

# BLUUM

## WE EMPOWER



*2021 Annual Report*



**BLUUM**

LET LEARNING GROW

702 W IDAHO STREET  
SUITE 600  
BOISE, ID 83702

**BLUUM.ORG**

## WE BELIEVE

a robust choice of learning opportunities helps children, families and educators achieve more and do better.

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## WE ARE COMMITTED

to ensuring that Idaho's children reach their fullest potential by cultivating great leaders, replicating high-performing school models, and taking risks to develop new approaches so all Idaho students have access to a great education.

# FROM OUR CEO



Despite the ongoing challenges, pain and uncertainties raised by the persistent COVID-19 pandemic, Bluum expanded its new school work and partnerships in 2021. We operated in the spirit of “We Empower Through Service.”

We have the privilege of serving some of Idaho’s finest school leaders in helping them educate and support their thousands of families and students. In 2021, the real heroes in our orbit were our 30 plus partner schools and their teams. These education warriors dealt with a myriad of pandemic disruptions, frustrations and setbacks. Many had to deal with personal sickness and the scare of having

COVID-19 in their own homes, they had to worry about their teachers and their students. They had to battle learning loss, student malaise, and the general exhaustion and frustration of living in a pandemic that refused to end.

Our annual report this year is dedicated to these educators in our partner schools. The activities we describe in our report could not have been possible without the sweat, toil, bravery, devotion and energy of these dedicated educators. Two data points generated by the FDR Research team as part of our Federal Charter School (CSP) Program grant captures the excellence of our school partners: 89% of their parents trusted their school “to do what is right for their child,” while 90% of their parents believed their child’s school “did an excellent/good job during COVID-19.”

We are so proud to support and serve these hard-working people as they continue to provide an essential education to Idaho’s students.



Visit our website for a fully interactive version of this report

— Terry Ryan  
**DECEMBER 2021**

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## OUR BOARD

**TOBY PREHN**  
*Cold Chain, LLC*

**JOE BRUNO**  
*Building Hope*

**BILL RUSSELL**  
*Northwest Nazarene University*

**MARYBETH FLACHBART**  
*Education Northwest*

**WILL HUGHES**  
*Boise State University*

**RENITA THUKRAL**  
*National Alliance for Public Charter Schools*

**MARTA REYES-NEWBERRY**  
*Reyes-Newberry & Associates*

# INVESTMENT SUMMARY

2015  2021

Grants Awarded by J.A.  
and Kathryn Albertson  
Family Foundation

**\$30,749,265**

Communities  
of Excellence

**\$17,579,877**

**22 Schools**

Other Philanthropic  
Investments

**\$6,032,700**

Fellowship Support

**\$2,650,000**

**21 Fellowships**

Total Combined  
Investment

**\$59,661,842**

Combined Number of  
School Seats

**13,966**



# 2021 INVESTMENTS

Grants Awarded by J.A.  
and Kathryn Albertson  
Family Foundation

**\$4,137,300**

Communities  
of Excellence

**\$4,183,300**

7 Schools

Other Philanthropic  
Investments

**\$700,000**

Fellowship Support

**\$250,000**

Total Combined  
Investment

**\$9,270,600**

Total New School Seats

**1,978**





## WE EMPOWER LEADERS

We empower educational leaders in the Gem State by providing a one- to two-year *Idaho New School Fellowship* to those who take risks and put children first. Bluum has recruited top talent to the ranks of Idaho's public charter school leadership cohort, and this year, we added two new faces. Logan Waetje will lead Elevate Academy East Idaho, and Adam Bruno will open Gem Prep: Twin Falls. We are excited to see all they will accomplish during their fellowship as they work to improve student achievement and expand school choice options for families in their communities.

Since **2016**,  
Bluum has  
supported **21**  
Fellows.



“Our one year fellowship was a whirlwind. There was much to learn, and quickly, about charter schools and the approval process. We learned about the makings of good leaders. And grant writing. And school finance. And marketing. But the thing that makes the fellowship process so unique and, I think so special, is the **unwavering belief and support** from Bluum that you can reach your goal. And only now, several months past Cardinal Academy's opening, I realize: isn't this the very thing we are trying to instill in our own students as they face life's big challenges? I guess that you could say Bluum and JKAF **empowered us in the very way we try to empower our students:** by helping us learn to pivot in the face of life's difficulties, all the while providing unwavering care, belief and support.”

— *Emily Bergstrom, Idaho New School Fellow, 2020-21*

# 2021 FELLOWS



**LOGAN WAETJE**

*Elevate Academy East Idaho*



“I am so excited to bring new and great opportunities to students in the greater Idaho Falls area. Idaho Falls is growing rapidly and I can’t wait to prepare students for the jobs that will facilitate this growth.”



**ADAM BRUNO**

*Gem Prep: Twin Falls*

“I love the work Gem Prep does, so when I saw Gem Prep had the opportunity partnering with Bluum to create another school and be able to spread our mission – I was like – I want to be a part of that.”



# WE EMPOWER CHOICE

We empower education choice for families by supporting right-fit, high-performing options across 10 Idaho counties. In 2021, four Bluum partner schools opened their doors to students, creating 1,978 additional school seats. This includes Cardinal Academy, Gem Prep: Meridian North, Alturas Preparatory Academy, and RISE Charter School. Each school is unique in its own way. We are thrilled to welcome them to our portfolio of partner schools.



## CARDINAL ACADEMY

Cardinal Academy is a free, public charter school in the Treasure Valley, which offers a flexible, **personalized academic program for expectant and parenting students** (including dads) in grades 9-12, ages 14-21. Students don't have to choose between working to support their new family and earning their high school diploma.

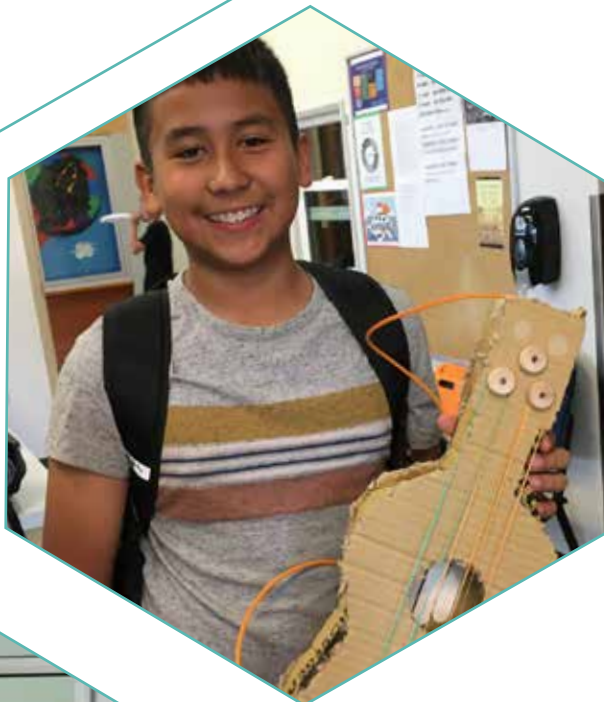






## GEM PREP: MERIDIAN NORTH

Gem Prep: Meridian North is the fourth brick and mortar school to open as part of Idaho's first home-grown charter management organization, Gem Innovation Schools. Gem's brick-and-mortar schools seek to provide a **rigorous, college-prep model** using blended learning, computer-adaptive software, direct instruction from the teacher, and peer collaboration.



## RISE CHARTER SCHOOL

Partnering with the Kimberly School District, RISE Charter School aims to serve the growing population of students in Kimberly. Students in grades 4-8 can choose RISE's **exploratory, individualized approach** to educating students.



## ALTURAS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

APA is an extension of Alturas International Academy's K-5 **International Baccalaureate** school model, which features learning through **small group instruction in multi-age classrooms**. Serving grades 6-12, students now have the choice to continue this unique learning opportunity all the way through high school.

**1,978**  
Total New School Seats

# WE EMPOWER TRANSFORMATION

We empower transformation to ensure Idaho's children reach their fullest potential. This year, we have not only shared stories of how our schools are changing the lives of students and families, but have also conducted research and sought data to support and guide our efforts. In 2019, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation provided funding to 17 Bluum partner schools for families to opt-into full-day kindergarten — free of charge. Beginning in 2021, and for the next three years, Bluum will support the analysis of IRI data for every Idaho school offering full-day kindergarten, in order to garner stronger longitudinal data around the impact on both “kindergarten outcomes” and “kindergarten preparedness.” Another first-of-its-kind study produced in partnership with ECONorthwest, a highly reputable independent economic consulting firm, found that every \$1 million in Bluum grants and matching funds generates an additional \$1.9 million in economic activity in Idaho. Bluum grants, primarily from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation (JKAF) and the federal Charter School Program, also create 60 jobs for every \$1 million spent.

**“From fall 2020 to spring 2021, full-day kindergarteners made more progress than partial day including economically disadvantaged (ED) students, though ED students remain far behind.”**

*— Full-Day Kindergarten Analysis*



## CANCEL CULTURE VS. PARENT CHOICE

*by Terry Ryan*

“So can parent and school choice survive “cancel culture”? All I know for sure is that there are a lot of parents hoping that their schools of choice, and the teachers working in them, can weather the latest versions of America's culture wars. Needy families and children in both red and blue states are depending on it.”



## ALL DAY KINDERGARTEN IMPACT

*by Bryan Hassell, Public Impact*

“To the extent there's fadeout, we should be looking at what's happening in the fadeout grades. Consider this analogy: you're running a 4 person relay. The first leg runner is really amazing, but then then next three runners fall behind. You wouldn't react to this by saying “There's no point in running a great first leg.” You'd say “how can we get better runners in legs 2-4, or better running from the runners we have.”





## WEIGHTED CHARTER LOTTERY

by Alan Gottlieb

“Having access to a school that uses a weighted lottery so that that school can achieve a mission that is appealing and attractive to the students and the students’ families are important, as long as the preferences are granted in a very narrow way.”



## NEXT STEP READY

by Lindsay Trombly

“This school is here for the sake of our students’ next steps. What are you going to do when you graduate from here. Even though there is learning in these walls, we work at how they can take this knowledge and apply it outside,” Elevate’s Career Placement Coordinator Brett Williams said.





# WE EMPOWER QUALITY

We empower quality of education by assessing the data, researching best practices, and applying feedback from our families and teachers. This year, The FDR Group interviewed 1,489 parents and 322 teachers, from 12 Idaho charters, to see how they felt their charter school's response was due to the pandemic. There was a positive response overall between parents and teachers.

**89%**  
**of parents**

“I trusted this school to do what was right for my child.”



**90%**  
**of parents**

“My child's school did an excellent/good job during COVID-19.”

**90%**  
**of teachers**

“My school adapted quickly and decisively to the challenges it faced.”

**92%**  
**of parents**

“My school adapted quickly and decisively to the challenges it faced.”

“I was very, very skeptical going into it [the charter school]. After a couple years now, of witnessing what goes on in the school, and comparing it to other educational experiences that I’ve had, personally... there is a drastic difference in the focus on academics... And ultimately, **I’m most impressed** with how their approach to academics **has helped my two sons.**”

*–Parent at Alturas Preparatory Academy*



# WE EMPOWER LEADERS TO FOCUS

By providing targeted technical support in various disciplines, we empower our school leaders to focus on what matters most – the children. Bluum has added four new team members this year to help continue supporting our partner schools through finance, communications, special education, grant management, academics, and governance support. Collectively we provided over 14,500 hours of technical assistance to our schools. We couldn't have accomplished all we have this year without our devoted funders the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the work of our Bluum board, and our two expert advisors: Emily McClure and Blake Youde at the Idaho Charter School Network. We are looking forward to a stellar 2022.



**MARC CARIGNAN**  
*Chief Financial Officer*



**KIM ESTERMAN**

*Finance and Operations  
Manager*



**KRISTEN McCARVER**  
*Communications Manager*



**COLE SKINNER**  
*Idaho School Finance  
Fellow*



**FINANCE**



**TERRY RYAN**  
*Chief Executive  
Officer*



**NANCY DAYHOFF**  
*Finance and Operations  
Manager*



**NATALIA MILLER**

*Accounts Payable Clerk*



**JENNIFER RIBORDY**  
*Special Education  
Development Coordinator*



**RAY CROWELL**

*Chief Innovation Officer*



**LINDSAY TROMBLY**

*Digital Communications  
Coordinator*



**AMY FELTON-TOTH**

*Director of Federal  
Grants & Support*



**COLLEEN MACKAY**

*New School Officer*



**KEITH DONAHUE**

*School Support Manager*



**MARKETING &  
COMMUNICATIONS**



**ACADEMICS &  
OPERATIONS**



**MAX KOLTUV**

*Chief Academic Program  
Officer*

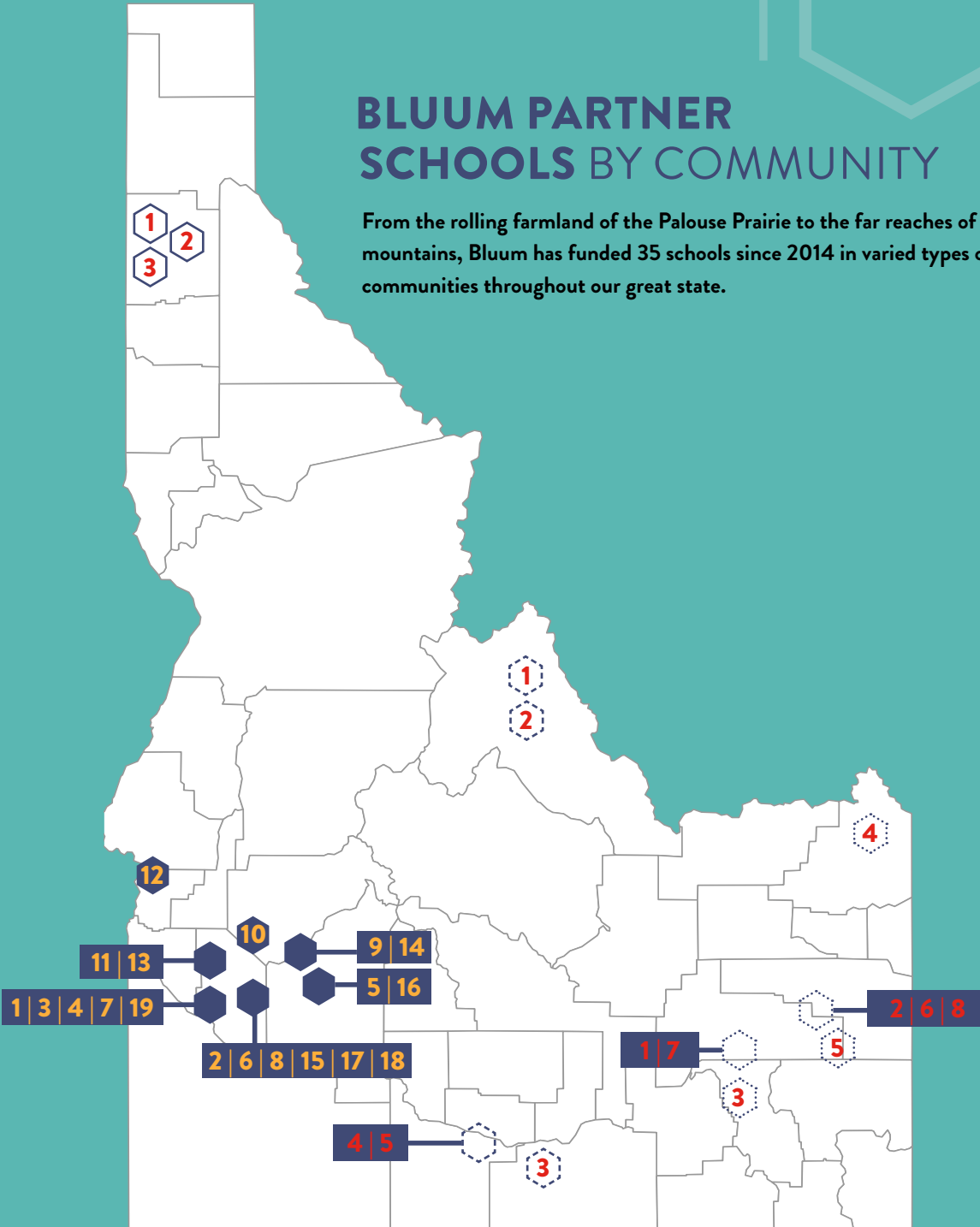


**SPECIAL  
EDUCATION**



# BLUUM PARTNER SCHOOLS BY COMMUNITY

From the rolling farmland of the Palouse Prairie to the far reaches of forested mountains, Bluum has funded 35 schools since 2014 in varied types of communities throughout our great state.



## NORTHERN

- 1 North Idaho STEM Charter Academy, Rathdrum
- 2 Hayden Canyon Charter School, Hayden
- 3 Elevate Academy North, Post Falls

## SOUTHWEST

- 1 Idaho Arts Charter School, Nampa
- 2 Compass Public Charter School, Meridian
- 3 Gem Prep: Nampa, Nampa
- 4 Treasure Valley Leadership Academy, Nampa
- 5 Sage International School, Boise
- 6 Gem Prep: Meridian, Meridian
- 7 Pathways in Education, Nampa
- 8 St. Ignatius Catholic School, Meridian
- 9 Future Public School, Garden City
- 10 Forge International School, Middleton
- 11 Elevate Academy, Caldwell
- 12 Treasure Valley Classical Academy, Fruitland
- 13 MOSAICS Public School, Caldwell
- 14 Anser Charter School, Garden City
- 15 Gem Prep: Meridian North, Meridian
- 16 Cardinal Academy, Boise
- 17 Gem Prep: Meridian South, Meridian
- 18 Doral Academy, Meridian
- 19 Elevate Academy Nampa, Nampa

## CENTRAL

- 1 Upper Carmen Charter School, Upper Carmen
- 2 Fernwaters Charter School, Nampa
- 3 RISE Charter School, Kimberly
- 4 Pinecrest Academy, Twin Falls
- 5 Gem Prep: Twin Falls, Twin Falls

## SOUTHEAST

- 1 Gem Prep: Pocatello, Chubbuck
- 2 Alturas International School, Idaho Falls
- 3 Grace Lutheran High School, Pocatello
- 4 Island Park Charter School, Island Park
- 5 White Pine Charter School, Ammon
- 6 Alturas Preparatory Academy, Idaho Falls
- 7 The Academy (Connor), Chubbuck
- 8 Elevate East Idaho, Idaho Falls