

Quality Child Care Matters

Annual Report 2018/19 Fiscal Year



IDAHO
STARS

What an incredible year

It was a big year for IdahoSTARS and our work to support child care providers and families across the state. We've introduced several exciting changes that advance our mission to ensure Idaho's children have access to the highest quality inclusive early care and education:

- **RISE.** To adequately support early childhood professionals, our own practices must be as effective as possible. With that in mind, we launched a new online system called RISE in December, making it possible for professionals to manage their interactions with IdahoSTARS in one place. That includes submitting documents, signing up for trainings and tracking progress on quality improvement goals.
- **Targeted Technical Assistance.** This year, we introduced a specialized form of professional development through our regional Child Care Resource Centers. If a child care center needs help improving in a specific area such as active supervision or block play, the staff now receives targeted onsite assistance.
- **Simplified Professional Recognition.** Thanks to RISE, we've seen more individuals than ever interacting with our Professional Development System. In addition to expanding scholarship and training opportunities, we've streamlined our financial recognition structure to reward the individuals taking steps to increase their level of education.
- **CDA Cohorts.** To help more child care professionals advance their qualifications, we've reached out to individuals who would be good candidates for Child Development Associate credentials. Through our new CDA Cohorts across the state, Child Care Resource Centers have engaged with about 75 individuals, offering support to complete the application and exam required for a CDA.

This annual report highlights further the data and stories of our work this year. I sincerely thank our team, our Idaho child care professionals and our partners for their commitment to quality inclusive child care.



Melissa Crist
IdahoSTARS Director of Programs



Who We Are

Our mission is to ensure that Idaho's children, infancy through age 12, have access to the highest-quality inclusive early care and education. We accomplish this by:

- **Supporting child care providers** with professional development opportunities to improve their practice and develop their businesses.
- **Equipping families** with tools and resources that empower them to find a nurturing and safe environment for their child.

The University of Idaho Center on Disabilities and Human Development (CDHD), Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (Idaho AEYC), Panhandle Health District and Department of Health and Welfare proudly partner on the IdahoSTARS project. IdahoSTARS is funded by the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to improve the quality of child care available to families.

We will leverage our resources, experience and community partnerships to:





Challenge:

Child care is a critical element that strengthens our economy and supports working families. The profession has been historically underfunded and overlooked, making it difficult for the workforce to increase wages and afford professional development opportunities.

Early childhood educators need access to free or low-cost professional development to increase their skills and stay up to date on leading child development practices.

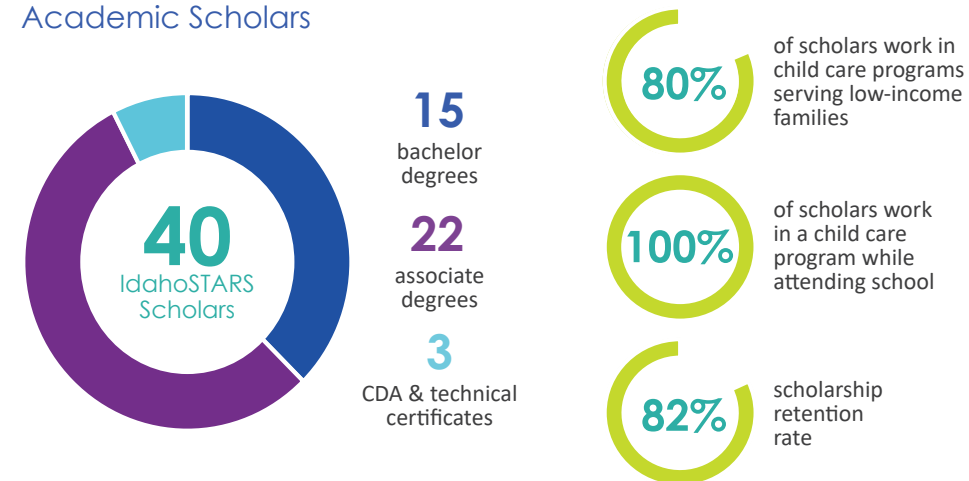
Increasing Qualifications

IdahoSTARS offers a range of professional development and scholarship opportunities for child care professionals to help improve skills, increase knowledge of child development and improve wages within the early childhood workforce. The scholarships cover a variety of professional development options, from conference registration fees to early childhood master's degree courses. Professional Development System (PDS) participants also receive recognition awards for their career development.

Trainings



Academic Scholars



*Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Farsi, French, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Kizigua, Maay Maay, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya & Ukrainian



After several years volunteering in preschool and elementary classrooms, Kristi Keeler realized she had found her career path. She loved the eagerness and enthusiasm of children, and she wanted to make a difference in their lives.

Kristi has now spent nearly two decades at The Kids Klub in

Grangeville, serving as program director the past 15 years. She joined the Professional Development System Registry in 2010 and received her first academic scholarship through IdahoSTARS not long after. Over seven years fitting college courses around her full-time work and raising her family, Kristi earned her associate degree in early childhood education and then her bachelor's degree in early childhood development.

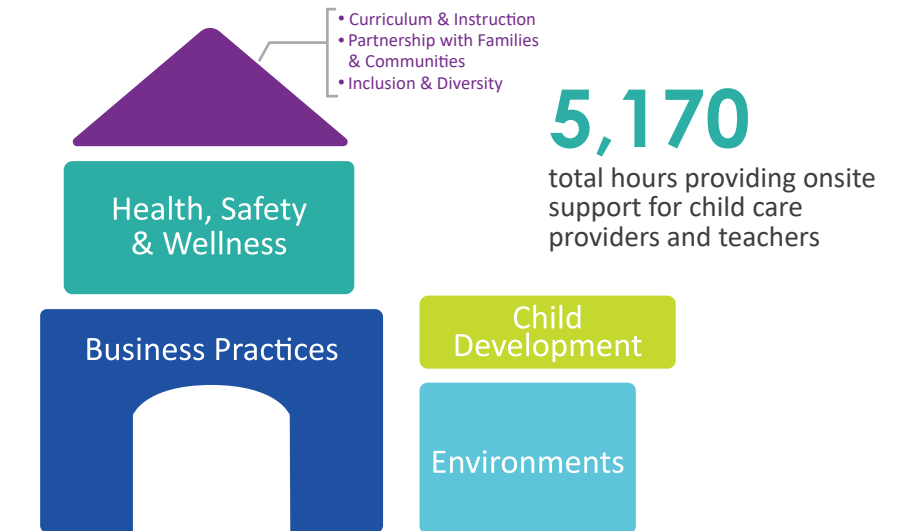
"I did not attend college right out of high school and always wished that I had," she says. "This scholarship gave me the means to do so. I am a first generation, cum laude graduate. This was important for me to set an example to my children and the children that I care for that it is never too late to pursue your dreams."

She says the education has made her a more intentional, confident teacher. Knowing about the stages of child development has guided her work to help children reach those milestones. And her program aims to continually evolve, seeking input from parents and staying up to date on new research through training.

"A lot goes into providing quality child care," Kristi says. "The program where I work is so much more than child care or babysitting. We are committed to providing enriching opportunities that expand children's learning and development."

Coaching & Technical Assistance

IdahoSTARS has seven local Child Care Resource Centers across the state. Our team of consultants help early childhood professionals increase the quality of their programs. They provide individualized, in-person technical assistance, focusing on seven quality domains that create developmentally appropriate, inclusive and diverse classrooms where children will learn and grow.



Challenge:

Parents need help identifying and affording quality child care where their child is safe, growing and learning.

Every week in Idaho over 80,000 children are in paid child care*



Bre Brush has experienced the mental anguish of unreliable child care. When she first moved to Boise with her husband and baby daughter, Charlotte, she was just happy to find space in a program at all. But the problems started right away and she began

to worry about Charlotte's safety. It affected Bre's state of mind as she tried to focus on her new job. "I was anxious going to work every day," she says.

Everything changed when Bre was able to enroll Charlotte in Giraffe Laugh 2 in Boise, a program that has frequently connected with IdahoSTARS on coaching and professional development. Bre says Giraffe Laugh takes care of her as much as they take care of Charlotte, staying in communication throughout the day and collaborating on her daughter's milestones. Charlotte has such a good time at child care that she often doesn't want to leave at the end of the day.

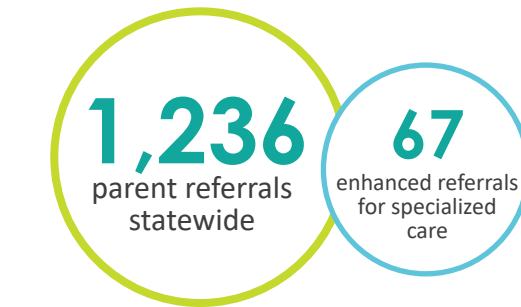
Quality makes all the difference, Bre says, encouraging parents to connect with resources such as IdahoSTARS to understand what they're looking for as they search for programs.

"Child care providers are a part of your family," Bre says. "They are with your child all day. If it is not someone you can trust, you're going to have a hard time."

Visit idahostars.org for additional stories about the impact IdahoSTARS is making across our state.

Help for Families

It can be difficult for families to navigate options and locate quality care. IdahoSTARS provides free child care referrals for families, suggesting programs based on the type of care needed, desired days and hours for child care, and location. Enhanced referrals are available to families who require additional assistance with finding care that meets their specialized needs, such as developmental delays, non-English speaking, or nontraditional child care hours.



Child Care Assistance

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) helps families access child care. Child care programs that choose to participate in ICCP must meet health, safety and training requirements. IdahoSTARS supports programs with enrolling and maintaining eligibility in ICCP.

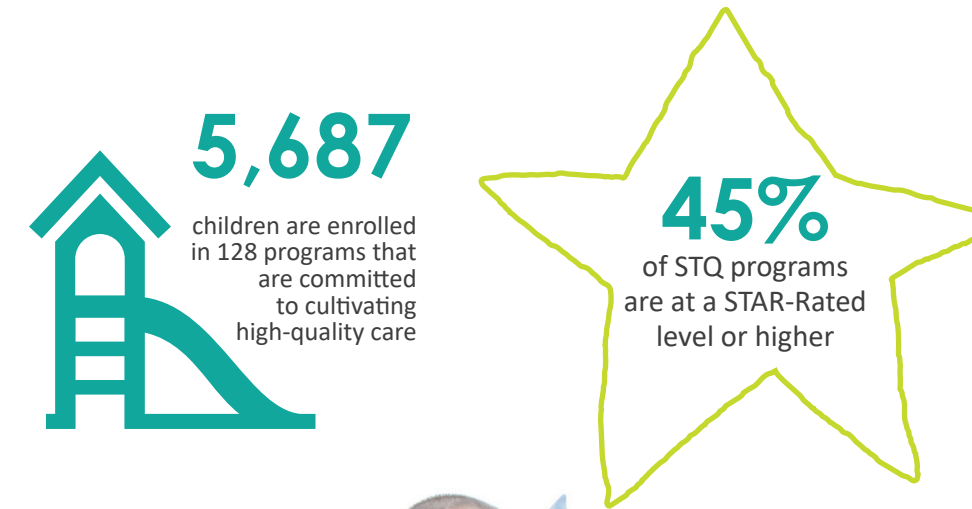


Improving Quality

Steps to Quality: Idaho's Quality Rating & Improvement System

Steps to Quality is a voluntary program for child care centers and home-based programs that want to improve their practices. Participants work directly with IdahoSTARS consultants to move through six steps aimed at enhancing the quality of a program. When a program is verified at Step 3, it is considered STAR-Rated.

While searching for child care, parents can use Steps to Quality to identify programs committed to offering quality early learning.



When her first grandchild needed child care, Marcia Davis decided to start her own program. She had nearly a decade of experience as a public-school teacher, and she hoped to provide an early learning environment that was positive for children, families and teachers. In 2012, she opened Kootenai Kids in Boise.



While searching for resources to help a child overcome challenging behavior, Marcia and her staff were relieved to come upon the free, local mentorship available through IdahoSTARS.

After meeting with an IdahoSTARS consultant and taking advantage of training and other professional development opportunities, Marcia and her team decided to participate in Steps to Quality. Since the goal at Kootenai Kids had always been purposeful, quality child care, it made sense to work with IdahoSTARS as their program evolved. Kootenai Kids is now close to reaching Step 4 in the six-step process.

"What I realized during Step 2 was that our center was naturally evolving along the Steps to Quality time frame," Marcia says. "First comes child safety, good hygiene practices and classroom organization, then comes children's social-emotional growth, curriculum development and other aspects of quality child care. The IdahoSTARS program guided our team through this progression, enabling us to stay on track."

That's important, Marcia emphasized, because children need an enriched environment to lay the foundation for all future success.

"Children are little sponges who soak up what they are exposed to," she says. "They all participate at their own levels of interest, but they are listening and watching. Suddenly a child who appeared to be playing in his own little world will talk about a book that was read aloud or a song that they never sang before."



*Committee for Economic Development. "The Business Case for Investing in High-Quality Child Care." www.ced.org



Visit idahostars.org | Call Idaho CareLine 2-1-1 or 800-926-2588