

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 5, 2021



Contact: Beth Oppenheimer, Idaho AEYC Executive Director
208.867.5611 (cell)
boppenheimer@idahoaeyc.org

Contact: Mike Keckler, Idaho State Board of Education
208-332-1591 (office)
208-866-5734 (cell)
Mike.Keckler@osbe.idaho.gov

Idaho Awarded \$6 Million Grant to Support Early Childhood Learning and School Readiness

Boise, ID – With nearly \$6 million in federal grant funding per year over the next three years, the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC) and the State Board of Education will partner to continue the successful efforts to build a foundation for a better-connected early childhood system to prepare Idaho children for a successful start in school.

The federal Preschool Development Grant will significantly expand efforts to engage families, local communities, business partners, early childhood educators, schools, policymakers and others to build a mixed-delivery system for parents with young children, age's birth to five, and work to improve school readiness outcomes with a focus on early literacy.

Since taking office in January 2019, Governor Brad Little has prioritized early literacy. This grant will support Governor Little's goal to strengthen young children's language and literacy prior to starting kindergarten through localized efforts in communities throughout the state.

"Literacy continues to be my top priority in education and this resource ensures our youngest children have improved opportunities to stay on track with their reading so they are ready for school," Governor Little said.

"Every community throughout Idaho is unique, and the approach to investing in early learning must meet the needs of all Idahoans," said Idaho AEYC Executive Director Beth Oppenheimer. "By understanding the different choices and options that work for our families, we are better positioned to improve early learning outcomes and options that best fit each individual community's needs."

The State Board of Education and Idaho AEYC will utilize results from a statewide needs assessment conducted in 2020, which was funded with an initial \$3 million Preschool Development Grant. The needs assessment identified gaps Idaho families face, including access to resources that best support their children. It also identified opportunities to strengthen the transition between early childhood programs and our K-12 system.

"On behalf of the State Board of Education, we are grateful for the opportunity to partner with the Idaho AEYC, along with other collaborators, for the development of a high-quality early childhood care

and education system in Idaho,” said Debbie Critchfield, President of the Idaho State Board of Education. “Early childhood literacy is a priority area of concern and focus for the State Board of Education. This federal grant is an opportunity to fortify local communities with resources to help families prepare their children to be ready to learn.”

The grant will be implemented starting in January 2021.

“This funding will make a meaningful difference as Idaho’s communities develop and implement early learning programs that are tailored to their individual needs,” Oppenheimer concluded.

#

About Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC)

The nonprofit Idaho AEYC is dedicated to advancing Idaho's early learning profession and advocating for children and families. The organization was founded in 1986 and is headquartered in Boise, Idaho. Learn more at idahoaeyc.org

About the Idaho State Board of Education

The Idaho State Board of Education is charged with the general supervision and governance of the public educational institutions and the public school system of the State of Idaho. Governor Little designated the State Board as the lead agency with responsibility for the execution and administration of the grant.