually visit Idaho’s colleges and universities, explore a vast range of training and professional opportunities, and learn more about hundreds of different careers and pathways. Parents will likely uncover some new insights into their own talents, interests, and career choices while taking interactive quizzes and self-assessments side-by-side with their kids.”

Next Steps Idaho is an online platform containing curated information, resources, tools, tips, and interactive activities that can help Idahoans navigate their own personalized education and career journeys. The platform was originally launched in 2015 as a tool to help students and parents understand and explore post-secondary education options. Next Steps Idaho was expanded in 2020 to include additional resources for adults who might be at a career crossroads, looking to upskill, or simply wanting to reimagine their professional lives.

Freeman pointed out that Next Steps Idaho can help parents and students explore career & technical education and apprenticeships (videos about electrical, auto repair, and beverage maker apprenticeships, for example), as well as Journey to Career videos (produced by Idaho Public Television), which show the stories of young adults pursuing careers in wind energy, law enforcement, and aquaculture (i.e., fish farming). He also noted that as many colleges and universities across the country continue to limit visitors, institutions have made significant investments in virtual tours, including Idaho’s public colleges and universities, which have tours in English and Spanish. “These videos allow viewers to click and drag to pan around a full 360 degrees, whether you’re standing on the campus quad or in a classroom or lab.”

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Wendi Secrist, Executive Director of the Idaho Workforce Development Council, which partners with Next Steps Idaho, noted, “When parents, teachers, and trusted adults start conversations about the pathways to career early, they begin to plant seeds and lay the groundwork for

students creating and following their own career readiness plans. With a plan, they can enter the workforce with the skills and training needed to pursue the career that interests them.”

Fun family activities on Next Steps include:

- **Take the Future Finder quiz:** React to statements such as “I like to cook,” “I like to give speeches,” and “I like putting things together or assembling things.” Once you identify your strengths and interests, you’ll see how those might translate into a future career. It’s even more fun when parents also take the quiz to see how suggested career pathways compare to their actual professional lives.
- **Research careers:** Explore hundreds of different professions, including careers you may have never heard of, and learn about what the job entails, education/training needed, salary ranges and the demand in Idaho for workers in that field.
- **Figure out how much money you will need:** Use the Plan Smart tool to estimate how much the lifestyle you seek (by entering rent vs. own, married or single, car payments, etc.) will require in earnings. Then you can click through to careers that could provide the income you need for the lifestyle you want. This is a great activity for talking with students about the realities of adult life, or for financial planning for your next transition.

Families taking their spring break “Vacation to the Future” can start here:

<http://nextsteps.idaho.gov/springbreak>

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