

# Idaho should give children the head start they deserve

**Anthony Kuipers/Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

Idaho is one of 10 states that does not offer a public preschool system, and this could be hurting Idaho's children in the long run.

According to a piece written by Education Secretary Arne Duncan in April 2013 in the Washington Post, studies show children who attend preschool begin kindergarten seven months ahead in literacy skills and four months ahead in math skills.

He said early education improves a student's non-cognitive skills such as persistence, self-control and emotion regulation.

Proponents also cite research that says introducing preschool in schools actually saves money in the long run since children who attend preschool are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to be incarcerated.

One Latah County school district has seen similar cost-savings first hand. Whitepine School District has provided a tuition-free early education since the 1990s, and the school board has no intention to get rid of it, Superintendent Tera Reeves told the Daily News in a May 19 story.

"It allows us an opportunity for early intervention to identify students that are at risk," she said.

This saves the school money on special programs that would be necessary if these problems weren't identified early.

It's these type of benefits that drove Rep. Hy Kloc, D-Ada County, to craft a plan to create a three-year, 1.4 million pilot preschool program in Idaho funded by private and public funds.

The bill did not make it out of committee this year, but Kloc is hopeful it will gain traction in 2016.

We don't think schools should be obligated to run a preschool. The pilot program won't be of much use to schools that don't have the facilities for a preschool class, as pointed out by Moscow School District Superintendent Greg Bailey.

However, it seems more than worthwhile to give schools the option of receiving preschool funding if they want it.