

Background History of Payette River Technical Academy

Payette River Technical Academy was first contemplated in the Fall of 2008. The Emmett School District was in difficult financial condition due in no small part to the exodus of students from the District. This was occurring for two critical reasons: the loss of employment opportunities in Emmett and surrounding Gem County, and a lack of curriculum opportunities for Emmett High School students. Further, no charter schools or Professional-Technical (Career-Technical) Schools operated within a 15 mile radius of Gem County. Meanwhile surrounding districts, such as Eagle and Middleton, were growing in size and increasing student opportunity which further compounded the loss of students.

Thus, in the fall of 2008, Emmett Independent School District Superintendent Sue Beitia approached Boise teacher Ms. Susan Jenkins and Emmett High School Principal Dr. William Knickrehm with an idea. Although unknown to each other, both Jenkins and Knickrehm had been independently lobbying with Mrs. Beitia for increased Professional Technical Education as a means of retaining students within the District. Following their introduction and with her support, the two quickly developed a plan to help stimulate the District. The two founders reached the conclusion that a professional technical charter school was a viable vehicle. In 2009 the Emmett School District (aka ESD/EISD 221) authorized the founders to file for approval of Payette River Technical Academy (aka PRTA/PR²TA) and approval was granted by the State of Idaho to open in the Fall of 2010. Payette River Technical Academy's goal was to augment the educational opportunities available to the students of Emmett High School and for high schools of surrounding counties (HSB, Payette, New Plymouth, etc).

Why a Charter School?

The charter school designation was chosen because a charter school offered considerable discretion in how funds were utilized. In addition, designation as a charter school allowed for independent funding (separate from Emmett School District) which was approximately one and one-half greater than that available to the Emmett School District. The founding concept was that the Emmett School District would provide services which would be paid for by PRTA through PRTA's independent financing. The goal was that ESD would receive all of the revenue that it would have received if PRTA students had remained solely in the Emmett School District. Thus, by sharing students, PRTA would make the District financially whole while simultaneously earning enough money to increase student opportunities in Professional Technical Education. It made sense that PRTA and ESD would agree to a contract where PRTA pays for facilities, all maintenance, upgrades, labor, equipment and services for buildings PRTA uses. Has it worked? PRTA records indicate that not only has PRTA been able to hold the District financially harmless but also to provide the District unfettered additional monies in the tune of over \$100,000 per year. In addition, PRTA has given the Emmett School District monies in times when the District has been financial challenged, i.e. the sum of \$50,000 to pay for a teacher until a financial crisis was averted. This is a win/win for schools, students and the community.

By Idaho Statue, each charter school is required to establish a specific mission and/or vision. PRTA was created as a **professional (career) technical academy charter school** allowing additional funds to create career technical education opportunities for students which had not historically been offered. Before

PRTA, Emmett High School offered 4 vocational education courses with limited funds and opportunity. Today, PRTA offers 9 Career-Technical programs for Emmett students. The programs represent the very best in business - school partnerships to create state-of-the-art facilities and courses. The curriculum meets challenging industry standards and certifications. These 9 programs represent high demand job areas and provide training and internship opportunities. It is worth noting that PRTA students and the PRTA programs have achieved both national and state recognition since opening the doors. PRTA students have successfully competed through regional, state, and national competitions and, for the first time in Gem County history, been recognized as the best students within their discipline in all of North America! During its tenure, Payette River Technical Academy has been one of the most successful career technical education programs in the State of Idaho.

It is important to repeat, **PRTA had to become a charter school** or lose critical funding. Idaho State Statutes **required** that PRTA become an independent nonprofit entity—clearly separate from Emmett Independent School District—with our own board if we wished to obtain any funding. It was made clear if PRTA failed to do this PRTA would not get funded nor could PRTA continue in operation. PRTA’s goal was to accomplish the best choice for Gem County students, the community, and to avoid any fiscal injury to Emmett School District.

In addition, all PRTA faculty and staff are Payette River Technical Academy employees and paid for by PRTA.

- (1) No PRTA employee receives a dollar from EISD 221 funds; and
- (2) PRTA has never asked the citizens of Gem County for a single dime. Based on Idaho statutes, PRTA cannot participate in bonds or levies. PRTA monies come from federal grants (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006), state grants, lottery funds, and student enrollment (ADA). As a Professional (Career) Technical School (PTS) Charter, our student divisor is lower than a traditional high school. Consequently, a portion of this money is saved for future building fund.
- (3) The operational or fiscal decisions made by PRTA have been both operationally and fiscally successful as noted by the annual audits and program audits.

What is a Public Charter School?

Idaho statute 33-5204: TITLE 3, EDUCATION, CHAPTER 52, PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS states the following:

33-5204. NONPROFIT CORPORATION — LIABILITY — INSURANCE. [EFFECTIVE UNTIL JULY 1, 2018] (1) A public charter school shall be organized and managed under the Idaho nonprofit corporation act. The board of directors of a public charter school shall be deemed public agents authorized by a public school district, the public charter school commission, or the state board of education to control the public charter school, but shall function independently of any school board of trustees in any school district in which the public charter school is located or independently of the public charter school commission, except as provided in the charter.

What makes PRTA and EISD 221 unique since they both attract many of the same students?

PRTA	EISD-221
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required by the State of Idaho to be a public charter school organized/managed under Idaho nonprofit corporation act to provide CTE education to surrounding area students; • A nonprofit corporation classified by the IRS as a 501C3 organization; • Cannot run bonds or levies; • Operational money comes from federal/state grants and student average daily attendance; • Governing board is a Board of Directors appointed by the members; • Directors serve for period of 1-9 years; • Chief Operating Officer and Principal are the administrative employees of the Board of Directors; • Each individual CTE program is required to follow CTE Program Standard-Industry Alignment, have active Industry Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) and provide Student Industry Organization Affiliation; • Students may apply and test for national/international industry certifications; and • Dual credit courses available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A government entity authorized by Idaho to provide public education for primary and secondary students of Gem County; • Is not a nonprofit corporation but classified by the IRS as government instrumentalities; • Can run bonds and levies; • Operational money comes from grants, bonds, levies, and student average daily attendance; • Governing board is a Board of Trustees elected by the Gem County patrons; • Trustees are elected and serve for period of 4 or more years unless otherwise stated; • Superintendent is the administrative employee of the Board of Trustees; • Educational Curriculum and Scope/Sequence of Studies are decided at local level as prescribed by Idaho Department of Education framework, curriculum program standards, and state recommendations; and • Advanced placement and dual credit courses available.

Operational Aspects of PRTA?

As noted, Payette River Technical Academy is established as a non-profit corporation (501C3) serving the educational needs of students and families who meet one or more of the following:

- 1) An interest in attaining both a high school diploma and career training designed to prepare the student for continuing education and/or immediate workforce; or
- 2) A searching for unique educational opportunities while living in a rural location; or
- 3) Not currently participating in the public school system.

PRTA follows the Idaho Division of Career-Technical Education (ICTE) model of sixteen National Career Clusters providing 79 Career Pathways giving opportunity for matching student interests, skills and education requirements to a sequence of courses from high school to college to the workplace. The Perkins Act of 2006 focuses on the academic and technical achievement of CTE students, strengthening the connections between secondary and postsecondary education, and improving accountability. The Perkins Act includes a new requirement for programs of study (POS), which is intended to seamlessly link academic and technical content across secondary and postsecondary education. Students have the opportunity to earn college credit for the majority of their classes through a college-affiliated Technical Competency Credit (tech prep) agreement or concurrent credit/advanced placement credits.