

Baker School District 5J
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Mark Witty, Superintendent

April 24, 2018

To: Joint Legislative Committee on Student Success
Re: Early Childhood Education is the Foundation for School Success

Investing early in kids is the most effective strategy for ensuring children will thrive in school and life. Babies are born learning, and 90 percent of brain development happens by the age of five. Making sure young children have high-quality early education opportunities before they enter kindergarten is essential for positive long term outcomes.

That's why Pendleton, Hermiston, Nyssa, and many of your districts as well, have invested in early learning centers, birth through kindergarten, to ensure their youngest learners reach their full potential. Community leaders in Baker are exploring the idea of doing the same locally.

Early learning centers include multiple partners and resources that provide education and health services to young children and their families. These can include everything from Head Start to the local library to health providers. Partner organizations contribute to the sustainability of the center by covering the cost of their own operation and paying rent where appropriate.

Early childhood education provides a strong foundation for children to be successful throughout their K-12 career and beyond. The self-regulation, early math and reading skills learned in preschool help set children on a trajectory to read proficiently by the end of grade three. That's critical because research shows reading at grade level by the end of third grade is the leading indicator for high school graduation. In addition, their job prospects are better and they tend to stay healthier over the course of their lives.

Because the most profound brain development happens between birth and five years, it's essential that early care and education take place in safe and developmentally appropriate settings. These services must also be affordable and accessible so that working parents can remain in the workforce. The care and education of young children must be a priority.

Baker School District has completed a year long process with a 24-member community task force charged with identifying critical facility investments needed to support 21st century education for the children in our community. As a result of this committee's work, our school board is seriously considering approaching our community to make a critical investment in facilities. The need for an early learning center was clearly identified by this task force as one of the top priorities.

In Baker School District it's our goal to make the connection between early learning and K-12 because we know our children deserve a great start in life. Over four decades of research in communities across the country demonstrate the benefits of high-quality early learning for children.

The Baker 5J schools exist to be the center of community vitality eliminating the barriers for gratifying individual educational experiences in order to have capable contributing citizens with character.

Improving high school graduation rates starts in preschool. Investing early in kids is smart, and it works. We are asking the Joint Committee on Student Success for a demonstration of their support of our community's children by authorizing a financial award of 8 million dollars for the Baker Early Learning Center.

Thank you for your time and consideration.


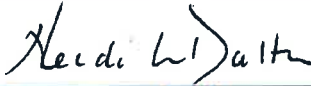








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BAKER SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Company	Signature
Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Teacher for Baker County	 Karla Macy
Baker City YMCA Chief Executive Officer	 Heidi Dalton
Baker Library Library Director	 Perry Stokes
Greater Oregon Behavioral Health	 Jill Boyd (on behalf of GOBHI)
Building Healthy Families Baker County Coordinator	 Erica Jaensch
Eastern Oregon Head Start Family and community Partnership Manager	
Oregon State University Extension Education Program Assistant	
North East Oregon Network Executive Director	
Baker 5J School District Superintendent	

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