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11 IDAHO SCHOOL DISTRICTS RECEIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GRANTS

*~ The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health is awarding nearly \$550,000
to Idaho school districts to launch or expand their early childhood education programs ~*

Boise, Idaho – The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health (the Foundation) is awarding grants to 11 Idaho school districts, totaling approximately \$550,000, to help launch or expand early childhood education programs for the upcoming school year.

From birth to age 5, children’s brains are developing rapidly and their capacity for learning is unparalleled. In these formative years, children are laying the cognitive and behavioral foundation for the rest of their development and learning. Early childhood education programs help provide children enhanced cognitive and emotional development.

The grants, funded in part by a \$6 million donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott to the Foundation, aim to improve kindergarten readiness and address the educational needs of young children across Idaho.

“We are proud to be supporting the expansion of early education programming across Idaho and believe that all families and children should have access to quality resources, materials and programs regardless of their ZIP code,” said Jackie Yarbrough, senior program officer for the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health. “Education and health outcomes are closely linked, and we know that academic and education success leads to better health outcomes.”

In Idaho, only 51 percent of Idaho children have the pre-literacy, math, and social-emotional skills needed for kindergarten. Recognizing the vital role of early childhood education, the Foundation for Health, in partnership with the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children, hosted a four-part Early Education & Schools webinar series during the 2023-24 school year. The series, completed by 35 school districts, equipped educators with best practices for launching or expanding early education programs. All participating districts were then invited to apply for grant funding.

“This interest showed us that Idahoans value early education and want it available in their communities,” Yarbrough said. “After many conversations with school administrators across the state, it was clear that funding to launch or expand preschool programs was desperately needed.”

The school districts receiving grant funding are:

- Basin School District (Idaho City)
- Bruneau Grand View Joint School District (Bruneau)
- Caldwell School District
- Castleford School District
- Genesee School District
- Horseshoe Bend School District
- Kuna School District
- Marsing School District
- Meadows Valley School District (New Meadows)
- Sugar Salem School District (Sugar City)
- West Side School District (Dayton)

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health has a long-standing commitment to education, investing more than \$3.67 million since 2021 to support pre-K through Grade 12 education in Idaho. The Foundation also offers scholarship programs at most Idaho colleges and universities.

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About the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, Inc., is a nonprofit charitable foundation established in 2001 by Blue Cross of Idaho. The Foundation is dedicated to giving back to Idaho and addressing root causes that impact health. Learn more at www.bcidahofoundation.org.