

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | May 10, 2022

Human Services announces early childhood Best in Class grant recipients

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Early Childhood Division announced the latest round of Best in Class grant recipients today. Thirty programs across the state will receive grant funds to promote quality early learning experiences for children in the year before kindergarten.

Grant recipients include **Ashley** Public School Early Childhood Education Program, Shiloh Christian Preschool in **Bismarck**, Central Cass Public Schools in **Casselton**, **Cannon Ball** Elementary School, **Cavalier** Public School, Elgin-New Leipzig Public School in **Elgin**, **Emerado** Public School, **Fargo** Public School - Agassiz School, Sargent Central Public School in **Forman**, **Grafton** Public Schools, **Maddock** Public School District No. 9, Kidder County School District in **Steele**, **Max** Public School, **McClusky** Public School, Mohall-Lansford Public School in **Mohall**, Midway Public School in **Inkster**, Valley-Edinburg Public School in **Hoople**, **Newburg** Public School, **New England** Public School, **New Rockford**-Sheyenne Public School District No. 2, North Border School District in **Pembina** and **Walhalla**, **Park River** Public School, North Shore Plaza School - Lewis and Clark School District in **Plaza**, **Rolla** Elementary preschool program, **Rugby** Public School, **St. John** Public School, **Underwood** Public School, **Westhope** Public School and **Wishek** Public School.

Of the 30 programs funded for 2022-2023, 21 previously participated in the Best in Class pilot cohort and received funding during the 2021-2022 program year.

Best in Class grants provide access to a higher level of support for staff through coaching and play-based curriculum. Programs also receive consultation and support on strategies to promote family engagement, connect children to child health and development screenings, measure child outcomes, and evaluate and enhance space to support quality early childhood experiences.

Grant amounts range from \$15,000 to \$120,000 per classroom and will be awarded in July 2022 for the 2022-2023 program year. Amounts vary by the number of children served and group size, total number of operating hours and other factors.

Programs providing a minimum of 832 hours of early childhood learning experiences over at least a 32-week period received more funds. Matching funds are required.

More Programs Can Apply

More programs can apply for funding. The department is offering another round of 2022-2023 Best in Class grants, and programs can apply beginning today through May 23, 2022. See details at <https://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/bestinclass.html>.

North Dakota's Best in Class program is a targeted investment in programs that have committed to delivering the highest quality experiences to the children and families they serve, and whose actions can demonstrate the return on investment that is possible with intentional, research-supported investments in early childhood.

Participating programs are monitored, evaluated and supported to help ensure that the investment has an impact. Programming is based on 25-plus years of research indicating that the positive gains that come from having access to quality early childhood experiences can have a long-lasting effect.

Funding was authorized in House Bill No. 1466 during the 2021 North Dakota Legislative Session. The funding for these programs comes from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II and III COVID-19 relief funds through a grant from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction state set-aside dollars.

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