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Zionsville Community Schools Awarded $25,000 Grant to Improve Elementary Education Starts for Hoosier Children

Zionsville Community Schools among 15 Indiana school communities selected to receive Strong Start Community Grant funds to develop plans to strengthen kindergarten transitions

Zionsville Indiana – Zionsville Community Schools was announced as a recipient of a statewide grant opportunity for communities interested in strengthening kindergarten transition programs and practices. This grant application was made possible with support from the Hussey-Mayfield Memorial Public Library and the Zionsville Chamber of Commerce. The Strong Start Community initiative, funded by Indiana’s Preschool Development Grant and powered by Early Learning Indiana, supports the creation of locally driven plans to ensure more Hoosier children move effectively into the kindergarten classroom, setting the stage for success in their first year of elementary school and beyond.

A smooth transition into kindergarten creates a foundation for children to build upon throughout the rest of their education journey. Without the right supports, children struggle to manage new expectations and the uncertainty of a new environment. Intentional programs that encourage family engagement and strengthen the connection between pre-K and K-12 are linked to academic gains, with the greatest gains made by children who experience social and economic risks.

Zionsville Community Schools is one of 15 Indiana school communities awarded $25,000 through the Strong Start Community Grant. As a grant recipient, Zionsville Community Schools have committed to developing and implementing kindergarten transition plans using specific criteria. That criteria, informed by national best practices and local innovation identified through the Strong Start for Kindergarten Prize competition, includes:

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- Key stakeholder representation and public and private partnerships forged to support community participation
- Joint participation by early childhood education and K-12 stakeholders
- Engagement of early learning and kindergarten teachers through exposure opportunities and joint professional development
- Activities that engage families in the kindergarten transition planning process
- Supports for at-risk or vulnerable populations with a specific outcome goal
- Data use to set current level of kindergarten readiness and establish plan goals

“An increasing body of evidence suggests that effective kindergarten transitions can reduce academic fadeout, improve outcomes, encourage family involvement and allow children to navigate a significant period of adjustment,” said Early Learning Indiana CEO and President Maureen Weber. “By bringing all of the right stakeholders to the table and creating plans that leverage high-impact practices, communities can signal a genuine commitment to giving Hoosier children the best start possible in their elementary education journey, paving the way for future success.”

Indiana’s Preschool Development Grant, awarded to Indiana FSSA’s Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning in January 2019, supports a formal evaluation of the state’s birth-to-five early childhood education programs and strategic planning to strengthen them. The Strong Start Community Grant builds upon these efforts.

For more information on the Strong Start Community Grant, visit solutions.earlylearningin.org/strong-start-community-grant

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