



IDAHO AEYC  
**Annual  
Report**

*Imagine an Idaho  
where all children  
**THRIVE!***

**2023**



**idaeyc**

Idaho Association for the  
Education of Young Children

[www.idahoeyc.org](http://www.idahoeyc.org)


## A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As we take a moment to reflect on the past year and commemorate Idaho AEYC's remarkable 25-year journey as Champions for Children, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and hope for the days and years ahead. Over the past 25 years, Idaho AEYC has advanced high-quality early childhood education throughout our state. We've navigated complex systems and political landscapes, all while nurturing a collective vision of an Idaho where all children thrive, every family can access affordable, high-quality early childhood education and our early childhood educators have opportunities for growth through professional development. This vision drives us forward in our pursuit of a brighter, more equitable future for the youngest members of our communities.

In the face of unprecedented challenges, Idaho AEYC has remained committed to being a champion for high-quality early childhood education. We have worked relentlessly to ensure that every child in Idaho has access to the nurturing and stimulating environments they deserve. Our dedicated team, along with our partners and supporters, has continued to champion the cause of early childhood education, advocating for policy changes, supporting early childhood educators and expanding access to quality programs. As we look to the future, we hope you will remain with us on our journey in our commitment to the vision of an Idaho where all children thrive, knowing that our efforts today will shape a brighter tomorrow for future generations. Thank you for your support and for joining us in this critical endeavor.

With warm regards,



**Beth Oppenheimer**  
Idaho AEYC Executive Director

**Proud to have served  
Idaho AEYC for over 13 years**



## A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

As the President of the Idaho AEYC Governing Board, I'm delighted to extend my gratitude to all of you who have been instrumental in making this year another remarkable chapter in our 25-year journey. Your unwavering support and dedication to our mission of advancing early childhood education in Idaho have profoundly impacted the lives of countless children, families and early education professionals.

In this annual report, you'll discover the inspiring stories of our accomplishments and the challenges we've faced, all of which have strengthened our resolve to champion high-quality early childhood education. Your continued partnership fuels our commitment to creating a brighter future for the children of Idaho.

Thank you for your commitment and belief in our mission. Together, we are making a difference.

With warm regards,

**Tonya Sears**  
Idaho AEYC Board President



# 25 Years

## OF IDAHO AEYC



### Leading Idaho's effort to ...



Advance Early Learning Programs and Resources.

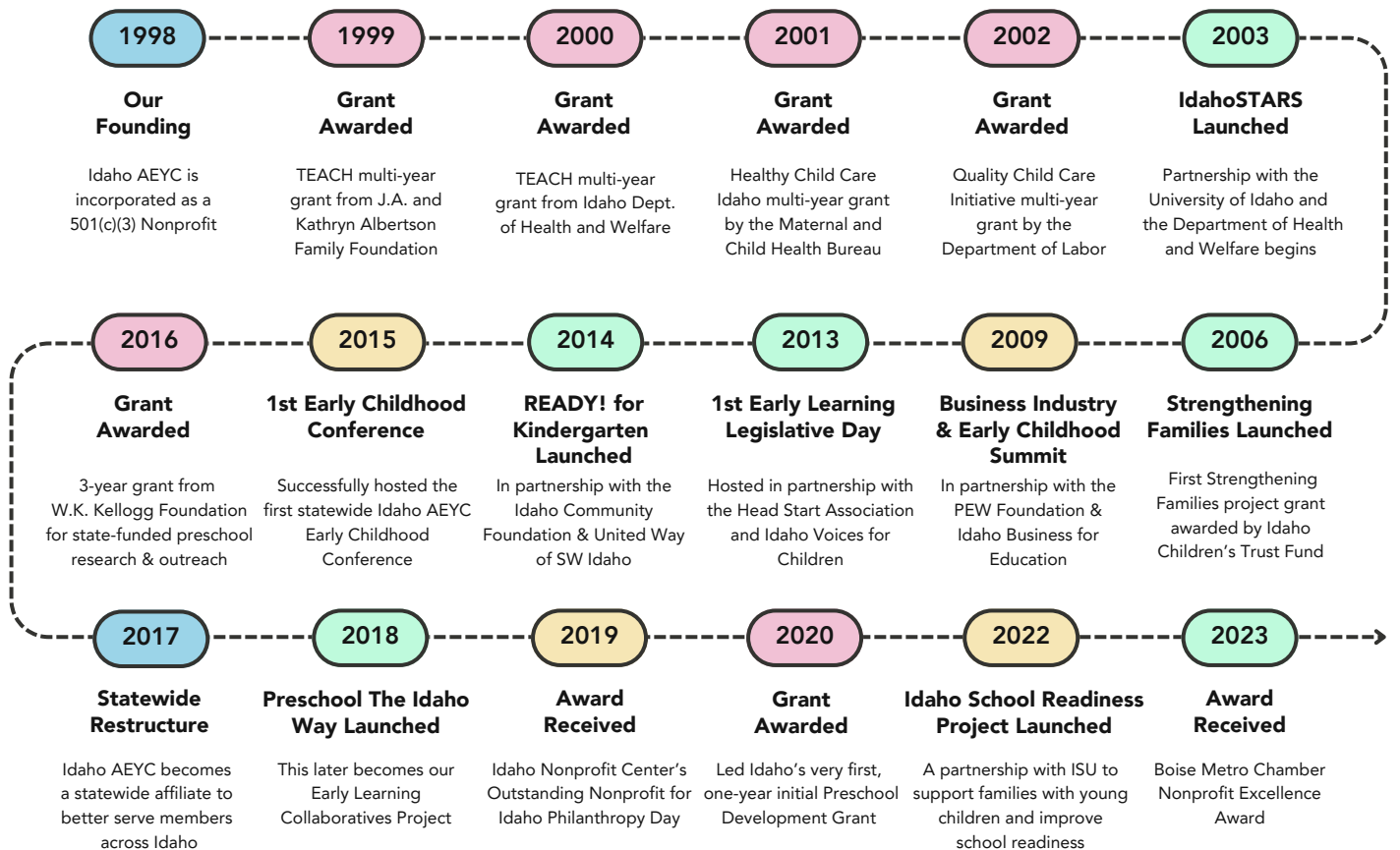


Support Early Care and Education Professionals.



Champion for Idaho's Children and Families.

## IDAHO AEYC OVER THE YEARS





# Supporting Families with young children to engage in quality early learning.



## FAMILY RESOURCES

In the past year, Idaho AEYC introduced its Family Resource Page, a significant step in bolstering early childhood education and family support. This platform empowers parents, caregivers and families with a wide range of educational tools and expert guidance. It reflects Idaho AEYC’s dedication to fostering meaningful partnerships between parents and educators while nurturing a supportive environment for Idaho's children.

### Kids of Idaho Kits:

In partnership with Lakeshore Learning, Idaho AEYC created a children’s activity book series titled “Kids of Idaho.” This series can be paired with aligned activity kits that support children’s development.

**# Given Out**

- Kids of Idaho Love to Learn Kits** 43k +
- Kids of Idaho Love the Outdoors Kits** 22k +

Kids of Idaho: The World Around Me **Coming Soon!**

### Early Learning Products:

Active Learning Products are designed to be used by families at home to support children who are starting school. They contain activity ideas and directions and the kits contain early learning materials such as, playdough, crayons, scissors, books and more.

**# Given Out**

- Active Learning Kits** 6k +
- Active & Engaged Families Booklets** 5k +

Active & Engaged Families Kits **Coming Soon!**

## CELEBRATION OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Idaho AEYC hosted our annual celebration on August 19th. Families were able to spend their afternoon at the park while learning about organizations and services available in Idaho that support young children. This year's celebration witnessed a record-breaking attendance, hosting an impressive gathering of families and educators. With a remarkable turnout, we were thrilled to welcome over 45 vendors—the highest number in our history.





## READY! FOR KINDERGARTEN WORKSHOPS

Children learn best through engagement with people they love and trust. READY! for Kindergarten provides workshops for parents and educators that show them different ways to foster pre-literacy, math, and social skills through songs, activities and reading.

## READY! FOR KINDERGARTEN IMPACT

Through both virtual and in-person workshops, Idaho AEYC offered Ready! for Kindergarten workshops resulting in the following impacts:

**85 Workshops**  
**2,200+ Participants**  
**6,500+ Learning Kits**

**33**  
**New!**  
**Partners**



**Offered in-person in 45 cities and towns across Idaho.**



**Adrian Amo**  
Ready! for  
Kindergarten Director

on staff since **2021**

“READY! for Kindergarten empowers parents in the role of their child’s first and most influential teacher by giving them the tools they need to support their child’s kindergarten readiness through play! Workshops facilitate relationships between families and educators, bridging the gap between home and school. Parents who attend a workshop series leave with knowledge, tools, and new friendships!”

## READY! TESTIMONY

“The READY! for Kindergarten curriculum completely transformed my life. It's incredible to think that it not only improved my parenting skills, but also allowed me to fully prepare my son for kindergarten, where he's now excelling. I can't express how grateful I am for this program. What's even more amazing is that it sparked a fire within me. I've decided to go back to school after completing my early childhood development and social work program. My dream is to become the support for other children that I didn't have when I was growing up.”

- READY! for Kindergarten Participant hosted at Boise Rescue Mission, Boise, ID

# Improving quality early care and education by supporting **Professionals** in the field.

## IDAHOSTARS PROJECT

Through the IdahoSTARS project (implemented in partnership with the University of Idaho) Early Care and Education Professionals participate in these learning opportunities and grow in their understanding and use of quality practices in child care.

## IDAHOSTARS LEADERSHIP CO-DIRECTORS

Erin McCandless joined Malia Woessner as an AEYC Leadership Co-Director for the IdahoSTARS Project. Erin and Malia lead a forward-thinking team to collaborate across partner organizations to meet the strategic plan of the IdahoSTARS Project with a focus on increasing qualifications in Idaho’s early care and education workforce, and increasing quality practices in Idaho’s early childhood programs.



**Erin McCandless**  
IdahoSTARS  
Leadership Director

on staff since **2019**



**Malia Woessner**  
IdahoSTARS  
Leadership Director

on staff since **2018**

## HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

This year, Higher Education Grants supported 339 Idaho residents pursuing degrees and certificates in Early Childhood Education at accredited institutions of higher education.

## WORKFORCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Recipients receiving academic scholarships are pursuing a degree or coursework in Early Childhood Education at an accredited college/university in Idaho.

**45**  
Scholarship  
Recipients

**339**  
Grant  
Recipients

## STEPS TO QUALITY UPDATE

Steps to Quality (STQ) is Idaho’s Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care programs. It is a voluntary program for centers and home-based programs in which they work with IdahoSTARS consultants to assess, improve and communicate quality practices.

In 2022-2023, STQ piloted a program helping home-based child care providers engage in quality improvement. IdahoSTARS now has more than doubled the number of children receiving care in home-based settings engaged in quality improvement.



## IDAHO AEYC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

In June, over 350 attendees from across the State participated in over 19 workshops over two days at the Idaho AEYC Annual Professional Development Institute (PDI), a record-breaking attendance for Idaho AEYC. Keynote Speaker Patrick Mitchell, Idaho's own "Down to Earth Dad," shared the importance of storytelling, whether it be at home, or in the classroom. There were many amazing moments to highlight from the conference, one being the conference's key sponsor, the Micron Foundation, who provided a \$25 gift card to all 350 conference attendees to share their gratitude for early education professionals. Additionally, this conference addresses the impact that early education professionals have on our community, providing space for reflection, growth and connection.



## IDAHO AEYC MEMBERSHIP

With over 300 professional members across the state of Idaho, our dedicated network shapes policies that benefit educators, caregivers, and, most importantly, the children we all serve. Membership provides access to vital resources, including our annual PDI Conference and NAEYC Conference, enhancing professional development and networking opportunities. By joining Idaho AEYC, members contribute to the advancement of early childhood education standards and ensure a brighter future for Idaho's young learners.



**350+** attendees  
**19** workshops  
**2** days



# Creating an Idaho where every **Community** has access to quality early learning opportunities.

## EARLY LEARNING DAY

In February, Idaho AEYC orchestrated the yearly Early Learning Day at the Capitol, aiming to showcase ongoing efforts in bolstering early childhood education across communities statewide. Our presentation effectively illustrated the substantial advantages of investing in children during their early developmental stages. This event provided an invaluable opportunity for policymakers to witness firsthand the impact of early learning resources and understand how they can actively support their local communities. Idaho AEYC remains a reliable resource for policymakers, offering crucial insights into our early childhood system and advocating for the well-being of the children and families throughout Idaho.



## READY IDAHO COALITION

The Ready Idaho Coalition was founded and is led by Idaho AEYC to collectively develop policy, advocacy and programmatic strategies to secure investments that improve access to quality early learning opportunities for Idaho’s children.



**Jonny Carkin**  
Advocacy and  
Coalition Director

on staff since 2020

“The work of improving the early childhood landscape in Idaho would not be possible without the dedicated coalition partners and advocates who step up and speak out for our children, families and the early childhood workforce. The collective impact our advocates have made through outreach, education and direct engagement in the policymaking process continues to impress me.”

## ADVOCACY UPDATE

This year our 40-member coalition collaborated to:

- Advance awareness among decision-makers about the importance of early education.
- Support early childhood providers by advocating for continued COVID-related program supports like wage subsidies and facilities grants.
- Support passage of the Child Care Workforce Development Grant program.
- Advocate for legislation that provided landmark investment in literacy that enabled many school districts to offer no-cost, full-day kindergarten.

## EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVES (ELCS)

These collaboratives bring together local stakeholders – such as city and school leaders, parents, teachers and businesses – to build and offer affordable, quality early learning opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable in their community.



"The ELCs are a testament to what can be achieved when dedicated individuals come together with a shared vision. They foster growth and development in our youngest citizens and knit communities closer together. Our 25 ELCs provide a platform for local parents, educators and policymakers to unite and create a tailored approach to support early learning that suits their community's unique needs."



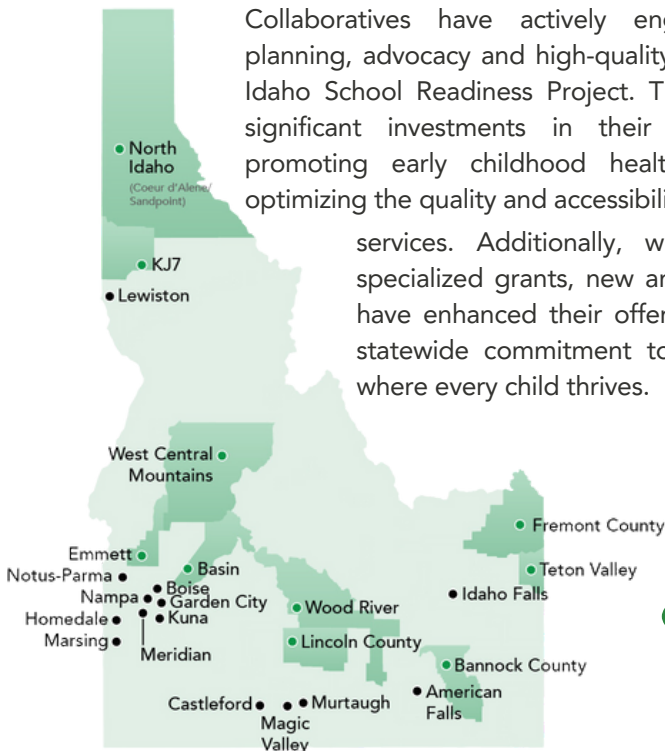
**Martin Balben**  
Early Learning Collaboratives Project Director

on staff since 2017

## EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE UPDATE

Collaboratives have actively engaged in strategic planning, advocacy and high-quality service through the Idaho School Readiness Project. They have also made significant investments in their communities, from promoting early childhood health and learning to optimizing the quality and accessibility of child care

services. Additionally, with the support of specialized grants, new and existing programs have enhanced their offerings, underscoring a statewide commitment to fostering an Idaho where every child thrives.



**25**  
Communities Impacted

## Success in Sandpoint ELC

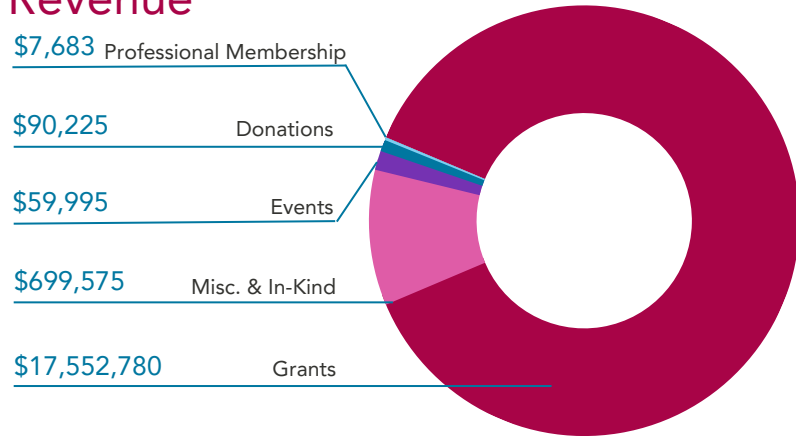
Our partners at Panhandle Alliance in Sandpoint received their fall Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) scores from forty students whose families attended *READY! for Kindergarten* workshops. The results were that 93% of Panhandle Alliance's *READY! for Kindergarten* graduates scored at or near grade level. This collaborative had 68% score at grade level (already!) and 25% in near grade level, indicating that they would likely achieve grade level standards by the end of the school year.

# Growing our Impact



## FINANCIAL REPORT

### Revenue

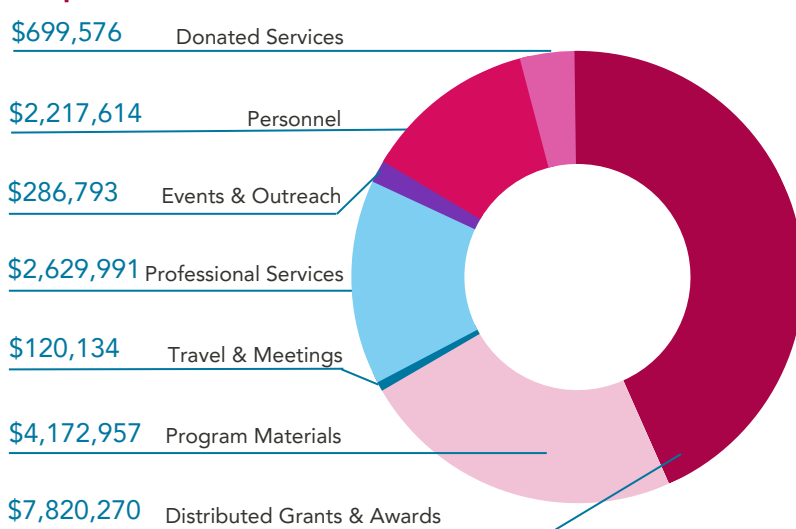


“Our work has made measurable, positive impacts on children and families, but there is still so much to be done to ensure every child in Idaho has the opportunity to thrive. ”



**Rachel Flachbart Sladek**  
Development Director  
on staff since 2022

### Expenses



**27%**  
increase in  
DONORS

### Join our Circle of Friends

- Visionary Circle:** \$5k+ given annually
- Advocate Circle:** \$1k-\$4,999 given annually
- Community Circle:** \$500-\$999 given annually
- Family Circle:** \$100-\$499 given annually
- Young Child Circle:** Give up to \$99 annually



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

<b>Tonya Sears</b> , President	North Idaho College Head Start
<b>Kevin Bailey</b> , President-Elect	Idaho Nonprofit Center
<b>Anna Wolfenbarger</b> , Treasurer	Severn, Winkle, LLP
<b>Chase Ropelato</b> , Past-President	Idaho Power Company

### REGIONAL DIRECTORS

<b>Denise Ohrt</b> , North Idaho	North Idaho College Head Start
<b>Megan Robison</b> , North Central	University of Idaho Children's Center
<b>Phyllis Vernon</b> , Southwest Idaho	WICAP Head Start
<b>Melissa Buck</b> , Treasure Valley	Vista Montessori Schools, Inc.
<b>Maura Goldstein</b> , Treasure Valley	Roots Forest School
<b>Janet Salvoni</b> , Magic Valley	Sun Valley Community School
<b>Kelsey W. Skinner</b> , Magic Valley	College of Southern Idaho
<b>Sheryl Gittings</b> , Eastern Idaho	Maggie's Place, LLC

### APPOINTED DIRECTORS

<b>Kayla Burnim</b>	Prairie Learning Center
<b>Nichole Billetz</b>	Boise State Children's Center
<b>Cristina Daccarett</b>	St. Luke's Health System
<b>Katie Downs</b>	Middleton School District
<b>Trina Dykas-Dillman</b>	Huntington Learning Center, Boise
<b>Erin Erkins</b>	Erkins Commercial Real Estate
<b>DaLynn Hammer</b>	Idaho National Laboratory
<b>Rebecca Lemmons</b>	Saint Alphonsus
<b>Krystal McFarlane</b>	TLC for Tots
<b>Ellen Neff</b>	Retired, College of Southern Idaho
<b>Alicia Robertson</b>	Lewis-Clark State College
<b>Cammra Wakagawa</b>	New Horizon Academy

## STAFF

### ADMINISTRATION *with Idaho AEYC since...*

<b>Beth Oppenheimer</b> , Executive Director	2010
<b>Jane Zink</b> , Deputy Director	2003
<b>Rachel Sladek Flachbart</b> , Development Director	2022
<b>Nicole Criner</b> , Marketing & Communications Director	2023
<b>Laurie Demko</b> , Executive Assistant	2014
<b>Patty Keyes</b> , Administrative Assistant	2011

### READY! FOR KINDERGARTEN TEAM

<b>Adrian Amo</b> , READY! for Kindergarten Director	2021
<b>Stacy Poirier</b> , READY! for Kindergarten Specialist	2023

### EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY TEAM

<b>Jonny Carkin</b> , Advocacy and Coalition Director	2020
<b>Richard Mussler-Wright</b> , Membership Coordinator	2022
<b>Martin Balbin</b> , ELC Project Director	2017
<b>Heather Lee</b> , ELC Assistant Director	2021
<b>Florina Ruvio</b> , Community Engagement Coordinator	2022
<b>Amanda Mills</b> , Strengthening Families Specialist	2023
<b>Yucare Camacho Delgado</b> , Child Care Specialist	2023

### FINANCE TEAM *with Idaho AEYC since...*

<b>Katrice Walters</b> , Finance Director	2002
<b>Megan O'Neill</b> , Accounts Payable Manager	2010
<b>Christy Galaviz</b> , Assistant Finance Director	2022
<b>Nicole Walters</b> , Accounts Payable Specialist	2022

### IDAHOSTARS TEAM

<b>Lisa Just</b> , Customer Communication Director	2018
<b>Malia Woessner</b> , Leadership Director	2018
<b>Erin McCandless</b> , Leadership Director	2019
<b>Chelsea Krema</b> , Equity Director	2017
<b>Blanca Rios</b> , Equity Specialist	2022
<b>Krisi Wagnon</b> , Academic Scholarship Coordinator	2022
<b>Lucy Pekovich</b> , Academic Scholarship Specialist	2023
<b>Victoria Heaton</b> , Academic Scholarship Specialist	2013
<b>Tracy Gagnon</b> , Project Assessment Specialist	2009
<b>Eleni Graham</b> , Professional Development Specialist	2017
<b>Sheralynn Bauder</b> , Communications Specialist	2020
<b>John Hess</b> , Customer Support Coordinator	2023
<b>Cheryl Bowers</b> , Customer Support Specialist	2017
<b>Maria Perez</b> , Customer Support Specialist	2021
<b>Debra Amsi</b> , Customer Support Specialist	2021

*Imagine an Idaho...*  
**THAT SUPPORTS EARLY EDUCATION  
FOR ALL CHILDREN.**

**CONNECT WITH US**

Visit our website to sign up for our newsletters, become a member, or join our Circle of Friends.

[idahoaeyc.org](http://idahoaeyc.org)



Idaho Association for the  
Education of Young Children

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