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NEWS RELEASE

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Idaho Elementary Schools Receive Funds to Help Serve Youngest Students

BOISE, ID – Elementary school libraries play a vital role in ensuring that Idaho children develop strong literacy skills, starting in the earliest grades. 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. Last year the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) awarded Read to Me Mini-grants to 20 schools to help increase access to books. This year 23 Idaho elementary schools are receiving grant funds to improve their collections and change their check-out practices for these young students.

The Idaho State Department of Education's [2012 Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#) states, "School libraries should have a minimum of 20 books per child to enable children to take multiple books home at each visit. This figure also takes into consideration the needs of teachers to have access to quality trade books to support the Common Core. In addition...two new books per child should be added to the school library collection each year to allow for the addition of important new titles." Yet, in ICfL's *September 2012 Public Elementary School Library Study* by Boise State University literacy professor Dr. Roger Stewart, 62 percent of Idaho elementary school libraries reported annual book budgets of under \$1,000 and 28 percent of those reported budgets of under \$100. As a result, most have insufficient budgets to provide quality, age-appropriate books for their students. Consequently, many Idaho children do not have access to enough reading materials to become proficient readers, the basis required for all other learning.

ICfL received 59 applications for the mini-grants this year, requesting a total of \$242,000, and was able to fund 23 for a total of \$100,000. Schools that had developmental preschool programs on school grounds and high levels of student poverty were given highest priority. Grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 were awarded to the following elementary schools:

- Boise School District #1: Hillcrest Elementary and Shadow Hills Elementary
- Boundary County School District #101: Valley View Elementary, Bonners Ferry
- Caldwell School District #132: Lewis & Clark Elementary and Woodrow Wilson Elementary
- Culesac Joint School District #342: Culesac Elementary
- Freemont County Joint School District #215: Henry's Fork Elementary, St. Anthony
- Fruitland School District #373: Fruitland Elementary
- Highland Joint School District #305: Highland Elementary, Craigmont

- Horseshoe Bend School District #73: Horseshoe Bend Elementary
- Idaho Falls School District #91: Fox Hollow Elementary
- Lake Pend Oreille School District #84: Kootenai Elementary
- Madison School District #321: Burton Elementary, Rexburg
- Marsh Valley Joint School District #21: Inkom Elementary
- Meridian Joint School District #2: Desert Sage Elementary
- Middleton School District #134: Purple Sage Elementary
- Murtaugh Joint School District #418: Murtaugh Elementary
- New Plymouth School District #372: New Plymouth Elementary
- Oneida School District #351: Malad Elementary
- Orofino Joint School District #171: Orofino Elementary
- Parma School District #137: Maxine Johnson Elementary
- Ririe Joint School District #252: Ririe Elementary Pre K-1
- Troy School District #287: Troy Elementary

ICfL is requesting an additional \$100,000 for the Read to Me Mini-grant program during the upcoming legislative session to ensure that more schools are able to improve their collections and help meet the needs of emerging readers. “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. “When children have access to books, they read them. And, when they read a lot or have parents reading to them on a regular basis, all aspects of literacy improve. 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 and at grade level.” ICfL Project Coordinator Stephanie Bailey-White added that the elementary schools receiving mini-grants are committed to increasing access to books for their youngest students.

The evaluation of last year’s Read to Me Mini-grants completed by Dr. 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. The access and excitement led to substantial shifts in self-reported parent/caregiver behaviors in the home. These included increased amounts of reading to their children, and more discussion of the books read....[This is] another example of a highly-effective, relatively low-cost program expertly developed and administered by ICfL staff,” Stewart wrote.

See more about the ICfL’s Read to Me program <http://libraries.idaho.gov/landing/read-to-me>.

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele. To learn more about ICfL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.