

IDAHO ASSOCIATION FOR THE
EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Annual Report 2024



Idaho Association for the
Education of Young Children

*Building Idaho's Early Care
and Education System*

LETTER FROM OUR

Executive Director

Dear Idaho AEYC Community,

As we come to the close of a truly meaningful year, I find myself inspired and deeply grateful for this journey we're on together. In my first six months as Executive Director, I have witnessed an unwavering commitment to Idaho's children, families and early childhood professionals that goes beyond words. Every day, your dedication shapes a brighter future for Idaho's youngest learners and it's an honor to walk this path with you.

Together, we have achieved milestones that reflect our shared purpose and passion. This year, Idaho AEYC's READY! for Kindergarten program was recognized as the nation's top program, a powerful acknowledgment of Idaho's investment in school readiness and family support. Additionally, our IdahoSTARS team earned national recognition for excellence in human-centered design, a tribute to our dedication to putting families and providers at the heart of all we do. These achievements are a testament to the commitment and heart each of you brings to this work.

As we look forward, Idaho AEYC's refreshed strategic plan will be released in Spring 2025. This plan will guide our work through five key areas that embody our values and vision for the future: Expanding Access to Affordable, High-Quality Child Care, Providing Essential Early Intervention Services, Empowering Families as Leaders, Championing School Readiness and Lifelong Success Strengthening Idaho's Early Childhood Workforce.

These focus areas reflect our mission and our vision for Idaho's future. Each one of you—whether you are part of our staff, a board member, a volunteer, or a partner in the community—plays an essential role in this journey. Your dedication and resilience drive our work forward, making Idaho AEYC a place of compassion, innovation and lasting impact.

Thank you for all you bring to this mission, for your belief in what we can accomplish together, and for being a part of Idaho AEYC. It is an honor to be in this work with you, building brighter beginnings for Idaho's children, supporting Idaho's families and strengthening our communities. Together, we are shaping a future that is full of promise.



With my heartfelt gratitude and respect,

Robert Sanchez, PhD
Executive Director, Idaho AEYC

OUR FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE

Building an early care and education system for all families and communities through advocacy and community engagement.

Expanding Access to Affordable, High-Quality Child Care

We are committed to increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities for families across the state. High-quality child care, whether at home or in a program, builds a strong foundation for the future growth and success of Idaho's children.

Strengthening Our Early Childhood Workforce

Idaho's early childhood educators are the backbone of Idaho education. We are dedicated to supporting, recognizing and elevating these professionals through career pathways and professional development, helping to build a thriving early childhood community.

Empowering Families by Providing Early Learning Resources and Services

Idaho families are at the heart of our mission and we are creating pathways for their voices to lead in the early childhood community. Advocacy training, engagement and leadership opportunities ensure that families have a central role in shaping early learning. We provide families with the resources and information they need to keep their families strong.

Supporting Kindergarten Readiness and Transition

Through READY! for Kindergarten and other programs, we are laying the groundwork for Idaho's children to thrive in school and beyond, providing the resources and support communities need to build a lifelong foundation for learning and success.



Expanding access

TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



Early Learning Collaboratives (ELCs)

Early Learning Collaboratives bring together local stakeholders such as city and school leaders, parents, teachers and businesses.

Collaboratives are built on the premise that the best solutions are homegrown, originating from the understanding of each community's unique context and needs. By investing in Early Learning Collaboratives, we aim to ensure that every Idaho child has the chance to develop the critical skills they need to thrive in school and beyond. By working together, we build and expand access to affordable, quality early learning opportunities.

**Impacting over 5,400
participants in 25 communities.**



North Idaho (Coeur d'Alene Early Learning Collaborative)
North Idaho (Sandpoint Early Learning Collaborative)
KJ7 Early Learning Collaborative
Clearwater Regional Early Learning Collaborative
Emmett Early Learning Collaborative
Homedale Early Learning Collaborative
Marsing Early Learning Collaborative
Canyon County Early Learning Collaborative
Notus-Parma Early Learning Collaborative
Treasure Valley Early Learning Collaborative
Garden City Early Learning Collaborative
Basin Early Learning Collaborative
Kuna Early Learning
Meridian Early Learning Collaborative
West Central Mountains Early Learning Collaborative
Castleford Early Learning Collaborative
Murtaugh Early Learning Collaborative
Lincoln County Early Learning Collaborative
Magic Valley Early Learning Collaborative
Wood River Early Learning Collaborative
American Falls Early Learning Collaborative
Idaho Falls Early Learning Collaborative
Fremont County Early Learning Collaborative
Teton Valley Collaborative for Early Learning

Idaho AEYC awarded 25 Idaho School Readiness Project Subgrants to our network of Early Learning Collaboratives in every corner of Idaho. A total of

\$1.94 million

was dispersed to these communities to support the development of high-quality early learning opportunities.



CASTLEFORD ELC A small town sees big early learning success!

Castleford, Idaho is a small town 30 minutes west of Twin Falls. Before August 2024, there were zero child care programs in Castleford. After months of planning and development in partnership with Castleford School District, Idaho AEYC, and the Workforce Development Council, Castleford Early Learning Collaborative opened its first preschool, Wolf Pup Preschool, serving 18 students, and has the capacity to scale up to 34 students. They are using a play-based curriculum that will support children's transition to kindergarten.



Teton Valley Collaborative for Early Learning

The Teton Valley Collaborative for Early Learning celebrated the opening of a child care center this year at the newly relocated and remodeled Gamble House. This achievement was the result of incredible investment and coordination between Teton School District, Sweet Spirits Preschool & Child Care, Idaho AEYC, private donors and additional stakeholders. In June, the Gamble House was donated and moved onto school district property. In September, Sweet Spirits began providing care in a community that has been struggling to keep child care businesses afloat. Idaho AEYC has been a proud partner in this process!



Gamble House being moved to Teton School District property in Driggs for the creation of a new child care facility

“Kuna’s formal collective impact work in early learning started in March 2015 with community projects to increase our children’s school readiness skills. With the help of the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC), we have grown and our young learners are thriving. We are confidently moving the needle in our incoming kindergarten fall school proficiency screening scores.”

LUDEE VERMAAS

Early Learning Project Director, Kuna School District

Advocating for and uniting an early learning system

Efforts to unify the fragmented Early Care and Education landscape continued this year, with Idaho AEYC playing a crucial role in facilitating discussions and piloting new data collection strategies aimed at creating more cohesive and actionable insights.

“Idaho AEYC is a driving force in advocating for early childhood education statewide, creating a lasting impact across Idaho. Their invaluable support has been instrumental to the Caldwell School District and programs throughout Canyon County, providing vital resources and guidance. Through this collaboration, these programs are better equipped to teach children and share the importance of early care and education. As a leader in this field, Idaho AEYC is shaping the future success of our children.”

KARI PALMER

*Early Learning Project Manager
Caldwell School District*



Dr. Sanchez, Florina Ruvio, and Tennille Call sharing the important work of our Early Learning Collaboratives at the U.S.D.A. Rural Child Care Forum in Washington D.C.



Early Learning Day

Idaho AEYC hosted our third annual Early Learning Day at the Capitol on February 6th, 2024. At this event, advocacy cohorts took part in 34 legislative meetings. Providers and parents, many of them involved in our Early Learning Collaborative (ELC) network, met with their legislative delegations to share their stories, discuss the early childhood needs in their communities and to ask for support in improving Idaho's early childhood landscape.

The IdahoStars Project

IdahoSTARS is a joint project between the University of Idaho - Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development and Idaho AEYC. The project is funded by the Child Care Development Block Grant through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.



STEPS TO QUALITY



QUALITY ACHIEVERS

Steps to Quality (STQ) is Idaho's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) supported through the work of the IdahoSTARS Project. Participation in STQ is voluntary for Idaho child care programs, ensuring those involved are committed to improving their quality practices.

Through listening to child care professionals, studying national trends and receiving input from other states' strategies, we will be transitioning to our new QRIS system, Quality Achievers, in 2025. Participants will see new structures that focus on recognizing a program's definition of quality in a more tailored and relevant way. Programs will be encouraged to work in areas that naturally make sense for their staff, children and families.

154 child care programs in Idaho verified at a step



825 ICCP Certified Programs



674 State-Licensed Programs

ICCP & State Licensing Support

Our IdahoSTARS Customer Support Team (CST) supports child care programs participating in the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP), which assists low-income families with child care tuition through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Additionally, the IdahoSTARS Project supports providers licensed throughout the state. The CST works with new and renewing child care programs to ensure that all requirements and documentation are met to participate in those programs. Their assistance means more financially stable programs for child care providers and families.

STRENGTHENING OUR Early childhood workforce

We equip early educators with the resources they need to deliver exceptional early childhood education, ensuring that our collective efforts set the stage for a lifetime of learning.

Early Learning Conference

350 Attendees

20+ Workshops Offered

In June, over 350 attendees from across the state participated in over 20 workshops at our two-day Idaho Early Learning Conference. This year's Keynote Speaker, Dr. Junlei Li of Harvard's Early Childhood Education Program, shared inspiring research on how connecting with the hearts of children matters more than the tools and resources we use, whether it be in a home-care setting or in an early learning classroom, simple interactions can make all the difference.



“ I think you all do a fabulous job,
and make early childhood
educators feel valued. ”

CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

“ It was a memorable experience
with great information. ”

CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

Professional Development

We provided over 250 training sessions and workshops, enhancing the competencies of over 1,200 Early Care and Education Professionals. The sessions were available in a variety of topic areas relevant to early care and education professionals in Idaho, including: infant and early childhood mental health, nutrition and active play, early literacy and math, conscious discipline, Child Development Associates support, trauma-informed practices, and strength-based approaches for early care.

1,200+ Educators Trained

250+ Training Sessions Offered

Strengthening Families™ Trainings

We hosted a Strengthening Families™ Protective Factor series of trainings for early childhood professionals with Swahili interpretation. Participants received resources and materials to support their work around supporting the families and children in their programs.

At the end of summer and early fall, this group of 37 gathered twice for peer-to-peer learning sessions, reflecting on what they learned and sharing their ideas and successes. They decided to build a Community of Practice and plan to meet again soon!



Early Math Matters – Professional Development Micro-Course

A total of 39 participants throughout the state began a Math for Preschoolers three-month micro-course led by the Erikson Institute this fall. Those who complete the course will receive a \$1,200 early math learning kit. A second cohort of the micro-course will be available in Spring 2025.



Child Care Start Up Trainings

The Rural Development Initiatives' Pasos al Éxito child care start up trainings were created to bolster our state's early childhood workforce by supporting Spanish-speaking child care providers in rural geographies. These trainings have been delivered in three cohorts within the last year. During these trainings, we have had the opportunity to present valuable information on how to open and sustain a child care program in Idaho.

42 Participants



Scholarships for early educators

Academic scholarships offered through two of our projects reduce the financial barrier of higher education, making it more feasible for early care and education professionals to advance their formal education and career. We strive to support professionals at all stages of their career whether they need support for a single academic course in Early Childhood Education or their Graduate Degree.



IdahoSTARS Project
Academic Scholarships

58

Recipients

\$170K+

Awarded in 2023/2024 fiscal year



Idaho School Readiness
Project Academic
Scholarships

89

Recipients

\$440K+

Awarded in 2024 calendar year

Professional Development Badge System

This year, at the National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA) conference, the IdahoSTARS Project received the prestigious Human-Centered Design Award. This award recognizes the collaborative efforts made through the implementation of the IdahoSTARS Badge System and the redesign of the Professional Development System (PDS). The IdahoSTARS team ensured that the designs for a new professional development system were responsive and also met the needs of Idaho's child care workforce, aligning with national standards.



North Idaho Shared Services Alliance Pilot

In partnership with the North Idaho Early Learning Collaborative and IdahoSTARS Region 1 team, Idaho AEYC is engaged in this grassroots effort to shift the work of early childhood educators from surviving to thriving. A shared services alliance allows child care businesses to gain support that improves efficiency, reduces costs and creates economies of scale. Idaho AEYC covers fees for access to Wonderschool, a child care management software, as well as provides technical assistance for pilot leaders. Participants receive intensive business coaching and training.

Empowering families with resources

Strong families are the building blocks of a strong community. Every family needs the tools to support their children with stable, nurturing environments in their earliest years. By giving parents the resources they need and expanding early learning opportunities in Idaho, we increase children's chances of success in school and life.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Our team has supported at least one family-focused event in each Early Learning Collaborative community. These included events, such as the Notus Harvest Festival, A Book and a Bite summer program in Caldwell, the Dia de los Ninos event at the Boise Public Library, a child abuse prevention family event in Lewiston.

- 22+ events
- 18 communities
- 2,600+ families impacted

Parenting Groups

We offered parent workshops teaching strengths-based support to build resilience and reduce stress in families.

- 9 Parent Workshops
- 95+ Attendees

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Through collaboration with community partners, Idaho AEYC proudly supported families by gifting materials for parents to provide their young children with rich experiences at home.

Kids of Idaho Kits

25,477

Active & Engaged Families Kits

5,007

Active Learning Kits

2,934



Our "You've Got This!" booklet is designed to help connect families to the resources available through Idaho AEYC including: information about developmental milestones, nutrition, early literacy, high-quality child care and our Strengthening Families™ and Advocacy Programs.

12,780 in English

1,975 in Spanish

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S Transition into kindergarten

We believe that parents are their children's first and most important teachers. When it comes to early learning, children learn best through engagement with people they love and trust.

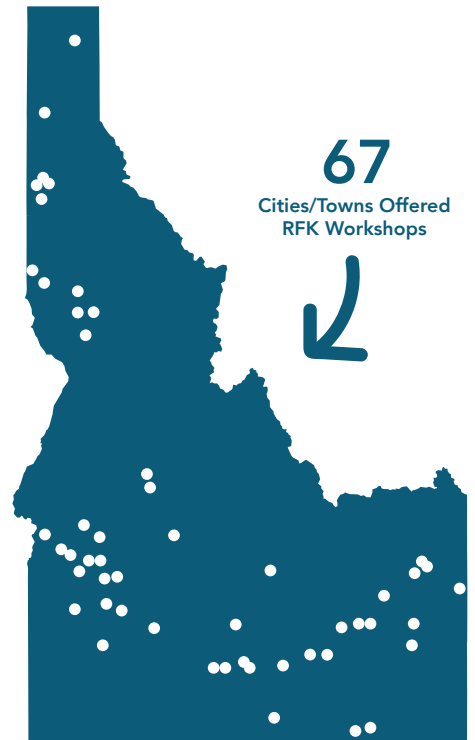
READY! for Kindergarten® Workshops

The READY! for Kindergarten® program helps to build relationships between parent, child, family, school and community. This year, over 4,500 READY! for Kindergarten® kits were distributed, enhancing educational support at home, and more than 3,000 parents and caregivers benefited from READY! for Kindergarten® (RFK) workshops offered FREE OF CHARGE, in communities across Idaho.

IN 2024

3,000+
Parents Participated

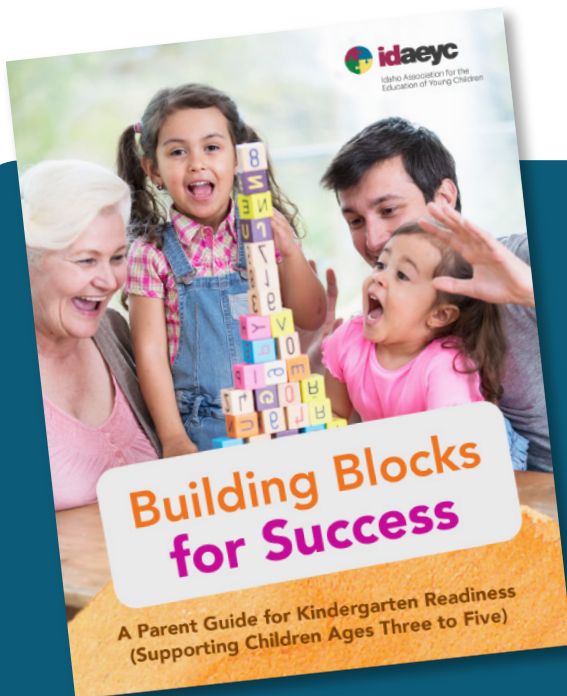
4,500+
Learning Kits Distributed





“ I have been teaching at Husky Pups for two years and have seen several children grow and thrive as a result of our program. One student came to us at age five - she could not speak and would communicate in "gibberish." After working with her and testing her, I started working with her in American Sign Language (ASL) - it opened up her world! By the next test, not only could she tell me her letters and numbers in Sign Language, she could talk as well. This student is brilliant and this year she is doing number line math, working on sight words and problem solving. She is a clear leader this year, and has made a lot of social/emotional progress. ”

AMBER CLAY
Husky Pups Teacher
Marsing, Idaho



≥ 24 pages! ≤

Hiring of Kindergarten Transition Specialist

In 2024, we hired a Kindergarten Transition Specialist to explore how we can further build bridges between the home, early learning programs, and school districts for a smooth kindergarten entry. Multiple resources are in the works, like the Building Blocks for Success, a parent guide for school readiness that focuses on ages three to five. The Educator's Companion document will also be available that provides ideas about playful family activities and events that school districts can utilize to support parents. The Idaho Kindergarten Toolkit is another resource to help school districts curate nurturing experiences for children as they move through the early years and into the K-12 system.

Thankful for our grantors and funders!



Financial Report

REVENUE

\$18,619,256.00

Professional Membership	\$6,565
Donations	\$52,700
Events	\$68,538
Misc. & In-Kind	\$2,724,538.00
Grants	\$15,766,915.00

EXPENSES

\$18,552,104.00

Donated Services	\$2,724,247.00
Personnel	\$2,548,647.00
Events & Outreach	\$293,713.00
Professional Services	\$3,843,132.00
Travel & Meetings	\$124,640.00
Program Materials	\$3,447,567.00
Distributed Grants & Awards	\$5,158,867.00
Operational Expenses	\$411,291.00

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Officers

Kevin Bailey - President
Rebecca Lemmons - President Elect
Anna Wolfenbarger - Treasurer
Tonya Sears - Past President

Appointed Representatives

Kari Schweitzer Prange
Renee Addington English
Nicole Criner
DaLynn Hammer
Melissa Buck
Erin Erkins
Alicia Robertson
Justin Snyder – Emerging Leader

Regional Representatives

Lori Fascilla – Treasure Valley
Denise Ohrt – North Idaho
Sheryl Gittings – Eastern Idaho
Maura Goldstein – Central Idaho
Megan Robison – North Central
Krystal McFarlane – Southwest Idaho
Janet Salvoni - Magic Valley
Kelsey Skinner – Magic Valley

STAFF

Administration

Dr. Robert Sanchez, Executive Director
Jane Zink, Deputy Director
Martin Balben, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Sheralynn Bauder, Director of External Relations
Laurie Demko, Executive Assistant
Patty Keyes, Administrative Assistant

Finance Team

Katrice Walters, Finance Director
Christy Galaviz, Assistant Finance Director
Megan O'Neil, Accounts Payable Manager
Nicole Walters, Accounts Payable Specialist

Family and Community Engagement Team

Adrian Amo, Director of Family and Community Engagement
Stacey Poirier, Ready! for Kindergarten Specialist
Florina Ruvio, Community Engagement Coordinator
Amanda Mills, Strengthening Families Specialist

Early Learning Collaboratives Team

Heather Lee, Early Learning Collaboratives Project Director
Jonny Carkin, Early Learning Collaboratives Operations Director
Yucare Camacho Delgado, Child Care Specialist
Phyllis Vernon, Kindergarten Transition Specialist

Early Care & Education Professionals Support Team

Erin McCandless, IdahoSTARS Co-Leadership Director
Malia Woessner, IdahoSTARS Co-Leadership Director
Lisa Just, IdahoSTARS Customer Communication Director
Chelsea Krema, IdahoSTARS Director of Systems Alignment
Krisi Wagnon, Academic Scholarships Coordinator
Victoria Heaton, IdahoSTARS Scholarship Specialist
Eleni Graham, IdahoSTARS Professional Development System Registry Coordinator
Tracy Gagnon, IdahoSTARS Quality Assessment Coordinator
Blanca Rios, IdahoSTARS Quality and Language Specialist
Cheryl Bowers, IdahoSTARS Customer Support Specialist
Maria Perez, IdahoSTARS Customer Support Specialist
Debora Amsi, IdahoSTARS Customer Support Specialist

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Your support allows our communities to thrive.



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