
The Idaho Commission for Libraries assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele.

NEWS RELEASE

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Three Idaho Falls Schools Receive Funds to Help Serve Youngest Students

BOISE, ID— Three Idaho Falls elementary schools recently received Read to Me Mini-Grants from the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) to increase access to reading materials for their youngest students: Falls Valley Elementary (\$3,000) and Cloverdale Elementary (\$5,000) in Bonneville Joint District #93 and Ethel Boyes Elementary (\$5,000) in Idaho Falls District #91.

Elementary school libraries play a vital role in ensuring that children develop strong literacy skills, starting in the earliest grades. “Research shows that the best way to improve a child’s reading skills is to provide convenient access to reading materials,” said State Librarian Ann Joslin. “It’s critical that Idaho’s school and public libraries offer strong collections of quality, age-appropriate books as part of the effort to have Idaho’s young children reading proficiently.” Unfortunately, many Idaho elementary schools haven’t had the resources to allow children in developmental preschool programs, kindergarten, and even first grade to check out books to take home.

Falls Valley librarian Adlina Memmott said, “Our library has been lacking in the lower-level books in our nonfiction area and to see our bookshelves fill with those much needed books is exciting! Our students are excited to see books that teach them about bugs and dinosaurs, pets and real people. We have particularly enjoyed being able to check these new books out and see the excitement in the children. They are now able to learn more about what they’ve chosen to read about.” Cloverdale librarian Beth Waite said, “Thanks to this grant we are now allowing all students in the school to check out two books per week. The younger students are very excited to be able to have more than one book. The teachers have given us suggestions about what books to buy with the grant money and they are happy to know there will be new books in the library. We have not had a budget to buy new books in our library and so the new books are going to be a great addition.”

In the past two years, ICfL awarded Read to Me Mini-Grants to 43 elementary schools to help them improve collections and change check-out policies to better meet the needs of emerging readers. The evaluation of the first year Mini-Grants, completed by Boise State University literacy professor Dr. Roger Stewart, showed strong positive results. “Young children had dramatically increased access to books resulting in them, their teachers, and their parents/caregivers becoming excited about books and reading,” Dr. Stewart wrote. This year, the Idaho Legislature approved a one-time increase of \$100,000 for school library Mini-Grants. ICfL received 80 applications requesting a total of \$314,000 and was able to award \$200,000 in grant funds—ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000—to 49 elementary schools.

See more about ICfL’s Read to Me Elementary School Library Access Mini-Grants program at <http://libraries.idaho.gov/school-access-mini-grants>.

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries helps libraries build the capacity to better serve their clientele by supporting statewide databases and online resources, continuing education, consulting, programming, early literacy skills, and building library community. To learn more about ICfL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.