



Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health is Committed to Education

By Jackie Yarbrough / Senior Program Officer

I sometimes get asked why a health foundation supports education. The answer: education impacts health. Data supports that educational and health outcomes are linked. The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health is dedicated to addressing the root causes that impact health, and education is one of those root causes.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the Foundation supported education in Idaho in numerous ways. Here is a look at how we invested in education in our state.

Early Education

Quality early education programs help prepare children for kindergarten. From birth to age 5, children's brains are developing rapidly and their capacity for learning is unparalleled. During these formative years, children are laying the cognitive and behavioral foundation for the rest of their development and learning.

The Foundation helped 10 school districts launch new or expand early education programs in the 2024-25 school year. Each district attended a four-part Early Education & School webinar series that shared early education program best practices. There were 35 school districts that participated in the webinar series and were invited to apply for grant funding.

The interest was so great that a second Early Education & Schools webinar series took place in the spring of 2025 with 16 districts participating. The Foundation awarded funding to 12 additional schools to launch or expand programs.

Health Professions CTE Programs

Idaho is a so-called healthcare desert because the state has a severe shortage of healthcare workers, including primary care doctors, nurses, and just about every healthcare profession.

Career Technical Education (CTE) programs are one way to bolster the state's healthcare workforce. Many schools are offering Health Professions CTE programs, helping prepare students for in-demand careers such as emergency medical technicians, certified nursing

assistant, medical assisting, rehabilitation services, sports medicine and pharmacy technician.

The Foundation sees the importance of these programs and understands that many schools and districts don't have the resources to launch or expand their programs. That's why we provided 14 grants to schools for their programs in 2024-25 and awarded 16 additional grants for schools for the upcoming 2025-26 school year.

Youth Behavioral Health

Idaho has a youth behavioral health crisis, and the Foundation supports evidence-based solutions such as Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports (PBIS). It supported a three-district cohort that helped Cascade, Notus, and Parma become PBIS schools that data shows have positively impacted children.

The Foundation continues to offer its Healthy Minds Partnership program that helps schools offer school-located behavioral health services. While trying to find providers for this program, the Foundation noticed several barriers that were preventing schools from offering that care.

This led to the Foundation commissioning a research paper on factors that impact youth behavioral health in the state. The paper was shared with many stakeholders with a goal of improving access to behavioral health for Idaho's children and families.

We've also supported the Idaho Out of School Network's Behavior Management Institute (BMI). The BMI program is designed by Dr. Katie Azevedo to provide research-based strategies to adults who work with youth of all ages in an out-of-school time setting. This leads to well-managed learning environments that are foundations for positive relationships and academic success.

The Idaho Youth Well-Being Assessment is a tool that schools and districts can use to better serve students and families. The survey is designed for sixth through 12th-grade students and provides schools and districts with the up-to-date information they need to serve students' behavioral health needs. The Foundation made the assessment available to all school districts at no cost for the 2024-25 school year.



Community Schools

Community Schools are neighborhood public schools where parents, educators and community partners work together to expand the support available to families and create meaningful learning experiences for students.

We began partnering with the Idaho Coalition for Community Schools (ICCS) in 2021 and have helped the organization expand from a regional entity to one with statewide impact. I serve on the ICCS State Steering Committee, Collaborative Funders Group, and Rural Expansion Advisory team with the goal of transforming Idaho's education system.

As a result, there are now 65 community schools in 25 school districts operating in Idaho and five additional districts have been selected to join the Idaho Community Schools Rural Expansion Initiative in the 2025-26 school year.

Other Support

The Foundation supports education outside of the classroom, too. We funded a leadership development program for the Idaho School Boards Association. The program included 13 workshops across Idaho to strengthen school board members' leadership skills to provide effective communication within the board room and community.

One participant said, "It opened my eyes about communicating as a leader. Helped with how to communicate with board; how to build trust."

In addition to those leadership workshops, the Foundation has supported six large community meetings in 2025 that bring together school board members, administrators, teachers, staff, caregivers, parents and community members to discuss and explore effective communications strategies. The Foundation also backed eight networking opportunities for board members, administrators, and community service providers to support collaboration and shared solutions for Idaho children.

Additionally, the Foundation supported the ISBA's annual convention by bringing in featured speaker Christine Porath and providing 200 copies of her book for school board members and administrators.

As a trusted partner in education, the Foundation provides funding support for most education conferences that benefit teachers and administrators, including Idaho Association of School Administrators, Stronger Together Behavioral Health Conference, Family & Community Education Conference, Idaho Prevention and Support Conference, and Idaho HOSA.

Our goal is to build a healthier Idaho. Our work in the education sector is making difference for thousands of Idaho children. If your district is interested in learning more about the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, contact me at:

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Early Childhood Education Grant Recipients

2025-26

- Avery School District (Shoshone County)
- Bliss School District
- Fruitland School District
- Glenns Ferry School District
- Kootenai Joint School District
- Lewiston School District
- Madison School District
- Mullan School District
- Pocatello/Chubbuck School District
- Snake River School District (Bingham County)
- Wendell School District
- Wilder School District

2024-25

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

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Health Professions CTE Grant Recipients

2025-26

- Blackfoot School District
- Blaine County School District
- Bruneau Grandview Joint School District
- Canyon Owyhee School Service Agency (COSSA)
- Fruitland School District
- Genesee School District
- Hagerman School District
- Horseshoe Bend District
- Lake Pend Oreille School District
- Madison School District
- Melba School District
- Middleton Academy
- Nampa School District
- Rise Charter School
- Snake River School District
- Twin Falls School District

2024-25

- American Falls School District
- Boise School District
- Butte School District
- Cassia Joint School District
- Elevate Academy North
- Firth School District
- Jerome School District
- Kamiah Joint School District
- Middleton School District
- Moscow School District
- Orofino Joint School District
- Payette River Technical Academy
- Joint School District 60 (Shelley)
- Sugar Salem Joint School District (Sugar City)

Feedback From ISBA Workshops supported by the Foundation

- "ISBA has come and put on 3 different community meetings in which we invited the community to come and share their vision, expectations, and goals for the district. These were absolutely some of the best meetings."
- "This was terrific! The only thing I would suggest is bringing this presentation to more people. Fantastic information! Thank you!"
- "I am looking more to how others feel when I speak than before. I will be more aware of how I communicate and what motivates my responses. Being aware of my feelings going in."
- "Opened my eyes about communicating as a leader. Helped with how to communicate with board; how to build trust."
- "Leadership as a board is unique, so considering the ideas we discussed in that context is helpful."
- "The power of self-reflection & accountability. Civility starts with me."
- "I enjoyed learning more about effective communication and how I communicate. Great suggestions for how to deal with board situations."
- "I really enjoyed this training. Thank you for asking questions and making us think and provide a safe space to openly share our ideas and concerns."
- "More intimate or personal communication is harder to accomplish, if there isn't a high level of trust within the group."



**We engage and
collaborate with schools
and community
organizations to ensure
Idaho youth thrive.**

