learning community

OF DOUGLAS AND SARPY COUNTIES

Annual Report 2012-2013

In compliance with §79-2104.02 & §79-2118

Submitted to the Nebraska Legislature January 2014

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

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Acknowledgements: The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties acknowledges the cooperation and assistance of the Nebraska Department of Education Data, Research and Evaluation Team: Dr. Dean Folkers, Senior Administrator; Pam Tagart, IT Applications Developer; Jill Aurand, IT Applications Developer; and Becky Hamm-Massey, IT Data/Database Analyst.

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Introduction

The Learning Community is pleased to provide to you this Annual Report. While the Report complies with 79-2102.02 and 79-2118, it also represents a turning point in the short evolution of the Learning Community.

When the Learning Community Coordinating Council first convened in January of 2009, it set out to implement legislation that responded to the conflicts swirling in the Omaha-metro area. The discussion that started back in 2005 to 2007, about how to best meet the needs of children from poverty, continues. One difference today is a Learning Community with experience in implementing that legislative policy and focus on strategies that will have the greatest impact in meeting the academic needs of those children.

The conversations about power, boundaries and finances cannot distract the Learning Community from advocating for the educational needs of children in poverty. Our work on promising solutions is reflected in the mission statement adopted by the council in 2013. It is our guidepost:

> ***Together with school districts and community organizations as partners, we demonstrate, share and implement more effective practices to measurably improve educational outcomes for children and families in poverty.***

The extensive learning needs of children in poverty are no less now than in 2005. Learning Community school districts have made significant, but incremental progress in narrowing the achievement gap. The differences between children whose families have means and those who do not, is increasing the “degree of difficulty” for educators more quickly than our demonstrated ability to respond.

There is reason for optimism in the positive results for programs supported by the Learning Community, as documented in this report. We can add measurably to that optimism with the increasing commitment to early childhood education provided by LB 585. By collaborating with school districts and their community partners, we can make a substantial difference in long-term educational outcomes.

We all want to see children overcome the challenges of poverty and succeed in school. No one wants that more than their parents and the small circle of adults who care about them. Parents and caring adults are our greatest assets. By engaging them in positive child development, we will learn from them and likely generate our best insights.

We thank you for your support in this effort and look forward to discussing this work in more detail.

Ted Stilwill, Learning Community CEO

Section I. Evaluation of Elementary Learning Programs

External evaluation director: Lisa St. Clair, Ed.D., Interdisciplinary Center for Program Evaluation, Munroe Meyer Institute, University of Nebraska Medical Center. Report finalized on November 22, 2013.

Background

The elementary learning centers funding levy was established to launch innovative programs to impact the achievement of elementary students who face challenges in the educational environment due to poverty, limited English skills, or mobility.

Evaluation Approach and Rationale

Generally based upon a Utilization-Focused evaluation design (Patton, 2012), the evaluation plan employed multiple methods to describe and measure the quality of implementation, the nature of programming, and to report outcomes demonstrated by the elementary learning programs funded by the Learning Community (LCDS). These programs included Jump Start to Kindergarten, Extended Learning (tutoring, after school, and summer school programs), Literacy Coaching, and the Family Liaisons program. The overarching evaluation questions were:

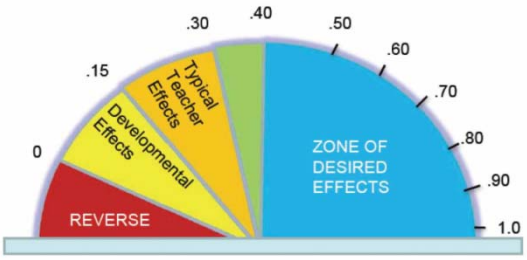
1. ***Implementation***: What was the nature and quality of implementation? Who accessed and participated in the program? Was there variation in implementation and if so, what factors contributed?
    a. What happened?
    b. For whom?
    c. What was the quality of implementation?

2. ***Academic focus***: What were short and long term outcomes related to academic achievement?
    a. Did other stakeholders report improvement in student learning or engagement (parents, school day teachers)?
    b. Was there improvement in communication skills (literacy)?
    c. Was there improvement in quantitative thinking skills (numeracy)?

3. ***Family support focus***: What did the program or school provide to families/parents that will allow greater student success in school?
    a. What processes did the program or school use to support the needs of families?
    b. What processes did the program or school use to develop resources for helping to meet those needs?

Program Impacts

To quantify program impacts, we will report all pre and post measures relative to significance (were the results significant) and if so, what was the magnitude of the change (effect size). To understand effect size and to place it in context, Cohen suggests using *d*=0.20 to be small, *d*=0.50 to be medium, and *d*=.80 to be a large effect. To describe this another way, John Hattie in *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*, uses a concept called "zone of desired effects" that starts at a medium effect size, 0.40 (Hattie, 2009). Hattie suggests that a 1.0 effect size (as shown in Hattie's graph) is equal to about 2-3 years of student growth and learning. Effect sizes can be greater than 1.0; however, they are less common and are therefore not shown on the graphic. Effect sizes tend to be smaller with very young children, so you must adjust your zone of desired effects to begin at around 0.20. With younger students (infant through kindergarten), effect size is often lower because the range of measurement error is larger with very young children (Burchinal, 2008). This concern, seconded by the smaller number of early childhood assessments that measure learning domains, it is easy to see why there might be more measurement error in the testing of young children. Therefore, for the very young, an effect size less than 0.40 may be in the zone of desired effects.



Program Descriptions

Subsection I.1 Extended Learning Time (ELT) Programs

I.1.1 Comprehensive out-of-school Time: These programs provide out-of-school programming throughout the school year. Students would be offered after school programming greater than one hour per day. This design would typically target academic and social/behavioral supports, and in some cases, family engagement services.

I.1.2 Tutoring: Tutoring ELT programs provide after school tutoring targeted to students at greatest risk for academic failure during the school year. This is typically offered in one hour sessions, one or two times per week.

I.1.3 Summer: Summer Extended Learning programs provide summer programming which targets academic and social/behavioral supports typically to students who have been identified as needing additional supports, and in some cases also includes recreation, health/wellness, and family engagement services.

Subsection I.2 Literacy Coaching Programs

Literacy Coaching: Literacy Coaching programs provided literacy coaches to teachers in elementary buildings with high levels of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch (FRL). The coaches provided support in multiple areas including individual work with teachers, professional development for teaching teams, data analysis, assessment assistance and assistance with gathering resources for use in classrooms.

Subsection I.3 Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs

Jump Start to Kindergarten programs offer programming to support students in the summer prior to entry into kindergarten.

Subsection I.4 Family Literacy Program

The Family Literacy Program is offered through the Learning Community Center of South Omaha (LCCSO) in partnership with OneWorld Community Health Centers. This program provides family literacy and parenting education to families in the broader South Omaha area, with a predominant focus on serving high-poverty parents who are learning English.

Subsection I.5 Learning Community Family Liaisons Program

The Learning Community Family Liaisons program (in partnership with Lutheran Family Services): The Family Liaison model was established to reduce barriers to learning by providing services to students and families that address underlying issues affecting the family and child. The program’s multi-pronged approach to service delivery addresses a variety of factors that impact the student’s ability to learn.

Extended Learning

2,588 students | 83% poverty[1]
Average summer school instruction time: 50 hours
Average school year instruction time: 38 hours

Key Findings

Evaluations show students making modest gains across all subject areas, with a broad results range in reading, writing and math from schools in the program.

Rating: Modest
Effect Size: 0.30

About Extended Learning

Some students need more than the traditional school day. Extended Learning programs can be a powerful resource when a classroom teacher identifies a child with educational needs. Options may include summer school and after programs, tutoring or programs offered away from the school building.

[1] *Percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch. For a family of four, weekly income may range from $539 to $838. Source: US Dept. of Agriculture, SY 2013-2014*

Subsection I.1: Extended Learning Time Programs

Lead: Jolene Johnson, Ed.S.

Introduction

The Learning Community funded a number of Extended Learning Time (ELT) programs that included comprehensive out-of-school time programs throughout the school year, before-school and after-school tutoring sessions with targeted academic support, and summer learning programs to students. Below is a description of the programs that served students during 2012-2013.

School Year Program Descriptions

Bellevue Extended Learning. This program featured extended learning time in the subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics during the school year to target students at risk for falling behind academically. It was implemented in six elementary schools across the district. Students targeted for this program were in grades 3-6. The program incorporated collaboration time for teachers to design lessons specifically targeted for individual student areas in need of improvement. A lead teacher was hired to organize the programs and improve their program flow and consistency. A literacy coach and English language learner teacher were incorporated to intensely focus on literacy and offer pull-out services for direct reading instruction to targeted students. In addition, literacy bags were provided for families in English as well as Spanish to encourage reading at home. This program operated two nights per week during the school year.

Completely KIDS.

This program focused on academic proficiency, youth development, food/nutrition, and family engagement. Completely KIDS's academic programming (mathematics, reading, writing, and science) was designed by licensed educators to align with Nebraska State Educational Standards and to supplement classroom learning in the core areas.

Licensed educators were also contracted with to support individual and group learning needs while at the program. Many lessons were molded to the individual learning needs of each student. The program also provided students with many opportunities to participate in educational enrichment activities, family engagement, and coordinators worked closely with Family Liaisons (one funded by the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, one privately funded) to identify additional supports for families. Students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade were targeted for this program at two schools. The program ran Monday through Friday from 3:55 to 6:00 pm after school, for 34 weeks during the school year.

Girls Inc. This program featured an out-of-school setting literacy program to promote phonemic awareness, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. It was sponsored by a community agency and the program complements the local school district's reading curriculum, utilizing the same phonics program and sequence of instruction. Certified teachers were included in the program staff to enhance the expertise, as well as to design specific interventions in response to individual needs. The overall focus of the program was to improve the percentage of students reading at grade level. This program ran Monday through Friday, for three hours per day during the school year at two sites.

Omaha Area Health Education Center (OAHEC) at Lothrop Elementary. This school-year program featured the Science and Math Enrichment Camp designed to increase competencies among underserved students at Lothrop Magnet Center utilizing programming from Carolina's Inquiry-Based Science and Math Curriculums developed in partnership with the National Academies and the Smithsonian Institution. Students involved in this program participated in substantive after-school classroom learning, including hands-on activities and presentations designed to prepare students for academic and career opportunities. Students participated in science and math programming in areas such as the life cycle of organisms, concepts in algebra and geometry (collecting and sorting, plotting on graphs, etc.) and taking measurements of all sorts. In addition to science and math programming, students in grades 3 and 4 and some members of their immediate families were trained on providing life-saving first aid care to friends and family. This program operated for 10 weeks, three days per week, for two hours per session. All students at Lothrop from grades K-4 were targeted for participation in this program.

Omaha Public Schools Extended Learning Time (Tutoring). This school-year program featured Extended Learning Time provided to select students with academic needs designed to help them master content in reading, writing and mathematics. The program design created a cohort of students with a common teacher to establish long-term relationships and in-depth learning opportunities within a small group. The teacher from the ELT program and the regular classroom teacher worked together to customize instruction for each student and incorporated planned instruction time for students. An individualized goals agreement was developed for each student and had a weekly focus. Progress toward goals was reported to parents every five weeks. The program ran for 21 weeks, consisting of two to three tutoring sessions per week, for one hour per day during the school year for students in grades K-6. This ELT program was designed by the school district and was implemented in 37 schools.

A district support team was established to assist schools in the implementation of programs and for coordination of resources that included a district level contact for administration, a lead teacher in each school to ensure individualized instruction was planned for every student, as well as incorporated an internal evaluation.

Salvation Army/North Corps. This after school program focused mainly on math and reading skills. Many students needed help and practice with calculation skills (such as addition and subtraction) as well as help understanding story problems. Reading skills worked on included vocabulary, sight words, fluency and comprehension strategies. Students were able to access the program as needed to work on homework or specific academic skills. The students were able to work on skills using a variety of programs and materials (games, manipulatives and puzzles). The program ran Monday through Friday for four hours each day serving students in grades K-12 with 95% of the participants being K-8.

South Sarpy. Students served by this after school program were identified using MAP scores to target those most in need of mathematics intervention. The intervention format broke students into small groups and combined direct instruction with manipulatives. Students rotated through mathematics centers and worked on skills such as basic math facts, number sense and problem-solving.

Summer Program Descriptions

Bellevue Summer School. This summer program featured intense instruction in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The program targeted Title I students, English Language Learner students, and other students at risk of falling behind academically. The program operated for two weeks during the summer for 7 hours per day, five days per week. Students entering kindergarten and 1st grade were targeted for this program. Although the summer program was held in one elementary building, it was a collaborative effort and students from multiple schools in the district participated.

Catholic Charities Summer. This program provided academically-focused summer enrichment, as well as physical and experiential activities to low-income students. Goals were structured to support participants in increasing their communication skills in reading and writing along with their quantitative thinking skills in mathematics. A certified teacher structured the lessons and coached the staff to work with staff from local schools to ensure summer offerings

complemented and enhanced the school curriculum. The program also provided students with the opportunity to participate in fine arts activities such as music class, swimming skills in partnership with the Red Cross, health and proper nutrition promotion activities, computer lessons, and field trips. The program was implemented for 10 weeks during the summer, 9.5 hours per day, Monday through Friday, and also allowed for early/late pick up. Students in grades K-6 were served in this 10 week program. The program ran Monday through Friday from 6:30 am to 6:00 pm.

Douglas County West. This summer enrichment program focused on targeting children in poverty, English language learners, and/or students who had high mobility. Academic support was provided from several teachers in the district to maintain or to improve student academic performance. Through this funding, a sliding scale system was provided to students depending on free and reduced lunch status to help cover the cost of participation in the program. The program operated for 4 weeks during the summer with three hours per day being devoted to instruction. Students targeted for this program were in grades K-6.

Elkhorn Public Schools. Jump Start to Reading. This program served incoming first through fourth grade students who met certain criteria based on the winter benchmarking national norms. Students scoring at or below the 25th percentile received an invitation to attend the program. The three-week program was held four days per week for three hours each day. The program focused on individual student reading needs and provided instruction based on one or more programs (Reading Street's My Sidewalks, Read Naturally, Guided Reading and/or writing). Students received instruction from a certified teacher in an average ratio of one teacher to five students.

Girls Inc. Summer. This summer literacy program was designed to promote phonemic awareness, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension. It was designed to complement the local school district's reading curriculum, utilizing the same phonics program and sequence of instruction. Certified teachers were included in the program staff to design specific interventions in response to individual needs and to help the program improve the percentage of students reading at grade level. Girls age 5 through 9 were targeted for participation. The program operated Monday through Friday for nine hours per day throughout the summer.

Kroc Center/Salvation Army Summer. Camp Kroc provided increased opportunities for underserved youth to develop skills and talents and utilize a curriculum that provides educational programming, arts enrichment and positive social interaction. Elements of the program included education, enrichment, interaction and involvement, literacy and English learning and resources for immigrants. Students targeted for this program were in grades 1-7 and the program was implemented Monday through Friday for eight hours a day all summer long. About 70 students ages 6-13 were served in this 9-week program. Students were engaged in structured academic and enrichment activities based around weekly themes. Daily reading instruction was supplemented with computer classes, art, music, and drama classes. Students also participated in activities to build life skills such as cooking, team building and leisure activities.

Millard Public Schools Summer. This program featured summer school learning targeted to students who are economically disadvantaged and/or limited in English proficiency and have academic deficiencies in an effort to prevent summer learning loss. Instruction was provided to students with deficiencies in writing, reading, and mathematics. In addition, the district provided informational, instructional, and community services in areas such as successful strategies to

support student learning, health and wellness, personal finance, assessing social services, child care, and English language classes. Transportation, meals, and books were provided to students, along with a bilingual liaison and licensed social worker to help families who could benefit from those services. The program was implemented for three weeks, three hours per day, during the summer in two elementary schools in the district. Students targeted for this program were in grades K-2. Students entering kindergarten were also invited to attend this program as a jump-start experience for school.

Students Served

Who did these programs serve? Participation data were collected on 2,588 elementary students who attended the programs.

- School Year – 1,850 students
- Summer programs – 738 students

Demographic data provided on these students indicated that 83% of the students served were eligible for free/reduced lunch.

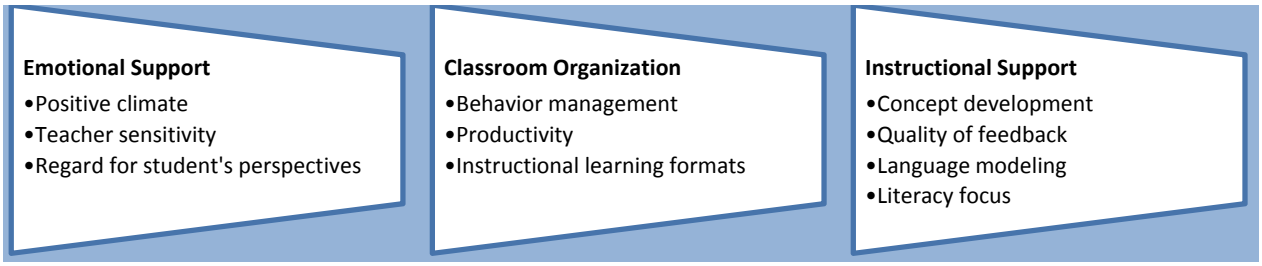
Generally, the population being served by the extended learning time programs appeared to fall within the target of the population identified to benefit from the resources of the Learning Community — those most at risk for academic failure due to socio-economic status.

Evaluation Data Collection

Quality. Quality programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term positive academic performance (Beckett, Capizzano, Parsley, Ross, Schirm, & Taylor, 2009; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000). Measurement of the quality of programs is central to a program evaluation. This section reports on the CLASS observations completed by the UNMC evaluation team with extended learning programs funded through the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties (LC).

To examine program instructional quality, the evaluation team recommended use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Developed by Bob Pianta and others at the University of Virginia Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, this external observation tool measures classroom quality across multiple domains including: emotional support, organization, and instructional delivery. According to its authors, the CLASS "*is an observational tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning*."

It has three domains:



In addition to these domains, interactions are further considered relative to dimensions. These dimensions include aspects such as: positive climate (focuses on how teachers interact with students to develop warm relationships that promote student's enjoyment of the classroom community) and concept development (focuses on how teachers interact with students to promote higher-order thinking and cognition).

For these reasons, the evaluation team has identified the CLASS observation tool as a valid way to gather an externally-rated measure of quality, and one with the added benefit of it having the potential to drive continuous improvement because of the specificity of the feedback from the observation.

CLASS

Classroom Assessment Scoring System

Author: Pianta, LaParo & Hamre, 2008

Scale:

1-2 = Low quality

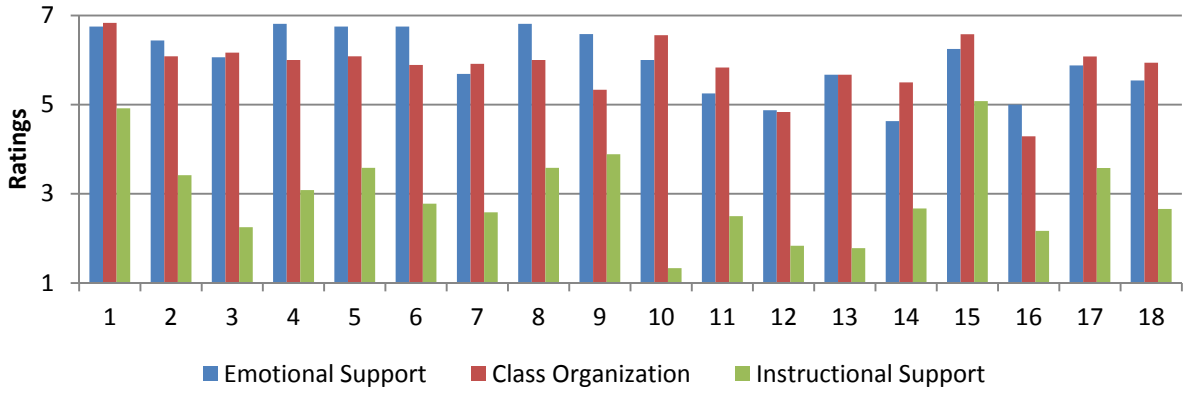
3-5 = Moderate quality

6-7 = High quality

Eighteen after school and summer school sites participated in this optional piece of the evaluation. Given the nature of out-of-school and summer school programs, CLASS scores were calculated for the program rather than per teacher. Multiple teachers were recorded,

scored and the CLASS score given to the program was an average of those scores (I.1.1).

I.1.1 Program CLASS ratings



Average CLASS ratings across after school and summer school programs were 5.99 for Emotional Support, 5.87 for Class Organization and 2.98 for Instructional Support. Scores at or above 6.00 indicate high levels of quality, scores at or above 3.00 are in moderate quality range, and scores below 3.00 indicating low quality. CLASS scores in national studies have been found to be in the low to moderate quality for Instructional Support (Kane et al, 2013), but effectively support continuous improvement/professional development to support teacher effectiveness. Overall, the programs scored near the high range for both Emotional Support and Class Organization and near the moderate range for Instructional Support. Recent research on pre-kindergarten and child care programs (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010) indicated that scores of 3.25 or higher are needed within the domain of instructional support to show measurable impact on student achievement.

Student Achievement

Student achievement data was submitted by nine of the thirteen programs with one program completing an internal evaluation. Three of the programs did not collect pre and post student achievement data this year. Of the nine programs submitting student achievement data, six programs submitted data allowing for analysis (standardized scores or scores that could be standardized). An overall effect size for the extended learning program was calculated (d=0.30) and is considered to be small. For the six programs with pre to post data, paired samples t-tests were conducted. Five of the six programs showed significant student gains in at least one academic area with the other program showing no significant loss or gain in student scores. For programs showing significant gains in student achievement, effect sizes were calculated to measure the size of the change. The following effect sizes were calculated for the specific academic areas of reading, mathematics and writing, and are based on those same six programs along with the results from one district's internal evaluation.

I.1.2: Effect Sizes in Local Achievement Data Results

Content Area Measured	Effect Sizes
Reading	0.12 – 0.87*
Writing	0.42*
Mathematics	0.21 – 1.94*

*Effect size calculated only if significant differences are found.

While the overall results of the extended learning program indicate that it was effective in improving student achievement, the magnitude of the improvement varied within and between programs. The effect sizes also varied within subject areas by program. Significant effects ranged from small effect sizes (*d*=0.12) to large effect sizes (*d*=1.94); however, student scores improved in each subject area across the programs included in the analysis.

Family support focus. Parent surveys were collected for students enrolled in the extended learning programs.

I.1.3: Parent Survey Results

Survey Question	Average Score	% Strongly Agree or Agree
I was satisfied with the hours of the program.	4.43	93%
I was satisfied with the length of the program.	4.37	89%
I was satisfied with the program as a whole.	4.43	92%
The staff were excellent (caring, reliable, skilled).	4.51	92%
My child enjoyed attending the program.	4.41	90%
I was able to communicate with my child's teacher.	4.15	80%
I was informed about my child's progress.	3.75	63%
I believe that my child will be more successful in school next year as a result of the program.	4.20	85%
I feel more prepared to support my student as a learner as a result of the program.	4.05	81%
My child believes that school will be a fun place to learn.	4.48	92%

Scale ranges from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

Overall, the parents rated the summer programs positively. Parents not only reported that their student benefitted from the program, but parents reported feeling better able to support them in their learning. One area of growth for most programs was communication with parents both in frequency and in content.

Extended Learning Conclusions and Implications for Program Important

Extended learning programs served 2,588 students across three major types of programs: tutoring programs, broader extended learning programs during the school year that served students greater than one hour daily and all/most days of the week, and summer extended learning programs. Eighty-three percent (83%) of students were eligible for free/reduced lunch.

Students benefitted from participating in extended learning programs (*d*=0.30). It is worth noting this effect is most likely a result of collective impact, rather than singularly attributable to extended learning programming. Significant effects were seen in reading, writing and mathematics indicating that this type of programming can make a difference in multiple areas. One area of improvement for the evaluation would be for all programs to work with the evaluation team in submitting student level pre to post-test data that can be analyzed for effectiveness. The effects noted in this evaluation were based on less than 60% of the programs funded. Many of the programs submitting student data indicated that their students had made progress based on raw scores or grades but that data could not be used for comparison purposes.

In terms of parent feedback, 92% were satisfied with the program as a whole. One opportunity for improvement would be strengthened communication and report of student progress.

Literacy Coaching

13,234 students | 533 teachers | 83% poverty[1]

Key Findings

Students successfully improved their reading abilities after classroom teachers received assistance from the program's literacy coaches.[2]

Student Reading

Rating: Successful
Effect Size: 0.56

About Literacy Coaching

Students struggling to read often need additional help. With carefully selected teachers as literacy coaches, classroom teachers have a valuable resource to develop new teaching strategies.

[1] *Percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch. For a family of four, weekly income may range from $539 to $838. Source: US Dept. of Agriculture, SY 2013-2014*

[2] *Key findings reflect complete data from one of two participating school districts.*

Sub-Section I.2: Literacy Coaching

Lead: Jolene Johnson, Ed.S.

Literacy Coaching was implemented with the belief that improving teachers' instruction of literacy would improve student achievement in the area of reading. Hattie's research indicated that ongoing use of formative evaluation by the teacher including data analysis and use of evidence-based models yielded an effect size in the high range (*d*=0.90). Given that literacy coaching provides teachers with formative information, it is possible to affect change in teacher instruction (Hattie, 2009). Other research into literacy coaching found that intensive coaching activities such as modeling and conferencing are significant predictors of student reading achievement (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011).

Summary of Program Models

Two districts were funded to implement literacy coaching. To avoid revealing specific district outcomes, results were merged into one aggregate finding. However one of the two districts participated in a full external evaluation and the other utilized only internal evaluation. For one district, literacy coaching has been implemented for three years while for the other district 2012-2013 was the first year of implementation.

Who was served in this program?

Across both districts, a total of 13,243 students were served through literacy coaching in the building in which they were located. Of these students, 83% were eligible for free/reduced lunch. A total of 45 literacy coaches served 533 teachers across the two districts.

Findings from District A

What was the quality of implementation of the program?

To examine program quality, multiple focus groups were conducted with teachers, literacy coaches and building principals. Overall, feedback from all three sets of participants found Literacy Coaching to be a positive and worthwhile endeavor.

Demographics of Focus Group participants. A sampling of teachers (80% women, 18% men, 2% undisclosed) participated in the interviews. They represented both primary (59%) and upper elementary grades (41%). A majority of the teachers (45%) had been teaching for 10 or more years, 39% had been teaching for 3 to 10 years, and only 15% had been teaching for fewer than three years. Principals and literacy coaches were also interviewed.

Literacy program successes. Responses to the Literacy Coaching program were overall very positive. Principals strongly agreed that the literacy coach in their buildings had helped their teaching staff improve their literacy teaching skills and the teachers echoed the sentiment, with 84% agreeing that they had changed as a teacher because of their work with the literacy coaches. Additionally, 75% of teachers believed Literacy Coaching had affected the academic achievement of their students. Coaches strengthened this argument, noting that data indicators support the teachers' intuition that students are indeed advancing academically. In-depth discussions indicated that principals believed literacy coaches were in a unique position to "really make a huge difference in what teachers are doing in classrooms" and "absolutely have" changed the literacy teaching practices in their buildings. The coaches themselves reported teachers were open and welcoming to the coaches in their classrooms. Comments from the teachers included "we heart her," "we have the best literacy coach," and "you can never replace her!"

Positive relationships. Teachers reported feeling respected by the literacy coach, with a strong majority responding positively to the following questions about the literacy coach in their buildings.

I.2.1: Teacher Ratings of Literacy Coach

Question	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
My Literacy Coach Is Interested In Helping Me Grow As A Teacher (Multiple Choice)	95%	5%
My Literacy Coach Is Interested In Me Both As A Person And As A Teacher (Multiple Choice)	98%	2%
My Literacy Coach Listens To Me (Multiple Choice)	98%	2%
My Literacy Coach Respects My Time (Multiple Choice)	96%	4%
My Literacy Coach Communicates With Me Clearly	98%	2%

Question	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
(Multiple Choice)		

Literacy coaches also commented on the need to respect the teachers' time: "Teachers have so much to do. There is a competition for time—it can't all be about literacy." Teachers appreciated this respect and noted that a high quality literacy coach is one that understands all of the demands on teachers. Both sides did note, however, that time was a barrier.

Teachers reported that the literacy coach was able to provide detailed responses to their needs; 95% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that "when I have a problem, my literacy coach is helpful in developing a plan to address it." Teachers shared several personal stories of how their literacy coach had successfully addressed a concern the teacher had raised with her. As one teacher recounted, "When I was ready to change my centers, we had it done in a week. I was like 'wow'. And this was just an idea I floated past her in the hallway one day…and she was like 'all right, on it!'" Coaches also noted that teachers felt comfortable coming to them, stating, "Most of the time I'm invited to join a lesson…there are very few cases where I go to them first."

Teachers strongly preferred to have informal interactions over formal interactions with their literacy coach; only 2 (5%) of respondents said they would prefer the formal interaction. One literacy coach noted feedback was best received when she respected the way an individual teacher learns. She also saw an increase of a "buy-in" from teachers as the year progressed, indicating she was able to successfully tailor her mentorship to the needs of the teachers.

Professional development and better teaching practices. Administrators and coaches felt the coaches were able to provide important professional development; the literacy coaches "allowed us to work on wider skills teachers need." Having a specialized and advanced education in literacy, the literacy coach can provide novel forms of professional development. Teachers also mentioned the benefits of skill development, specifically noting that help in designing lesson plans, co-planning, brainstorming, and learning new strategies such as keeping anecdotal notes and response journaling were the most helpful. Teachers and principals also mentioned the literacy coaches helped them develop strategies and lesson plans for specific topics such as increasing comprehension, organization patterns, defining literacy stations, guided reading, creating reading programs over breaks, and integrating all content areas (e.g., science and social studies) into reading.

Teachers also spoke passionately about having the literacy coach model for them. "In our profession they assume you know how to do everything because you are already a teacher. But

it was so helpful for her to come in and model different things for me. I felt like that made me grow as a teacher and, in turn, it made my students more successful." Many teachers reported their literacy coach had modeled specific lessons (such as teaching specific books) as well as more global strategies (such as running small groups or center time, modeling the language to use to facilitate different skills, and modeling discussions of the material to get more meaningful participation). Teachers noted that their literacy coach often presented them with good ideas to try, but thought the information would be more beneficial if she had come in and modeled it; "I think I have an idea of how to do it, then I start to do it and it was like 'whoa, I have no idea how to do this!' But now, [because of modeling and work with the literacy coach] I feel really good about my abilities to help students individually." As one principal noted, "teachers want to do things the right way," and literacy coaching is one way to help them improve their teaching.

Literacy coaches noticed positive changes in teaching practices as well and agreed with the statement "the teaching staff at my school has changed their literacy teaching practices this year." Moreover, they felt teachers who used the literacy coaches as a resource most often were also the ones who made the most progress. Coaches also identified modeling as one of the most effective strategies to increase teacher performance, but included videotaping and real-time feedback after observations as other successful strategies. One coach also mentioned that teachers appreciated when she would follow up professional development activities with in-classroom observations to see how the teacher implemented the new tool or skill, which may be another strategy similar to modeling to help teachers learn the new material.

As one principal noted, "It's a very common catch phrase to talk about 'lifelong learners.' [The literacy coach program] allows us to walk the walk; teachers get to be a lifelong learner, hone their skills over time."

Areas for growth and directions for the future. Although the program was overall considered a success, respondents also noted several ways the program could be improved.

> ***Time.*** "Time is a barrier" according to one principal, as he/she felt the building needed more hours from the literacy coach. About a third of the teachers (32%) reported spending less than one hour a month with the literacy coach, a majority (59%) reported 1-5 hours, and only 9% spent more than 5 hours per month with their literacy coach. Several teachers reported they did not get to see the literacy coach much, although there were mixed reasons for this conclusion; some teachers felt the literacy coach focused all of her time with other teachers and some felt the literacy coach spent most of her time preparing to help the teachers but needed little face-time to implement the new solutions. Suggested solutions to these problems would be to preschedule the literacy coach's time with allotted times per grade level, and acknowledging the time in the literacy coach's day that is spent gathering resources. Some teachers said they did not see the coach often, but admitted she was available if they needed her and they simply did not seek her out. These results are echoed in the survey questions in that only 3 (7%) of respondents disagreed with the statement "My literacy coach is available when I need her" and zero

teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. Still other teachers reported the literacy coach was impressively active in their school and were not interested in changing how she spent her time in their building. These respondents reported that if even if they had not seen their literacy coach in a while, she would make it a point to check in on them and find out if there was anything she could do for them. Thus, the concern of the literacy coach's time with teachers is one that is inconsistent across respondents and may be a building-level or individual-level focus area.

Teachers' time was also a concern; coaches mentioned the difficulty teachers had finding and using a new resource because of the initial time investment necessary. Given the other things that take up a teacher's day, sometimes they did not have the time to implement the strategies suggested by the literacy coach. This resulted in either the coach having to do the legwork, or the teacher being unable to implement the new strategy. Again, this concern was limited to a few respondents, with others lauding their literacy coach for "being really effective" with their time and appreciative of the time she was able to save teachers by finding resources for them and her "quick turnaround" time solving problems and implementing new strategies.

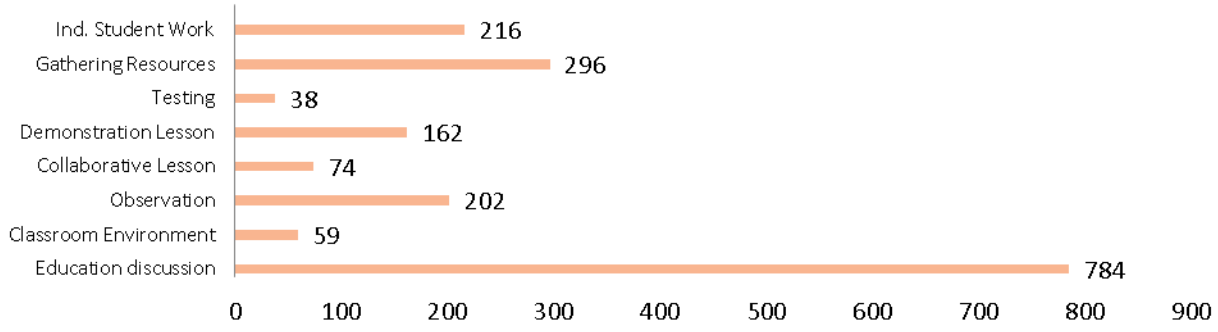
Changes to the role of the literacy coach. Despite the general positive relationships between literacy coaches and the teachers, there remain some barriers. Coaches noted that teachers sometimes view them as a threat; "I don't want to be seen as evaluative or threatening, or like an administrator. I want to be seen as a partner more than an evaluator." Note, however, that teachers did not always share this concern. As one stated, "I like how easy it was to collaborate with her. I never felt I was being critiqued; it felt like collaborative teaching when she'd watch or model for me."

Coaches reported sometimes feeling that teachers approached them with questions or requests that would be more appropriately addressed to an administrator. Although the coaches want teachers to continue to come to them when in need or when brainstorming, they also think the program would benefit from a more defined role for the literacy coach. Another literacy coach suggested an expansion of the literacy coach role to be part of educational assistance "so we can be more collaborative and streamlined," and a principal wanted to see stronger collaborations between the literacy coach and other leadership in the building. Several teachers made a similar suggestion, arguing that their literacy coach did a great job within the constraints of her position but would be a greater asset to the

school if she could spend her time focusing on professional development of the teachers rather than on acquiring materials for them; “She would be better used to help with the skills rather than our gopher to find things. Those things should already be available to us.” Teachers were careful to point out that the coach “is doing 100% of what we are asking,” and believe the conflict is due to the limitations imposed by the curriculum and district-level expectations. Teachers felt confused and frustrated by the amount of disparate information they were expected to incorporate, and argued that a more streamlined curriculum would free the literacy coach from the more mundane resource collection tasks; teachers reported the current system requires them to “pull from a lot of things to teach reading, which makes it difficult for teachers to streamline. But we don’t have control over it, so we have to use the literacy coach as we can, and she is just as helpful as she can be.” Teachers also noted that the literacy coach was occasionally pulled from her coaching job to do non-literacy jobs (e.g., bus duty, lunch duty, etc.) and that this “limits what literacy-related activities she can do.”

Literacy Coach Activity Log. Literacy coaches were asked to record their activities throughout the year. The activities were assigned into the following categories: Educational discussion, Classroom environment, Classroom observation, Collaborative lesson, Demonstration lesson, Testing, Gathering resources and Individual student work. Coaches recorded the frequency of working with each teacher and/or grade level. A large portion of literacy coaching time was spent in educational discussions (43%) and in gathering resources (16%). Activities directly related to intensive coaching practices (class observation, collaborative lesson and demonstration lessons) occurred less frequently (see I.2.2). The log also revealed the dosage per teacher. The number and amount of time spent with each teacher varied greatly. Analysis of dosage by teacher revealed no differences in student achievement gains.

I.2.2: Literacy Coaching Activities



Student Academic Achievement

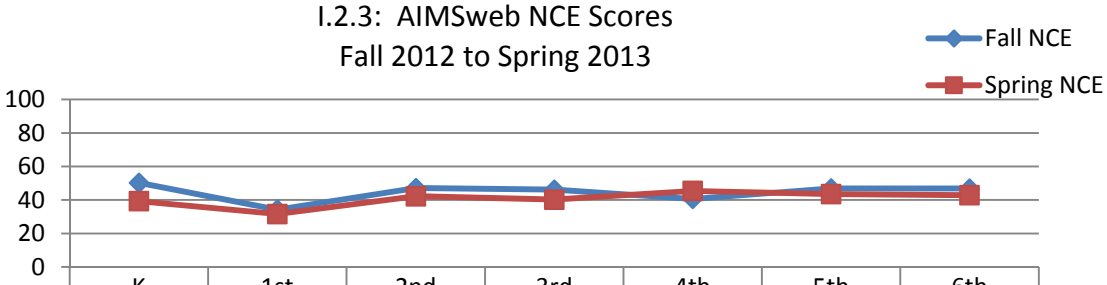
Student reading scores were assessed using two types of measures—AIMSweb and state assessments. One measure is part of a district screening process using AIMSweb benchmark probes three times a year. The probes are timed and designed to screen for students at-risk for reading failure and to inform teachers on student progress. AIMSweb probes should not be seen as indicative of complete reading ability, or as a diagnostic assessment, but rather they serve as proxy indicators to broad reading skills.

The screening measures allow schools to track students over the course of a year while the NeSA-R allows for year to year cohort comparisons. As the NeSA-R does not start until 3rd grade, the AIMSweb measures were used for K-2 as well as 3rd-6th. Normal curve equivalents were used because of the difference in measures across the grades and because the AIMSweb assessments do not provide standard scores. Raw scores are given percentile ranks. For the purpose of the evaluation, the percentile ranks were converted to NCEs (normal curve equivalents). Normal curve equivalents was developed for the US Department of Education by the RMC Research Corporation as a way of standardizing scores received on a test with a 0-100 scale. By preserving the equal-interval properties, it is then possible to use inferential statistical tests to examine differences from fall to spring. Thus, converting to NCEs allowed comparisons across grade levels and across measures.

The second measure used to track student achievement was the Nebraska State Assessment-Reading (NeSA-R). NeSA-R is the state reading assessment given to all students in grades 3-8 and 11. It is a multiple choice assessment yielding scaled scores that can be compared across years. A scaled score of 85 indicates proficiency on the assessment.

AIMSweb results. With the exception of 4th grade, all of the AIMSweb NCE scores decreased from fall to spring (I.2.3). While students improved their raw scores, the raw score gains did not translate into maintaining or improving the NCE score. To put it another way, while the students improved from fall to spring, other students in the same national aggregate group improved more.

I.2.3: AIMSweb NCE Scores
Fall 2012 to Spring 2013



	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Fall NCE	50.25	34.25	47.09	46.11	40.63	46.91	46.78
Spring NCE	39.32	31.6	42.24	40.23	45.4	43.5	42.83

NeSA-R results. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to analyze change in NeSA-R student performance from 2010-2013 and from 2012-2013 with the hypothesis being that the longer students were in a building with a literacy coach the more effect Literacy Coaching in combination with other literacy practices would have on student performance. Both of the paired-samples t-tests indicated that students demonstrated significant gains in their NeSA scores both over the course of one year and across four years. Student scores showed a larger effect size (d=0.56) when compared over four years (2010 to 2013) than student scores compared over one year (2012-2013), d=0.19. Data were then disaggregated into male and female subgroups. Both subgroups experienced significant gains in their NeSA-R scores from 2010-2013 but the males improved at a higher rate and ended with an effect size considered to be in the large range (d=0.69). While the NeSA-R scores of 3rd grade males were about six points less than females, by the end of 6th grade that gap had narrowed to less than one point.

I.2.4: NeSA-R Scores

	2010 NeSA-R Scale Score Mean	2013 NeSA-R Scale Score Mean	Change Score (from 2010-2013)	Effect Size
Females (*n*=36)	97.83	114.03	+16.19	0.43*
Males (*n*=41)	91.90	113.83	+21.93	0.69**
Overall (*n*=77)	94.68	113.92	+19.25	0.56**

*p<.05, **p<.01, Cohen's d was calculated by dividing the paired samples mean change score by the paired samples standard deviation.

Parenting Impacts or Feedback

Because the Literacy Coaching program is a professional development effort focused on classroom teachers' instructional practices, parenting impacts and feedback were not included in the evaluation.

Summary of Findings from District B

District B conducted an internal program evaluation. Given that it was District B's first year implementing Literacy Coaching, the primary focus of the evaluation was on the level and quality of the implementation and improvement in practices, rather than on measuring student achievement changes. Student achievement data were collected but should be understood as baseline data.

What was the quality of implementation of the program?

A focus group was conducted with the literacy coaches of the program. As it was a new program, the coaches expressed some challenges in helping teachers and building leaders

understand their role. It was particularly difficult for coaches who had worked in a different role the prior year as teachers were used to having them work on a consistent basis with students needing intervention. Some coaches expressed that building relationships with the teachers was difficult when they themselves didn't fully understand their role. The literacy coaches spoke about needing support understanding the coaching model more fully, perhaps having a mentor, and having enough time with each other to bounce off ideas, learn new strategies and collaborate. Being the only coach in a building left some of the coaches feeling isolated at times.

Quoting from the District B internal evaluation report provided to ICPE: *Overall, Literacy Coaches felt the program is beneficial to teachers and students. Initially, there were struggles to get teachers to understand their role. They think district leaders and building principal share the responsibility of clarifying the role of the Literacy Coach for teachers. Also, they would like more support on coaching as there are certain barriers to overcome in relationship building that must happen before coaching can begin. Literacy Coaches benefit from conversations with each other for ideas on how to work with teachers and they see improvements in teaching & student performance.*

Teacher surveys asking about the program were administered but had a very low response rate. The results from the survey indicated that the majority of teachers responding to the survey were unsure of the role of the literacy coach. However, once the program started, 58% reported that the literacy coach was mostly to completely available and 58% reported having had the opportunity for a modeling and/or coaching session. As with District A, the dosage of coaching per teacher varied greatly with some teachers reporting ten or more modeling sessions with the coach while other teachers reported zero sessions with the coach. It should be noted that coaches did not have a systematic way of working with teachers across the district therefore a dosage analysis for this initial year would not yield useful data. Teachers mirrored coaches' responses in asking for help in better understanding the role of the coach and the importance of having the support of the building leadership for the program.

Overall, teachers were complimentary of the Literacy Coaching program. They benefited from the additional support of the coach and the training on new district initiatives in the reading curriculum. Teachers were concerned about the lack of knowledge they had on the program at the beginning of the school year and felt that building leadership is a crucial component of teachers accepting the Literacy Coach's role in their classrooms (District B, internal evaluation).

Literacy Coaching Program Successes

Some of the successes from the program's first year were an increased use of the vocabulary and 'Think Aloud' methods, teachers and paraprofessionals began to see the literacy coaches as a resource, discussions about literacy increased in the buildings and between teachers, and student engagement about reading increased. Teachers reported learning new ideas for writing and reported that the literacy coaching improved instruction through more emphasis on detailed lesson plans and meaningful feedback to students.

Student Academic Achievement

Baseline data were collected using the district's K-2 Reading Assessment and the Nebraska State Reading Assessment (NeSA-R). Students showed an increase in raw scores on the K-2 Reading Assessment and gained an average of 1.6 scaled score points on the NeSA-R. No conclusions were drawn using the data from the first year of implementation. Data will continue to be collected and next year the data will be analyzed for growth.

Literacy Coaching Program Conclusions and Implications for Program Improvement

Overall, 13,243 students were impacted through literacy coaching in their buildings. The staff level of coaches in buildings varied across schools with some having one literacy coach for the building and other schools receiving part-time literacy coaching in a building. About 83% of students in these buildings were eligible for free/reduced lunch.

Teachers and administrators reported that literacy coaching was useful in improving teachers' literacy instruction, providing meaningful staff development, and improving student's love and passion for reading. Student effects varied depending on the type of measure used with effects being more prominent when examined over multiple years than over the course of one year. The differing effects possibly indicate that in a model in which the adults are the target audience for intervention, it may take longer than one or two years to find measurably large gains with students. Program suggestions include having a defined role for the literacy coach and removing as many extraneous duties as possible (recess duty, lunch duty), providing feedback to teachers based on their video-taped lessons, and focusing on the evidence-based intensive coaching activities that result in student achievement.

It is recommended that external and internal evaluation be blended in the 2013-2014 program year to provide the richness of internal evaluation along with the credibility of external evaluation.

Recommendations for programs funded for literacy coaching in the next program year:

1. Measure teacher change over time (with the CLASS) while continuing to track the type of activities coaches are engaging in with teachers.

2. Track both district reading measurements (AIMSweb or similar progress monitoring tool, Fountas & Pinnell levels) as well as state testing results.

3. In order to track the NeSA-R scores long-term, access to the NSSRS identification numbers for students is extremely helpful and will allow for further disaggregation of scores in the future.

Jump Start to Kindergarten

810 students | 61% poverty[1]
5 school districts | 1 community organization
Average instruction time per student: 118 hours

Key Findings

Jump Start to Kindergarten programs are successfully helping students enter school prepared. For some children in poverty, the eight week program can mean making up more than two years of learning. Ninety-six percent of the parents expressed confidence that their child would be successful in kindergarten due to the program.

Rating: Successful
Effect Size: 0.59

About Jump Start to Kindergarten

The Jump Start to Kindergarten program helps students in poverty establish a strong foundation in basic concepts for learning, like colors and letters. Some programs include home visits and parent involvement.

[1] *Percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch. For a family of four, weekly income may range from $539 to $838. Source: US Dept. of Agriculture, SY 2013-2014*

Sub-Section I.3: Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs

Lead: Abbey Siebler, M.A., supervised by Lisa St. Clair, Ed.D.

Kindergarten students from low income families benefit most from high quality classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions along with high quality instruction by demonstrating higher social competence and academic outcomes (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta, Mashburn, 2010).

Summary of Program Model

Jump Start to Kindergarten programming is designed to provide students the opportunity to become more prepared for Kindergarten and start at the same level as their peers that may have had previous preschool experiences. The programming focuses on pre-academic skills, routines and social skill development.

Who was served in these programs?

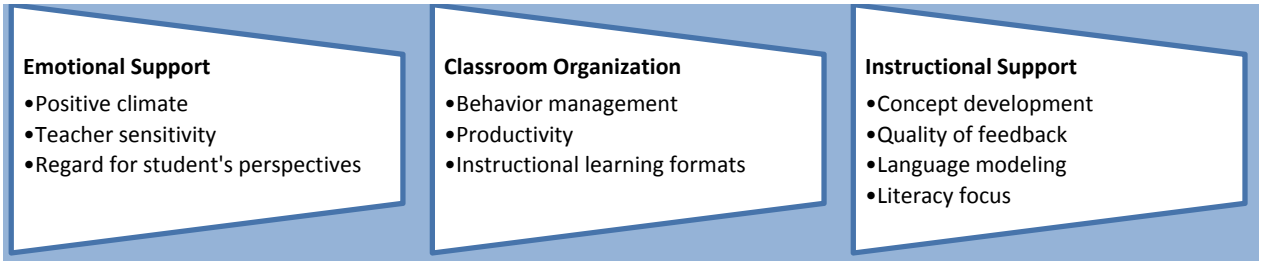
Jump Start to Kindergarten programs were funded in five districts and one community agency. All subcouncils were represented with programs. The programs ranged from two weeks to eight weeks, with varying hours and days per week. All programs utilized certified teachers for part or all of their staffing.

There were a total of 810 Kindergarten students served by the Jump Start to Kindergarten programs. They were served an average of 118 hours. Pre-post student achievement data were collected data on 692 students. Some brief demographic data follow:

- 54% male
- 46% female
- 61% eligible for free/reduced lunch

What was the quality of implementation for the Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was used to measure classroom quality in Kindergarten programs. Developed by Bob Pianta and others at the University of Virginia Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, this external observation tool measures classroom quality across multiple domains.



CLASS was more widely implemented in this program this year. A total of 31 CLASS ratings were completed of the 62 classrooms funded through the Learning Community, representing approximately 50% of the funded classrooms. These classrooms were drawn from all funded districts and one community agency that received Jump Start to Kindergarten funding. All but one school district completed CLASS observations in all Jump Start classrooms. Classrooms were video-recorded, submitted, and then scored at UNMC. A CLASS report was prepared for each participating classroom and results were sent to each district and agency. Districts and agencies determined how best to share the information with the teachers. The CLASS reports included video clips and written feedback along with dimension and domain scores. CLASS ratings were collected at one point in time only (summer 2013). Table I.3.1 summarizes the average CLASS domain scores for the last three years.

CLASS

Classroom Assessment Scoring System

Author: Pianta, LaParo & Hamre, 2008

Scale:

1-2 = Low quality

3-5 = Moderate quality

6-7 = High quality

I.3.1: Jump Start to Kindergarten CLASS Domain Averages

Summer	# of classrooms observed	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
2013	32	5.55	5.82	2.55
2012	15	6.15	6.08	2.78
2011	7	6.41	5.80	3.14

It is unclear why scores in some domains have increased and others have decreased over time. One reason could be that as use of the CLASS instrument has become more widespread, the average scores on some domains have decreased along with the increase of teachers new to the tool. As more CLASS ratings are collected, the evaluation team will be able to analyze trends over time.

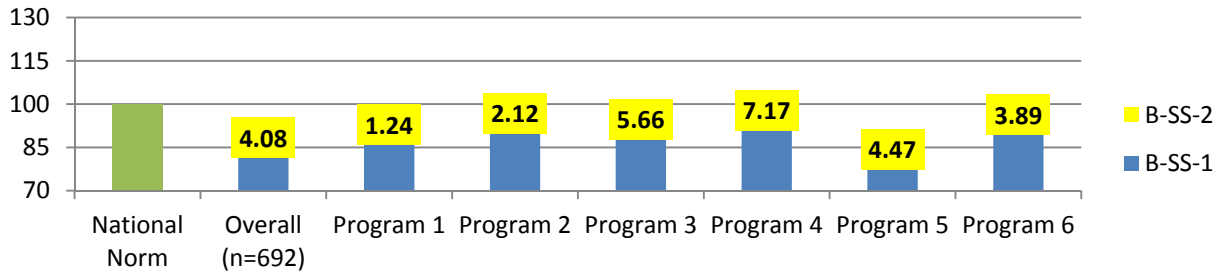
The CLASS will be added to the evaluation plan as mandatory observation with future Jump Start to Kindergarten programs. Programs may wish to explore professional development training with a focus on continuous improvement, particularly in the Instructional Support domain.

Student Academic Achievement

The importance of concept development, particularly for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, has been demonstrated in numerous research articles (Neuman, 2006; Panter and Bracken, 2009). Some researchers have found that basic concepts are a better means of predicting both reading and mathematics than are traditional vocabulary tests such as the PPVT-IV (Larrabee, 2007). The norm-referenced assessment selected to measure Kindergarten student's school readiness is the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). The BSRA was used to measure the academic readiness skills of young students in the areas of colors, letters, numbers/counting, sizes, comparisons and shapes. The mean of the BSRA is 100, with 86 to 114 falling within the average range (one standard deviation above and below the mean). It has been used in numerous studies, including the Joint Center for Poverty Research, NICHD study of early child care and youth development, Harlem Project, and the national implementation study of Educare, to name but a few. The limitation of this assessment is that it does not measure social/emotional readiness for school, executive functioning, and other important qualities to consider relative to "readiness for school."

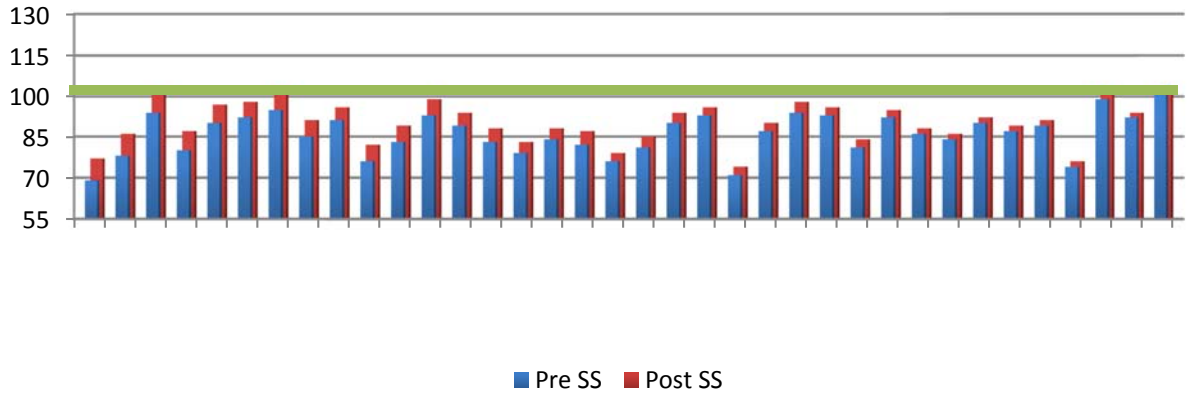
BSRAs were completed pre and post in 36 classrooms with a total of 692 students. BSRA standard scores are displayed in Figure I.3.2. The blue bar displays average pre standard scores and the yellow bar displays average post standard score increases. The green bar represents that national mean (or average) score of 100.

I.3.2: Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA)
Standard Score



Students significantly improved overall in the Jump Start program, as well as within each of the individual districts and agencies as a whole. Significant improvement was not always found at the school or site level, as there were significant variations in change from pre to post at the individual school or site level as well as variations in the numbers of students attending each program. The change scores ranged from a 7.97 to a .70 gain in BSRA standard score (SS), as demonstrated in I.3.3. Again, the green line represents the national norm of 100.

I.3.3: BSRA SS Change by School



Overall, the group of 692 students significantly improved in their readiness for kindergarten (p<.001). Mean standard scores on the Bracken increased from 86.42 to 90.50--a mean gain of 4.08 points moving them from just the beginning of the average range closer to the desired mean of 100. Of the 692 students assessed pre and post, almost a third (32%) were at or above a standard score of 100.

Strong effect sizes continued to be found with the Jump Start to Kindergarten program. Table I.3.4 summarizes student outcome information by program. This includes the percent of students

eligible for free/reduced lunch served by the program, the program duration, average pre and post Bracken School Readiness Assessment Standard Scores, statistical significance using a paired samples test (or T-test), and the effect size of the significance if change was found to be significant. The effect size test used was Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988). One of the strongest effect sizes reported in Hattie's research was for Reciprocal Teaching methods, with an overall effect size of 0.74.

I.3.4: Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA) Standard Scores-Summer 2013

Program	% F/R Lunch	Programming Duration	Average Pre Standard Scores	Average Post Standard Scores	Statistical significance	Effect Size
Overall	61%	70-260 hours	86.42	90.50	p<.001*	d=0.59
Program 1	56%	2 weeks, 35 hrs/wk	92.32	93.56	p=.037*	d=0.26
Program 2	100%	8 weeks, 32.5 hrs/wk	95.85	97.97	p<.001*	d=0.29
Program 3	13%	4 weeks, 12 hrs/wk	91.97	97.63	p<.001*	d=0.80
Program 4	59%	3 weeks, 22.5 hrs/wk	94.30	101.48	p<.001*	d=0.72
Program 5	58%	4 weeks, 31 hrs/wk	82.15	86.62	p<.001*	d=0.65
Program 6	66%	4 weeks, 20 hrs/wk	94.47	98.35	p<.001*	d=0.58

*Significant improvement using a paired samples t-test, one-tailed
Effect size calculated using paired samples mean differences/mean standard deviation

Utilization of Results with Schools and Programs. Teachers and schools were debriefed on the Bracken SRA results of each of their students, as well as their group of students, by a member of the evaluation team following both pre and post Bracken administration. The results were delivered to the teachers and schools one to two days after pre-assessment so that the results could be used by the teaching teams to inform and individualize instruction. Post results were also delivered to teachers and schools one to two days after Bracken administration was completed to inform them of the progress their students made.

Student Achievement Summary (Bracken School Readiness Assessment). Results for the program have remained consistent over three years. For the 2011 year, there was an average standard score gain of 4.28 with an effect size of *d*=0.58. In 2012, there was an average standard score gain of 4.11 with an effect size of *d*=0.63. For the 2013 summer, the average standard score gain was 4.08 and resulted an effect size within the zone of desired effects *(d*=0.59*)*.

The Jump Start to Kindergarten outcomes on the Bracken suggest that an area of strength for these students was color naming (93% mastery). An area for improvement would be Sizes/Comparisons (54% mastery). Sizes/Comparison may be a higher level skill for students as this subtest assesses their understanding of location words, comparison concepts and understanding directional concepts.

I.3.5: Bracken School Readiness Overall Standard Scores

Year	# of students	Average Pre Standard Scores	Average Post Standard Scores	Average Bracken SRA Standard Scores Change	Statistical significance using T-Test analysis	Effect Size
2013	649	86.42	90.50	4.08	*P*<.001*	*d*=0.59
2012	800	87.97	92.08	4.11	*p*<.001*	*d*=0.63
2011	156	85.85	90.13	4.28	*p*<.001*	*d*=0.58

*Significant improvement using a paired samples t-test, one-tailed
Effect size calculated using paired samples mean differences/mean standard deviation

What did parents report about Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs?

Parents provided feedback on the value or usefulness of the Jump Start to Kindergarten Program. Using a collaborative process across all districts and agencies, a master parent survey was developed. Districts or agencies were then able to choose which sections they would use for their program. Parent survey data was received from each of the participating districts and agencies. Parent survey results are displayed in I.3.6 (n=340).

I.3.6: Parent Satisfaction and Ratings of Impact

How much do you agree or disagree with each statement:	Average	% Agree or Strongly Agree
a. I was satisfied with the hours of the program.	4.60	96%
b. I was satisfied with the length of the program.	4.50	93%
c. I was satisfied with the program as a whole.	4.60	96%
d. The staff were excellent (caring, reliable, skilled).	4.64	95%
e. My child enjoyed attending the program.	4.70	96%
f. I was able to communicate with my child's teacher.	4.42	87%
g. I was informed about my child's progress.	4.20	79%
h. I believe that my child will be more successful in Kindergarten as a result of the program.	4.59	93%
i. I feel more prepared to be the parent of a Kindergartener as a result of the program.	4.44	89%
j. My child believes that school will be a fun place to learn.	4.68	97%
k. If my child begins to struggle in Kindergarten I would feel comfortable approaching his/her teacher or principal.	4.60	88%

Scale ranges from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

Families reported high overall satisfaction with the structure and environment of the program. They also reported high levels of impact on such items as believing their child is more ready for

kindergarten as a result of the program and feeling comfortable to talk with their child's teacher if a problem emerges. The lowest level of satisfaction was 79% for being informed about their child's progress.

Parents were also surveyed about the frequency of communications with their child's teacher (see I.3.7). A total of 311 parents responded to this section.

I.3.7: Parent Report of Communication

	Almost Every Week or Weekly	Once or Twice	Never	No Response
Your child's teacher talked to you about your child's development.	38%	27%	26%	10%
Your child's teacher talked to you about your child's behavior.	34%	21%	36%	8%
You visited your child's classroom for more than just dropping off/picking up your child.	34%	32%	22%	12%

More than half of the parents reported talking to their child's teacher about their behavior and/or development once or twice during the program. Approximately 35% of parents reported meeting with their child's teacher almost every week.

Parents were also surveyed about whether or not they felt that their children improved in targeted behaviors (see I.3.8). A total of 305 parents responded to this section.

I.3.8: Parent Report of Child Changes as a Result of Program

How much do you agree or disagree that your child made improvements in each of the following areas (if necessary):	Average Rating	Agree/Strongly Agree	Child Already Excellent with this Behavior
Willingness to separate from parents	4.32	66%	26%
Likes to listen to stories	4.46	78%	18%
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	4.41	79%	13%
Knows different colors and shapes	4.54	77%	18%
Plays well with other children	4.37	76%	15%
Willingness to share with other children	4.28	73%	13%
Interest in sharing what they have learned	4.43	82%	10%
Attentiveness when read to	4.32	74%	15%
Attention span for tasks	4.19	73%	11%
Eagerness to attend school	4.51	87%	11%

How much do you agree or disagree that your child made improvements in each of the following areas (if necessary):	Average Rating	Agree/Strongly Agree	Child Already Excellent with this Behavior
Overall	4.38	76.50%	15%

Scale ranges from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

The most positively rated behaviors were eagerness to attend school and liking to listen to stories, with 75.5% of parents agreeing or strongly agreeing that their child showed improvement across ten key behaviors associated with kindergarten success. A limitation in the interpretation of these data was that it is unclear what percentage of parents marked “already excellent” versus left the rating blank. Interpretations regarding the percent of students noted as already being excellent in an area should be drawn with caution.

Jump Start to Kindergarten Program Conclusions and Implications for Program Improvement

Jump Start to Kindergarten programs were implemented in five districts and one community agency. A total of 810 Kindergarten students were served an average 118 hours total over the summer. Students significantly improved on the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (Bracken 2009, $p<.001$, $d=0.59$). Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with and impacted by the Jump Start to Kindergarten programs. All districts used the CLASS observation tool to assess quality in their Jump Start classrooms, with all but one school district completing CLASS observations in all classrooms. With the CLASS observation tool becoming a mandatory component of the Jump Start to Kindergarten evaluation beginning in the fall of 2013, it is recommended that districts use the results to refine and continuously improve each program, as well as to guide the general continuous improvement process for programs funded by the Learning Community. Given the consistently positive results for the students after attending the Jump Start to Kindergarten summer programs, districts and programs may want to follow students to see if the programming has lasting effects.

Family Literacy

100 parents | 263 students | 100% poverty[1]

Key Findings

South Omaha parents exceeded first year expectations in English language classes. Program benefits carried over to parent-child interactions, critical to a child's success in school. Ninety-eight percent of parents reported strong satisfaction with the program.

Parents Learning English	Parent-Child Interactions
Rating: Successful	Rating: Successful
Effect Size: 1.06	Effect Size: 0.41

About Family Literacy

The Family Literacy program helps students make gains in school by helping parents with three key skills:

1. Learning English
2. Supporting their child's learning and development
3. Building parent-school relationships

[1] *Percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch. For a family of four, weekly income may range from $539 to $838. Source: US Dept. of Agriculture, SY 2013-2014*

Section I.4 Family Literacy Program

Lead: Jolene Johnson, Ed.S.

This evaluation report is intended to build upon last year's baseline report and to provide information on the implementation of the Family Literacy program through the Learning Community Center of South Omaha (LCCSO) in partnership with OneWorld Community Health Centers. This report will summarize data for program activities from June 2012 to present. These data are intended to support program planning and continuous improvement of the services provided to students and families.

Summary of Program Model

LCCSO was formed in 2012 as a collaborative effort of *the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties*, *OneWorld Community Health Centers,* and *Boys Town.* LCCSO began providing family literacy services to parents and their children in its temporary location across the street from the Public Library in South Omaha, and moved into its permanent center in South Omaha in the fall of 2013. Parents participating in the program met at the center to attend classes and access services. While parents participated in educational activities, on-site child care was provided for their children eight years old and under.

To help children from low-income families succeed in school, LCCSO collaborated with member school districts and community partners to activate long term strategies to support parents in their efforts to promote their children's education by teaching them the skills they need. LCCSO participants received a wide range of interrelated services, including, but not limited to:

- Parenting Education
- Navigator Services

- Adult Education

Parent and child outcomes were measured using a variety of assessments in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the various components of the program. The following sections will address what is being measured and present initial and follow-up results, beginning with parents/adults and followed by their children.

Parenting Education

Group Parenting Workshops: Parenting workshops engaged participants in activities that trained parents on how to partner with education systems and how to support their children's educational success. Parents were taught how to: work with teachers, help their children with homework, prepare for teacher conferences, read a report card, set high expectations for school work, support learning at home, etc. Workshops were held every other week for three hours during the academic year and for one and a half hours during summer months. The classes were tailored to the needs of the participants, as identified by the Educational Navigators and support staff. Examples of the areas of need that emerged were: Nutrition, Scholarship resources, Self Esteem, Car Seat Safety, and Child Abuse Awareness.

LCCSO collaborates with various organizations to deliver diverse workshops (Education Quest, Project Harmony, etc.). A further example of this is the program's alliance with *Boys Town* which integrated *Common Sense Parenting*® (CSP) into LCCSO group workshops. CSP was a practical, skill-based six week parenting program which involved classroom instruction, videotape modeling, roleplaying, feedback and review. Professional parent trainers provided instruction, consultation and support to LCCSO participants, addressing issues of communication, discipline, decision making, relationships, self-control and school success. Parents were taught proactive skills and techniques to help create healthy family relationships that fostered safety and well-being.

Navigator Services

LCCSO employed navigators that served as personal parent advocates, helping parents gain better understanding of the public school system, community resources and adult education programs. Navigators built strong relationships with participants to ensure individualized education and support.

Parents And Children Time (PACT) Events: All participants and their children were invited to attend social events where parents and children interact together with other families. Navigators modeled positive parent-child interaction in these group socialization events. These events were intended to give parents opportunities to engage in positive parent-child

interactions; parents were encouraged to practice proactive problem solving and decision making.

Home Visitations: Navigators visited participants' homes to communicate with parents, conduct informal needs assessments, connect parents with resources, model supportive learning activities, coach parenting skills, and attend to specific needs. Navigators completed home visitations as necessary, but on average once a month. Each participant worked with their navigator to design a Family Literacy Plan (FLP) and set personal and familial goals.

Adult Education/Literacy

English as a Second Language (ESL): Adult participants attended English language classes two days a week during the academic year. During summer months, the English language classes met for one and a half hours, two days a week.

Each class was comprised of eight to twelve students and met for three hours/day. ESL classes taught functional English skills and communication, with specific focus on parents' needs to support their children in school and collaborate with their teachers. Parents' homework was often expected to be done together with their children. The English skills parents learned were often useful for both participants and their children.

Computer Training: Computer training was provided to impart information technology skills to parents in order to assist in parents' educational endeavors and support communication with their children's schools. Topics covered included: basic computer skills (language software programs, sending emails, accessing school parent portals, etc.)**.**

Who did LCCSO Serve?

LCCSO served families from Subcouncil 5 of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, specifically parents and children in the South Omaha area. Since its inception, the program has enrolled 100 adult participants and their respective children under the age of 18 still living at home and attending school (263 students). Adult participants had children attending one of the following Omaha Public Schools elementary buildings: Indian Hill, Gomez Heritage, Ashland Park-Robbins, Spring Lake, Highland, Chandler View and Castelar. All students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. All were English language learners.

What was the Quality of Services Implemented?

Multiple tools were used to measure growth, assess perceptions of the participants and demonstrate program quality. The evaluation is both summative and developmental in nature.

The tools selected for the evaluation provided outcome information as well as informed the implementers about what is working and what needs improvement.

Focus Groups

Multiple focus groups were conducted with the cohorts in July of 2013. In the focus group, the participants were asked to respond to both multiple choice and open-ended questions. Overall, the participants (*n*=48) reported being satisfied with the program, staff, teachers and administration. Many have experienced success in this program after facing failure in other programs. They shared that the teachers helped them feel comfortable, motivated, and confident in learning English and new parenting strategies.

Parent Surveys

Participants completed an intake survey upon entrance into the program and a follow-up survey this summer as part of the focus group process. The survey measured beliefs about school engagement, experience with child care, family reading habits, and interactions with the community.

Parent and Student Academic Achievement

Normed measures of English language, preschool language, and school readiness were collected from the participants or their children. Normed measures allow for pre/post comparisons to track growth over time. Evaluation results encompassed four sections: improved language, improved relationships, improved sense of confidence and student achievement. Most sections were supported with both qualitative and quantitative data. Parent and student academic achievement results are described first, with improved relationships and sense of confidence in using English in the Parenting Impacts section.

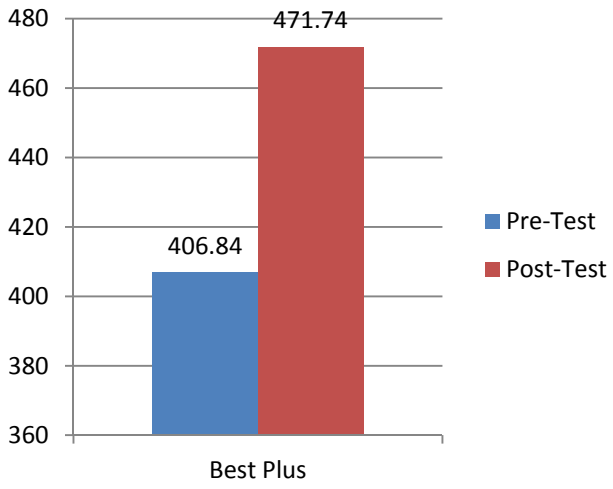
Parents significantly improved their English language skills. The participants have improved their English in reading, writing and speaking. They reported speaking English daily with their children and in the community. Many expressed satisfaction in being able to understand two to three words on a sign and being able to know what they needed to do in social situations and how to respond. Others discussed being able to communicate with people at the grocery store, medical clinics, schools and in their own homes with repairmen. Participants had more confidence in being able to communicate without needing a translator. One participant spoke about having more confidence in her ability to communicate with those in the community stating, “Before I would turn the other way because I was embarrassed that I couldn’t respond. And now with basic English, I understand and I know how to speak a little more.”

As a result of the program, parents report being able to read with their children and to help with homework. The parents feel more comfortable approaching their child’s teacher with questions. When attending parent-teacher conferences, they felt like they knew what questions

to ask and how to respond to the teacher. Parents reported reading more to their children and were much more consistent in having their children read on a frequent basis. One mother exemplified what many parents expressed stating, “Because now that I know a little more how to read, I am now reading a bit more with her. And, now she is learning to read and getting better.”

Participants in the program were assessed as they entered the program and again after every 60 hours of language instruction using the BEST Plus Oral Proficiency Test for Adults (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2005). A total of 58 participants with a pre-test score and at least one post-test score were analyzed for differences. Participants entered the program with a mean score in the low beginning stage of language development (*M*=406.84). At this stage, participants are able to produce very limited words and phrases and have a great deal of difficulty communicating with a native English speaker. The current post-test mean (*M*=471.74) is at the low intermediate stage of language development indicating that participants can meet basic survival needs and handle some routine social interactions. A native English speaker would still have difficulty understanding the speaker at this level but the person could handle an entry level job that involved simple oral communication. A paired-samples t-test was conducted and indicated significant improvement in English language growth (*t*=8.08, *p*<.01, one-tailed). Cohen’s d[1] effect size was calculated (*d*=1.06) and resulted in a large effect size. An effect size of 1.0 or greater indicates that participants improved by one full standard deviation. Moving from a level two to a level four has real world implications for the participants meaning that they have moved from knowing only a few words and phrases to being able to communicate about basic needs and handling social interactions within the community.

I.4.1: Parent English Assessment

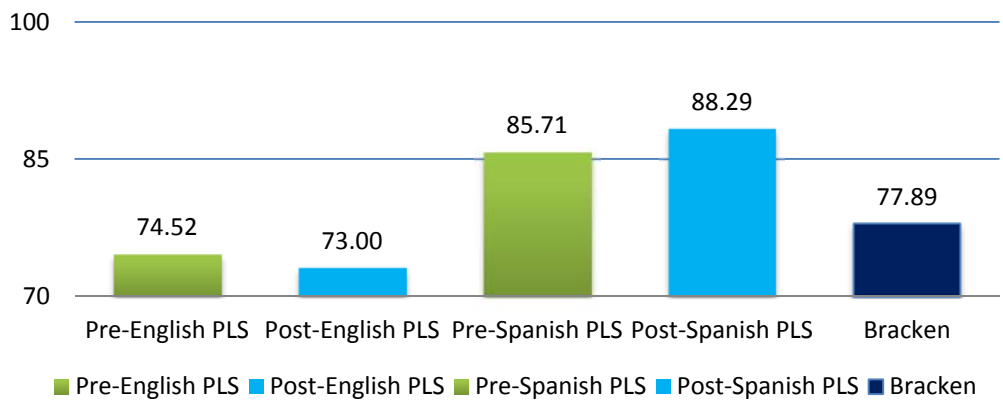


Young children’s language skills did not significantly change. Children were assessed pre and post using the Preschool Language Scales-Fifth Edition (Zimmerman, I., Steiner, V., & Pond, R., 2011-English, 2012-Spanish). Young children’s language skills did not significantly change. Paired-samples t-tests were completed to examine the effects from pre to post testing on the Preschool Language Scale (PLS-V) Assessment both in English and in Spanish. The analysis indicated no significant differences in gains or losses in any of the PLS-V scores, either the English or Spanish versions. The mean total post-PLS score in English (*M*=73.00) is in the delayed range while the mean total post PLS score in Spanish (*M*=88.29) is in the low average range.

Bracken School Readiness Assessment. The Bracken School Readiness Assessment (Bracken, 2002) measures pre-academic skills for students entering kindergarten. For the purposes of LCCSO only students entering into kindergarten were given this assessment. The

BSRA was administered in English. The overall mean score for students (*n*=29) entering school was in the delayed range (*M*=77.89). This score indicates their level of performance on an English only assessment.

I.4.2: Student Achievement Scores for 2012-2013



School age students. School age assessment data will be collected on those students whose parents were participants in the LCCSO program. Data from the school district on attendance, grades, and district assessments will be reported in the 2013-2014 evaluation report.

Parenting Impacts

Parents reported improved parent-child relationships; this qualitative finding was bolstered by externally rated parent/child interactions showing significant improvement and effect sizes within the zone of desired effects. Participants stated that learning more effective parenting strategies as opposed to spanking had led to increased quality of their interactions with their children. Parents stressed how they now made a conscious effort to take their children to the park, to play with them and to read with them frequently. Parents mentioned that learning to have a daily schedule or routine had reduced conflict in the home and that their children were developing the habit of reading and completing chores with fewer acting out behaviors. Consequently, the parents felt less stressed about home life.

Participants discussed changes in their parenting practices due to increased knowledge and understanding of more positive discipline strategies. “The classes helped me a lot. Because it helped me understand more than anything…my child better. Before, I expected him to understand me. Now, I understand him.” The parenting classes were a particularly strong resource to the participants of children with disabilities ranging from autism to ADHD to

speech/language issues. Parents felt that the classes helped them realize that the disabilities required different approaches and gave them strategies to implement. Several parents talked about how spanking use to be the go-to form of discipline and parenting but that the classes have helped them reduce the spanking and improve their quality time with the children. Seventy-seven percent of the participants attended at least five parenting classes and 89% of the participants reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the classes.

Parents acknowledged that being in class and having homework helped them to understand their child's and teacher's perspectives more. The importance of doing well in school and completing homework was something they now felt confident in modeling and expressing to their children. One parent reported telling her son, "I want to keep learning so that I can help you, and as you get better in school I also need to improve to be able to help you," while another shared, "My daughter says, 'Mommy, I will help you do your homework'. And so she is the one who helps me." Parents and children have now become partners in learning as evidenced by 100% of the parents attending parent teacher conferences and 88% attending four or more school events.

The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) was used to assess and measure parent-child interactions across three categories: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning and Supporting Confidence. Parents were video-recorded once a year to assess parenting skills and behaviors with their children under 6 years of age. Navigators recorded the parent and had it analyzed by the evaluation team. Once the Navigator received the report back, he or she provided feedback and coaching to the parent on parenting strategies and techniques. Pre and post KIPS scores were analyzed using a paired samples t-test (n=28). The results of the t-test were significant (t=2.178, p <.05, two-tailed). Cohen's d[1] was calculated (d=0.41), which is in the zone of desired effects.

Parents reported increased social capital and increased confidence. Parents stated that the child care provided at LCCSO allowed their children to become more socialized with other adults and children. Several mothers reported that prior to attending the program their children would cry and scream if they were left with anyone else and that this had been their first experience with child care. The children are now excited to come to the program and "school" and the mothers shared that their children were more prepared to start programs such as Head Start and public school.

When exposed to Watch DOGS (Dads of Great Students), mothers from LCCSO with children attending Gomez Heritage formed their own parent group called "Super Moms." "The parents will see how teachers teach math and they will actually learn some of them…Most of them don't speak English, so they are actually learning."

Read more: http://www.ketv.com/news/local-news/Mothers-lend-a-hand-at-Gomez-Heritage-Elementary-School/-/9674510/19603178/-/pfvq9bz/-/index.html#ixzz2hoLb02SY"

Participants reported higher involvement in the community. Several expressed that before beginning the program they stayed home all day and never left the house. Now, several said they were confident enough to venture out to the parks, library, schools and stores. Many had developed friendly relationships with other members of their cohort and felt that was a benefit as well. The participants pointed out the work of the Navigators in guiding them to new resources. When asked about their experiences with the Navigators, 98% responded that they were either “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied.”

Participants expressed much appreciation and acknowledgement for the resources provided by LCCSO. They stated that without transportation and child care many of them would not be able to attend. One member said, “You realize the money they are spending on us and we appreciate it. The community cares about us, the kids, and that the kids are good people, that they become professionals. We are the parents and we have to help them be the best persons they can be.”

Suggestions for the Program from the Focus Groups:

1. Longer Time: Participants would like to have class 3-4 days a week. They would like the classes to continue to be three hours in length. The change to 1.5 hours during the summer felt short to them and some reported it wasn’t a good use of time, especially having to get their children ready and transported to the center.
2. Better Communication: Participants often felt out of the loop as to what was going on in the program. At times, events and changes were communicated to some but not all participants and this caused some frustration. One suggestion was to give the announcements at the midway point in class.
3. Leveling of the Groups: A suggestion was made to level the classes according to language proficiency. When in a mixed group of proficiencies, the participants felt that the students with the lowest proficiency received the most instruction.
4. Additional Classes: Participants expressed interest in a variety of other classes such as GED, finances, understanding the laws and immigration, and self-esteem.

Family Literacy (LCCSO) Program Conclusions and Implications

The Family Literacy program (LCCSO) has significantly impacted families in poverty in South Omaha by improving their English language skills and increasing both their knowledge level and use of improved parenting techniques and strategies. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction across the English classes, parenting classes and Navigator services. The

improvement in English language skills of the participants was significant as were the changes in parent-child interactions. The confidence gained through learning English and having a supportive environment appears to have led to other outcomes including school engagement, increased confidence by the parents to interact socially and an increased involvement in the community. While significant student gains were not yet found, this is not unexpected given the nature of the program. It would be expected that student gains may not be immediately seen as the direct services are taking place with the parents and not the students. It is recommended that these students be followed as they enter and progress through school. As parents increase their own parenting capacity and more strongly engage with their child's school, it is possible that effects will be shown with school age data such as attendance, district level assessments, and the Nebraska State Assessments.

Family Liaisons

264 families | 282 students | 93% poverty[1]
12 schools

Key Findings

The Learning Community Family Liaison program successfully helped families move out of crisis, allowing students to be more focused on school work. The vast majority of parents reported significantly lower stress levels. While the academic gains of children are modest in this short-term program, most students are back on track academically within 90 days.

Parent Stress	Student Reading	Student Writing
Rating: Successful	Rating: Modest	Rating: Modest
Effect Size: 1.67	Effect Size: 0.35	Effect Size: 0.22

About Family Liaisons

Family Liaisons are in high-poverty schools to help children in serious academic danger. Typically, the families of these students face difficult circumstances like unemployment or health issues. Family Liaisons provide helpful resources and connect families with outside assistance. The Family Liaison model adjusts from school-to-school to accommodate a variety of student and family needs.

[1] *Percent qualified for free or reduced price lunch. For a family of four, weekly income may range from $539 to $838. Source: US Dept. of Agriculture SY 2013-2014*

Subsection I.5 Learning Community Family Liaisons Program

Lead: Kristina Norwood, Supervised by Lisa St. Clair, Ed.D.

The Learning Community Family Liaisons program (in partnership with Lutheran Family Services) was established to reduce barriers to learning by providing services to address the underlying issues affecting the family and child that impact the child's ability to learn. This intensive program is designed to support the needs of students who have multiple, complex challenges that are associated with needs outside of the school environment but are impacting school and academic success. These stressors affecting both family and child may be wide ranging and inclusive of financial, physical, psychological, logistical or other factors. Service provision occurred primarily via the Family Liaison (LCFL) was housed in the school and provided targeted services to individual students and their families.[1]

Summary of Program Model

The program placed Family Liaisons (LCFLs) in 12 elementary schools within Omaha Public Schools. Schools that had an LCFL were located in achievement subcouncils two (2) and five (5). The program employed 13 staff including one (1) program director and twelve Learning Community Family Liaisons.[2]

[1]The Learning Community signed a contract with Lutheran Family Services (LFS) to begin services in April 2011.

[2] Completely Kids (CK), partnered with Lutheran Family Services to provide this program. Lutheran Family Services felt it advantageous to utilize the two CK staff already employed in a similar role in three schools targeted for this program. A partnership was established resulting in a team that includes three CK employees who are jointly overseen by both agencies.

The Learning Community Family Liaisons program's (LCFLP) intent was to build on existing school efforts to provide supports and problem-solve the needs of students. The LCFL was responsible for brokering services to meet the student's and family's needs.

The LCFL provided case management, intensive intervention in two ways—targeted student supports and universal student supports.

The Learning Community Family Liaisons program model has evolved to include four different strategies for service provision. The LCFL's primary intent was to support at-risk students who struggled academically and experienced significant challenges in the home, often due to stress within the family. This primary objective has remained consistent since the program's inception. The model was changed this year to eliminate the LCFL's role in school-wide events to enhance more targeted service planning to meet individualized goals. In order to support this effort, the addition of service domains was implemented as a way to better categorize the services being brokered.

I.5.1: LCFL Program Model

Input Who/what's involved	**Activities** What occurs	**Output** First effects	**Outcome** Second effects	**Impact** Over time effects
Persons involved include: School staff, Family Liaisons, family, professionals, community resources, students, Student Assistance Teams **Location**: At school, at the family's home and in the community (accessing resources as needed) **Time**: 90 Days	**FLs provide intensive student and family support for 90 days via**: • Targeted service planning to meet individualized goals (Domains include: Family, Living Situation, Social Support, Health, Safety, Legal, Educational-Vocational. • Family/student assessments to identify academic/family need • Team meetings to monitor progress and revise service plan as needed **Target**: Individual students and families who provide consent	• FL partners with family and other stakeholders to create tailored service plan for youth/family using SMART goals • Family/child are assessed across academic and behavioral/mental health domains • Student's academic needs are targeted	• Parental stress is reduced and/or positively impacted • Student and stakeholders implement service plan which addresses need • 90% of goals (per student) will be met at the end of the 90 day period	• Parents are empowered, develop knowledge and/or ability to manage stress • Student's academic success indicators increase and/or are positively impacted

LCFLP Service Domains. The LCFLP services domains are the most common areas of need for students and families served by the Learning Community Family Liaisons. Identifying the service domains through a series of assessments and organizational intake processes are integral in identifying the appropriate interventions, supports and S.M.A.R.T. goals essential for developing an effective individual student and family case plan.

Family. In human context, a family is a group of people commonly classified as: a nuclear family (husband, wife, and children); single parent (mother or father and children); extended family (grandparent, aunt or uncle and children) or non-related family (associated through other arrangements including foster parenting.) In most societies the family is the principal institution for healthy development and socialization of children.

Living Situation. The living situation encompasses a description of the circumstances in which the family unit resides. It may include the type of housing, the link between housing and family, or the lack of housing (homelessness).

Social Support. Social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be emotional (e.g., nurturance), tangible (e.g., financial assistance), informational (e.g., advice), or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging). Support can come from many sources, such as family, friends, organizations, etc.

Health-Physical.

- Are the student's physical health needs being addressed?
- Has the student accessed the School Based Health Center?
- Does the student have access to Medicaid, SCHIP, or private insurance?
- Are there unmet physical health needs within the family?

Mental (Behavioral & Emotional).

- Does the student have any behavioral or emotional needs that are not being addressed?
- Does the student have any unresolved or unmet needs that are impacting student or adult relationships in the school setting?
- Are any problem behaviors blocking a family member's chances of having a good life?
- Do any other family members living in the family unit or living outside of the family unit have any unmet mental health (behavioral or emotional) needs?

- Are there unresolved issues that impede normal interaction within the family or community?

Safety. Safety is the state of being "safe" the condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, occupational, psychological, educational or other types or consequences of failure, harm or any other event which could be considered non-desirable.

Legal. Legal refers to the system of rules and guidelines which are enforced through social institutions to govern behavior of an individual, family, organization or community.

Educational/Vocational. Educational/vocational encompasses the educational needs of the child, children in the family as well as the parents and/or guardians. The vocational needs are pertinent to older youth, but also to the family unit.

Individual LCFLs described challenges and successes the LCFLP referral process. Team members' reported experiences vary over time, by school, and school district. Bi-monthly reflection sessions were held with the full LCFL team to explore their experiences implementing the program. Data collected demonstrate that each LCFL experience differs. School community members including principals, guidance counselors, Student Assistance Team (SAT) members and teachers impacted the LCFLs' ability, or opportunity, to implement the program.

Reflection sessions explored the topic of how referrals were received. LCFLs described a wide range in this process that varied by school. Referrals came predominantly from school guidance counselors and principals but LCFLs also reported that they came after or during SAT meetings, through teachers, other school staff, parents, and through pursuing them on their own.

This year the LCFL program worked with OPS to integrate the LCFLs into SAT meetings. In reflection sessions, LCFLs reported variation in having access to SAT meetings by school. One of the barriers that they reported was not always being alerted when a SAT meeting was scheduled, possibly due to not being on the OPS e-mail system. Some of the LCFLs reported greater success with getting SAT meeting notifications as the school year progressed.

The LCFLs reported that being part of SAT meetings was valuable in their work in that it gave them opportunities to give parents their information and resources. They also identified SAT teams as an asset in relationship building with school staff and families, and as another way to get background information on children and families.

Who did the LCFL Program Serve?

Learning Community Family Liaisons program served approximately 282 students with one-on-one services across 12 schools in the Omaha Public Schools. These students represented 264 distinct families.

- Students served ranged from kindergarten through sixth grade.
- Of the students served, 53.2% were served in Subcouncil 2, 45% were served in Subcouncil 5, and 1.8% did not complete this field.
- Of students served, 62.1% were male, 33.7% were female, and 4.3% did not respond to this question on the intake survey.
- The majority of students were identified as Hispanic (48.2%) or African American (31.9%).
- Most students received free/reduced lunch (93.3%).

Students were referred for behavioral concerns (34%), poor academics (27%), poor attendance (10%), or a family issue (9%).

Students had the following types of service domain goals assigned throughout their time in the program: Cultural/Spiritual, Educational/Vocational, Family, Legal, Living Situation, Medical, Mental Health, Safety and Social.

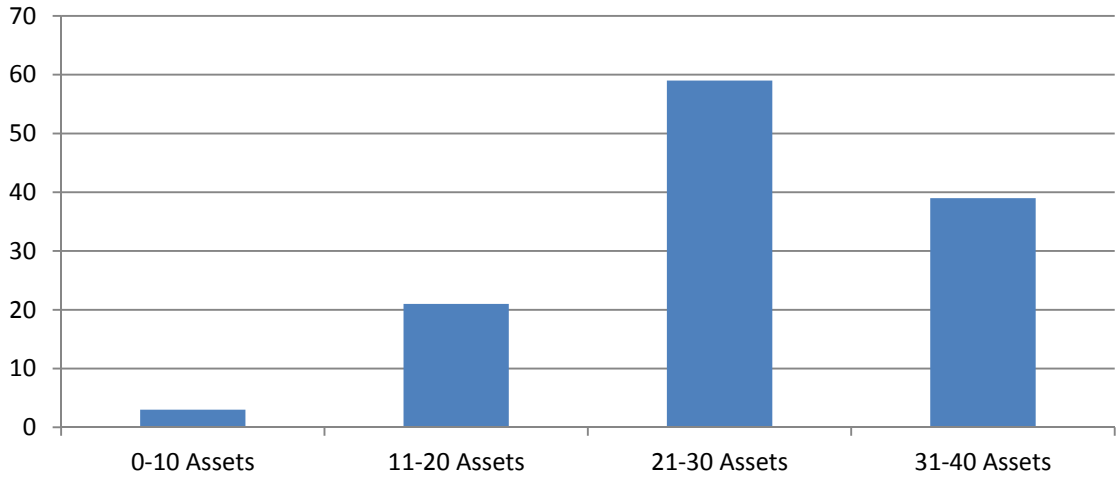
Goals were developed for each of students enrolled in the LCFL program. Of the 267 goals assigned in Subcouncil 2, the most frequently assigned goals categories were Educational/Vocational (69%), Family (10%), and Social (10%). Of the 323 goals assigned in Subcouncil 5, the most frequent assigned goals categories were Educational/Vocational (66%), Family (20%), Mental Health (4%) and Social (3%).

I.5.2: Goals by Service Domain

Service Domain	Sub. 2 (n=150)	%	Sub. 5 (n=127)	%	Totals	
Educational	184	69%	214	66%	398	67%
Family	28	10%	64	20%	92	16%
Living Situation	4	1%	4	1%	8	1%
Mental Health	11	4%	14	4%	25	4%
Social	27	10%	11	3%	38	6%
Medical	1	1%	8	2%	9	2%
Legal	2	1%	2	1%	4	1%
Safety	3	1%	1	1%	4	1%
Cultural/Spiritual	0	0%	2	1%	2	0%
Other	7	3%	3	1%	10	2%
Total Goals	267	100%	323	100%	590	100%

Students generally had a positive influence in their lives. Students rated themselves on the 40 Developmental Assets. Students reported a low to mid-low sense of academic self-efficacy, suggesting that they did not feel confident in their ability to be as academically successful as their peers. The majority of students served, 47%, had between 21 and 30 assets out of a possible 40. They averaged 27 assets. According to the Search Institute, the assets "represent the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and to thrive (Search Institute's website: http://www.search-institute.org/content/what-are-developmental-assets)." Research shows that the more assets a young person has, the less likely they are to engage in high risk behavior. These numbers suggested that the overall program population were more likely to have assets compared to the Search Institute's research on youth in 6th-12th grade which showed that girls have an average of 19.9 assets while boys have 17.2.[3] However, some caution must be exercised with this comparison because the national data is for an older group of children than those served for the Learning Community.

I.5.3: 40 Developmental Assets Profile of Students (*n*=122)



There was variation in the quality of service planning by individual LCFL. Average scores from a review of 31 randomly selected service plans suggest that the quality of service planning conducted by LCFLs varied throughout the school year with the highest score being 23.25 and the lowest 17.91 out of a possible 28 points. In January 2012, a Service Plan Rubric was

[3] For reference, the Search Institute's research on youth in 6th-12th grade shows that girls have an average of 19.9 assets while boys have 17.2. However, the population served by this program are at a different developmental stage (kindergarten through 6th grade) and should not be strictly compared to these numbers.

developed by the Family Liaison team with support from UNMCs evaluation team as a strategy for improving the quality of service plans written by LCFLs.[4] The rubric addressed three areas: Responsiveness; SMART goals and Professionalism. The areas were determined by LFS management to ensure that the service plans aligned with program goals. Responsiveness required that the service plan responds to all of the unique needs of that student and family present at intake and that later emerge. SMART goals required that all goal areas be specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and timely. Professionalism required that documentation accurately describe the work being done with the target child and family.

The rubric assigned a point value to each of the fourteen indicators within the three overarching categories. A score of low quality received a zero, of medium quality received a one, and of high quality received a two. There were 28 points possible. The LCFL team voted to set a score of 23 as their indicator of quality. In other words, the team agreed that a score of 23 indicated that the plan had addressed the student/family's need, was written in such a way that the goals were appropriate and achievable and accurately described the nature of their work with their clients.

The evaluation team reviewed a randomly selected sample of 31 services plans. Before the rubric was established, the average score was 17.8 points and last year the average score after the rubric was established was 20.3 points. This year, the average score was 20.47 points, a gain of 0.17 points. This suggests that limited progress had been made, although the average did not meet the team's established indicator of quality (a score of 23). There was clear variation by LFS as some scores fell into the high quality range consistently and others scored consistently low. Qualitative data suggest that the rubric was viewed positively by the LCFL team.

Student Impacts and Student Achievement

Students achieved 44.6% of the goals designed for them by their LCFL. Qualitative data suggests that the achievability of the goals developed for clients varied among LCFLs and varied over time, limiting the meaningfulness of this percentage as an indicator of effectiveness. Data from case notes and service plans demonstrated that there was variability in the goals established for clients. Variability can be attributed to multiple factors, including lessened family engagement or that some goals were not achievable or realistic within a 90 day timeframe. LCFLs have continued to have training and to utilize the rubric developed for quality. There were several new LCFLs this year which may account for some of the variability. The number of goals achieved increased from 31% in 2011-2012 to 45% in 2012-2013 showing a 14% increase.

[4] Service plans are critical to the work of the LCFL. They include individualized student/family goals, service provision rationale and strategies for monitoring and adjusting their work with the family.

Teacher ratings of student ability in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing increased across all subjects from intake to discharge. These increases were found to be statistically significant only in the areas of reading and writing.[5]

Teachers were asked to rate students' ability in the areas of mathematics, reading and writing at intake. These ratings ranged from 1 to 3 with a rating of 1 indicating a student's ability to be 'below expectations,' 2 indicating a student's ability 'meets expectations' or 3 indicating a student's ability 'exceeds expectations.' The pre/post ability ratings by teachers (*n*=63) are depicted in I.5.4.

I.5.4: Teacher Ratings of Students' Pre-Post Academic Achievement

Intake	Mathematics	Reading	Writing
Below	54%	63%	59%
Meets	43%	33%	38%
Exceeds	3%	4%	3%
Average Rating	1.49	1.40	1.44

Discharge	Mathematics	Reading	Writing
Below	51%	49%	51%
Meets	44%	46%	44%
Exceeds	5%	5%	5%
Average Rating	1.54	1.56	1.54

For proper comparison, only the ratings of students with complete pre and post data were analyzed (*n*=63). From intake to discharge, more students were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations in the subject of mathematics. The mean score difference was determined to not be statistically significant using a one-tailed, paired samples t-test (*M*=.045, *t*(62)=.903, *p*=.185), and therefore, no effect size was calculated. In the area of reading, significantly more students were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations at discharge. The difference in teacher ratings of reading was determined to be statistically significant using a one-tailed, paired samples t-test (*M*=.16, *t*(62)=2.816, *p*=.004). Cohen's *d* was calculated yielding an effect size that approached the zone of desired effects (*d*=0.35) for reading. Significantly more students were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations at post in the subject of writing, using a one-tailed, paired samples t-test (*M*=.10, *t*(62) 1.761, *p*=.041). The effect size (*d*=0.22) was in the low range.

[5] To analyze teacher ratings of academic ability, the Paired Samples T Test was used.

While teacher ratings of student ability indicated evidence of student growth in reading and writing, it should be noted that no other measures of student achievement were collected or analyzed. One recommendation would be to collect student NeSA scores or other school assessment data to quantifiably measure change in student achievement.

Success Story

This story comes from Lutheran Family Services and is part of their promotional literature.

Finding a way to make a fresh start can be hard. Sometimes families need a little help. Just ask Jackson. He's married – the father of five – and trying hard to provide for his family. His biggest challenge? He and his wife are both medically disabled. They manage to get by, but just barely. Jackson often gives plasma, just to have money for dinner.

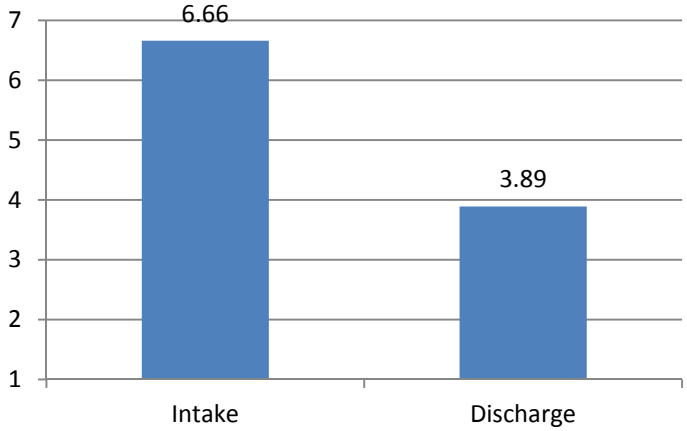
When their youngest daughter, Rosie started having problems in school, it turned out to be a blessing. An LCFL, Djuan Johnson, became aware of the family and made a visit to their home. Turns out, Rosie was missing school because her family was just days away from homelessness. Her parents were frustrated and scared. They fought every day. School simply wasn't a priority for the family at that moment. The family's financial problems became a huge barrier to learning for little Rosie, as well as her brothers and sisters. Having a warm place to sleep was a much greater concern.

It did not take Djuan Johnson long to connect Jackson and his family with community resources. As he guided the family towards a safe, affordable home, food pantries and other resources, Djuan was coaching Jackson on how to be a better father. Sometimes, Djuan just stopped by with a donated bag of groceries and stayed a while to chat. Jackson says without such intervention, his family of seven would have been homeless, broken, and lost. And perhaps fatherless, because for him – suicide had also become an option. "He's our angel in disguise. He changed our lives." Today, Rosie is winning awards in school for her academic progress! Families are strengthened.

Parenting Impacts

Parent stress ratings from intake to discharge significantly decreased. Ratings changed from 6.66 at intake to 3.89 at discharge. At intake, parents rated their perceptions of stress on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 indicating a low level of stress and 10 indicating a high level of stress. For proper comparison, only the ratings of parents with complete pre and post data were analyzed (n=35). Parents reported an initial mean stress rating of 6.66. The decrease of parent stress ratings from 6.66 to 3.89 was statistically significant using a one-tailed, paired-samples t-test (*M*=2.77, *t*=9.852, *p*<.001) which indicates that this change was not due to chance. The effect size was strong (*d*=1.67), as it was in the previous year (*d*=1.39).[12]

I.5.5: Parent Stress Rating



Families rated the services positively (between 'good' and 'excellent'). When asked if the 90 day timeframe was sufficient, responses were mixed with several stating that they would like the time frame extended.

Overall, parents rated the quality of the FL program highly. Surveys used a 5-point Likert scale to rate parent responses to "As a result of the Family Liaisons program…" There were 23 responses.

I.5.6: Parent Rating of Impact of LCFL Program

Item	Rating	Interpretation
I feel more confident in my ability to support my child academically.	1.5	Parent rating is positive, exactly between agree and strongly agree.
I have a better understanding of my children's academic needs.	1.3	Parent rating is positive, leaning towards agree.
I believe I have a better understanding of how to deal with stress.	1.3	Parent rating is positive, leaning towards agree.
I have a better understanding of the attendance requirement at my child's school.	1.6	Parent rating is positive, exactly between agree and strongly agree.
I was satisfied with the referrals I received.	1.4	Parent rating is positive, leaning slightly more towards agree.

Disagree Strongly= -2; Disagree = -1; Neutral = 0; Agree = 1; Strongly Agree = 2

LCFL Program Conclusions and Implications

The LCFL program was widely viewed as an asset within schools and to families for multiple reasons. The program continued to expand services with more families, despite an evolving model. Parental stress significantly decreased and teacher ratings of student reading and writing achievement levels increased. The quality of service plans continues to improve. The families and students served by this program viewed it positively and, while mixed on this, some would have liked for more length of time in the program. One thing to consider is the long-term effects of this short-term program. Are families able to sustain the lower levels of stress without receiving continued supports? In the next year's evaluation, the possibility of following up with families six months to a year after services end to see if the changes have been maintained would be worth considering.

Overall Conclusions

Section I.6 Elementary Learning Programs Overall Conclusions

The Learning Community funded a variety of programs to serve its mission of overcoming barriers to student achievement. The evaluation used diverse methods, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, to describe and measure the quality of implementation, the nature of programming, and to report outcomes demonstrated by the elementary learning programs funded by the LC: Extended Learning, Literacy Coaching, Jump Start to Kindergarten, and Family Support focused programs. The LC served 17,186 students in the past program year. Overall, the evaluation results of the funded programs were positive and suggested that the Learning Community's efforts were accomplishing two overarching tasks: (1) programs appear to be using evaluation data for improvement and (2) examination of family or student data suggested they were showing improvement. Student achievement results were consistently strong for Jump Start to Kindergarten over multiple years. Long-term student achievement in reading showed positive impact over multiple years through Literacy Coaching. Results showed more variability in Extended Learning, with some non-significant outcomes and some strong effect sizes found. This was likely attributable to variation in intensity of the program (duration), focus of the instruction, quality of programming, and measurement sources.

The following table summarizes findings for the 2012-13 year by program. It includes the type of program, the number of students served, the percent of those students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in school, the type of measurement source used for calculation of effect size, and the effect size found. Some notations are made to draw attention to results that are most likely attributable to collective impact—the result of multiple efforts from the schools, parents, community partners, and the program described.

I.6.1: Summary of Findings for 2012-13

Program	Number of Students Served	% Eligible for Free-Reduced Lunch	Measurement	Effect Size
Extended Learning (multiple districts and agencies)	2,588	83%	Multiple, including AimsWeb, MAP, NESA	0.30[1]
Literacy Coaching (Two districts)	13,243	83%	NESA-Reading	0.56[1]

Program	Number of Students Served	% Eligible for Free-Reduced Lunch	Measurement	Effect Size
Jump to Start Kindergarten (multiple districts and agencies)	810	61%	Bracken School Readiness Assessment	0.59
Family Literacy (LCCSO)	263 and 100 families	100%	BEST-Adult English KIPS-Parent Child Interactions	1.06 0.41
Family Liaisons program	282 and 264 families	93%	Parent Stress Reading Writing Mathematics	1.67 0.35 0.22 NS
Overall	17,186 students	82%		NS to 1.67

[1]Collective impact

The table that follows compares effect sizes found across programs over multiple years, where such results exist. If NS is noted, the results were not significant. A dash (--) indicates no data available to calculate a group result. For the 2011-12 year, extended learning had a range of effect sizes found but there was such variability in the data provided and examined, it was deemed most appropriate to report a group effect size for 2012-13. If an estimate were used for the 2011-12 year for extended learning, it would have been approximately in the .10 to .20 range.

I.6.2: Comparison of Effect Size Impacts Across Years

Program	2010-11 Effect Size	2011-12 Effect Size	2012-13 Effect Size
Extended Learning (multiple districts and agencies)	--	--	0.30[1]
Literacy Coaching (Two districts)	--	NS	0.56[1]
Jump Start to Kindergarten (multiple districts and agencies)	0.58	0.63	0.59

Program	2010-11 Effect Size	2011-12 Effect Size	2012-13 Effect Size
Family Literacy/LCCSO	--	--	BEST 1.06 KIPS 0.41
Family Liaisons program	--	Stress 1.39 Rdg 0.48[1] Wrtg 0.50[1] Math 0.47[1]	Stress 1.67 Rdg 0.35[1] Wrtg 0.22[1] Math NS[1]
Overall	--	NS to 1.39	NS to 1.67

[1]Collective impact

Summary of Programs

Extended Learning Programs. Extended Learning programs served 2,588 students and included three major types of programs: comprehensive out of school time programs serving students after school (1,117 students, multiple districts and community partners), tutoring programs (733, two districts), and summer programs (738, multiple districts and community partners). Across programs, the overall effect size change for student achievement was *d*=0.30; however, the range was very broad with some programs showing no significant improvement and some showing effect size change of *d*=1.94. Some elements associated with programs with the greater effect size change was emphasis on positive relationships, focus or intensity of the program although this did not always mean greater dosage, and effective teaching of concepts (e.g., mathematics) more so than specific skills for an upcoming assessment.

Literacy Coaching Programs. Two districts were funded with Literacy Coaching programs. A total of 13,243 students were served and approximately 83% were eligible for free/reduced lunch. Using external evaluation in one district, students showed significant improvement in reading (NeSA Reading) from beginning of the program implementation, 2010, to end of the program, 2013 (*d*=0.56). In 2013-14, two districts have been funded with literacy coaching. External measures of teaching quality will be implemented (CLASS). CLASS videos will be rated for participating teachers (pre and post).

Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs. Jump Start to Kindergarten programs were provided in five districts and one community agency. A total of 810 kindergarten students were served an average 118 hours total over the summer; 61% eligible for free/reduced lunch. Students significantly improved on the Bracken School Readiness Assessment and showed medium to nearly high effect size changes at the individual program levels as well as the overall LC program level (Bracken 2009, gained 4.11 standard score points, $p<.001$, $d=0.59$, similar to findings of the previous two years. Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with and impact

by the Jump Start to Kindergarten programs. An external measure of the quality of teaching/learning interactions, the CLASS was used in all programs, with all but one district collecting it for all classrooms. Results can be used to refine and continuously improve each program, as well as to guide the general continuous improvement process for programs funded by the Learning Community. The CLASS will be used in all classrooms in next year's evaluation.

Family Literacy Programs. Through the Learning Community Center of South Omaha and in partnership with OneWorld Community Health Centers, Family Literacy services were provided for parents with children attending elementary schools within Subcouncil 5. A total of 100 parents and 263 students were served by LCCSO. LCCSO participants received a wide range of interrelated services, including, but not limited to: Parenting Education, Navigator Services and Adult Education (ESL & Computer Training). Parents showed significant improvements with strong effects in learning English. Qualitative findings and externally rated assessments of parent-child interactions also showed significant improvement within the zone of desired effects. Young children's language skills did not significantly change, suggesting that with the parent as the impact target, it is too soon to measure changes within children.

Learning Community Family Liaisons Program. In partnership with Lutheran Family Services, LCFL services were provided for students and their families in 12 elementary schools within Omaha Public Schools (subcouncils 2 and 5). A total of 282 students and 264 families were served. Outcomes in the areas of student academics and family stress were positive (and statistically significant) and satisfaction ratings from parents were positive.

Summary

Overall, the programs evaluated in this report served the students that the Learning Community targeted and provided quality programming. A total of 17,186 students were served this program year. When available, outcomes related to academic achievement were measured and in general, showed that students benefitted from the additional resources, with strongest effect sizes found in school readiness and reading achievement. It is challenging to quantify the results of the evaluation in such a way as to show which programs impact students *more* when asked, "Which types of programs yield the best outcomes?" To answer these questions during the 2013-14 year, the evaluation design must include the addition of two major components: (1) consistent utilization of a same or similar tool to be used to assess program quality, at least in programs focused on teaching and learning (CLASS); and (2) student level data provided by all districts and programs to the program evaluation team. Without these, it is difficult to address what elements in the program were associated with positive benefits for students, and similarly, we can't really respond to questions about variation in

benefits for students. Do some students benefit more than others? Are there subgroups not making gains?

Although there are still improvements to be made, the foundation for closing the achievement gap has been established. Some programs are showing no significant differences, some programs are showing low to medium effects, and others show strong effects, especially over time. With continued focus on improvement, additional gains should be expected. Recommendations concerning program types cannot be made. Where some non-significant and lower effect sizes were found, there was also great variability across agencies and districts, with some showing strong effect sizes within the same broad category type (e.g., Extended Learning). The most consistency was found with Jump Start to Kindergarten.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the evaluation team be provided student state identification numbers (NSSRS numbers), demographic variables, and student performance on NeSA reading, writing, and mathematics over time. The true impact of Learning Community participation can best be measured over multiple years.

2. The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (Pre-K to Upper Elementary CLASS, Pianta) external observation tool has been added as a mandatory item for all 2013-14 programs in the areas of Extended Learning, Literacy Coaching, early childhood, and Jump Start to Kindergarten programming.

3. The process and concept of ‘knowledge transfer’ or sharing of best practices across buildings, districts, community agencies, and systems, should be evaluated as part of the external program evaluation of the Learning Community.

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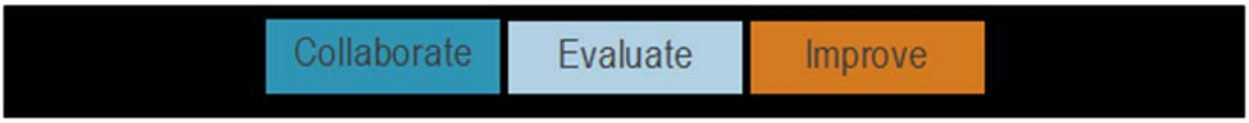


Learning Community Overview

Demographics | Open Enrollment | Student Performance

Learning Community Overview – Sections II, III, and IV

Section II: Demographic Characteristics

This section provides general enrollment information, as well as data associated with student eligibility for free or reduced price lunch (FRL) and English Language Learner (ELL) services. Comparative data from previous years is also included. The following are some of the important points from this section of the report:

- The Learning Community enrollment increased by 1.45% to 112,498 in 2012-13. The increase in the previous two years was approximately 2% per year. Enrollment in each Subcouncil, except Subcouncil 2 (northeastern portion of OPS), increased. The greatest increase was in Subcouncil 6 (western portion of the Learning Community).

- The percentage of students who qualify for FRL is approximately the same in the Learning and Statewide – 44.0% and 43.8%, respectively. The Learning Community's FRL rate increased by approximately one-half percent over the previous year, which was the lowest increase in four years. Since 2009-10, the first year of the Learning Community, the FRL percentage has increase by approximately 4%.

- The percentage of FRL, as in past years, was highest in Subcouncil 2 (80.9%) and lowest in Subcouncil 6 (16.6%). The three Subcouncils with the highest percentages of FRL increased by 1.2% in 2012-13, while Subcouncil 6 remained approximately the same (declining from 16.8% to 16.6%).

- Schools in the Learning Community continue to be economically segregated with virtually no improvement in school diversity over the past four years, and the number of schools with very high proportions of poverty has increased. More than half the schools can be classified as very low, or very high, poverty. Sixty-two (62) schools have less than 20% FRL and 41 have more than 80%). In 2012-13 there were nine fewer low poverty schools (< 20%) and nine more high poverty schools (>80%) than four years ago. The middle range (40% to 60%), which might be described as economically diverse, has remained constant with just 36 schools in that range in each year of the last four years.

- Nebraska schools outside the Learning Community are far more integrated economically. Only 9% of the schools in the State (excluding the Learning Community) have a FRL percentage <20% and just 4% fall in the 80% and above range. The majority of schools outside the Learning Community fall in the middle ranges indicating a more diverse school environment.

Section III: Open Enrollment

This section provides information about the number of Open Enrollment applications, the number approved, and the number of students enrolled as Open Enrollment students. Open Enrollment data for multiple years and for each school district, as well as its effect on school diversity are included. The following is a summary of some of the findings from this section of the report.

- In the 2012-13 school year 5,769 students were open-enrolled, and 40.7% qualified for FRL, somewhat lower than the Learning Community FRL rate of 44.0%. Approximately 5,200 of the open-enrolled students were enrolled in a school that is not within their resident school district. (Some districts use Open Enrollment for school transfers within the district.)

- The number of students who have open enrolled each year has remained fairly constant with a slight decrease from year to year. The proportion of those students who qualified for FRL was very similar to the Learning Community total percentage of FRL. At the start of the 2012-13 school year, a total of 7,341 students had open enrolled, at one point in time, approximately 1,600 more than the 2012-13 total of 5,769. Some of the students who did not continue as Open Enrollment students graduated and others, for a variety of reasons (e.g., becoming a resident of the Open Enrollment district, moving out of the Learning Community, or returning to their resident district), did not remain open enrolled.

- Approximately 35% of the Open Enrollment students are enrolled in schools that follow the intention of the Open Enrollment diversity plan. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the open enrolled students who qualify for FRL are in schools with a lower percentage of FRL than the total of the Learning Community, and 9.5% of the non-FRL open enrollment students are enrolled in schools with a higher percentage. However, it does not appear that this has resulted in much change in the diversity of Learning Community schools.

- Learning Community school districts received 3,212 applications for the 2012-13 school year and approved 2,832. The Nebraska Department of Education reports that at the start of the school year 2,315 students were enrolled as Open Enrollment students. The difference in the number approved and the number enrolled can be attributed in part to the fact that students may apply to multiple districts and may be approved by multiple districts, but can only enroll in one. In addition, some students move between the time of approval and the start of school and others may decide to remain in their resident district.

Section IV: Student Performance

This section describes Learning Community students' proficiency rates (percent passing) on the Nebraska State Assessments (NeSA Reading and Mathematics). Data comparing Learning

Community proficiency rates to the State, proficiency rates across years, and the performance gap (difference between proficiency rates of students who qualify for FRL and those who do not) are included. The following are some of the findings reported in this section of the report.

- At all grade levels in both Reading and Mathematics the proficiency rates of FRL and Non-FRL groups has improved over the past three years.

- In general the proficiency rates of students who do not qualify for FRL are similar in the State, as a whole, and the Learning Community. However, the State proficiency rate of students who qualify for FRL is somewhat higher than that of the Learning Community. This may be related to environmental difference between FRL-eligible Learning Community students and students outside the Learning Community (e.g., rural vs. urban poverty).

- Mathematics proficiency rates are lower than Reading. It is particularly low in 11th grade and the performance gap is large. In the Learning Community, only 28% of the 11th grade students who qualify for FRL and 67% of the non-FRL students were proficient on the 2013 NeSA Mathematics assessment.

The difference in the proficiency of students who qualify for FRL and those who do not is still large, ranging from 26% in Grades 3-5 Reading to 39% in 11th grade Math. However, over the past three years, the gap has narrowed. The proficiency rate of both FRL and Non-FRL students has improved, but improvement was greater in the FRL groups.

Student Demographics

Section II – Student Demographics

External evaluator: Bert Jackson, Ed.D, in cooperation with Brian Gabrial, Learning Community Finance Director; submitted December 3, 2013.

This section of the report provides general enrollment information, as well as data associated with student eligibility for free or reduced price lunch and ELL (English Language Learner) services for the 2012-2013 school year. Comparative data from previous years are also presented. The Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE) provided the data for this section. Enrollment data are submitted to NDE by each school district and reflect counts as of the last Friday of September. The NDE refers to these data as the Fall Membership[6].

Demographic Information by Subcouncil

Nebraska Statute establishes six Achievement Subcouncils within the two-county area of the Learning Community, dividing the population among the Subcouncils as equally as feasible. In 2011, the Subcouncil boundaries were changed because population shifts had affected proportional representation on the Learning Community Coordinating Council. Therefore, comparisons among the Subcouncils across years can only be made for the past two school years (2011-12 and 2012-13) since Subcouncils were composed of different schools in previous years.

Table II.1 (page 66) presents demographic data for each Subcouncil for the 2012-2013 school year, including total number of enrolled students, the percent eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL), and percent of English Language Learners (ELL).

[6] The Fall membership counts are used rather than end-of-year counts for consistency across years. For that reason the numbers in this report may differ from those appearing on the NDE State of the Schools Report.

Table II.1: 2012-2013 Free and Reduced Lunch and ELL by Subcouncil

	SC	Total Enrollment	Number FRL	Percent FRL	Number ELL	Percent ELL
K-6	1	8,258	3,397	41.1%	296	3.6%
7-12	1	6,730	3,629	53.9%	189	2.8%
Subcouncil Total	**1**	**14,988**	**7,026**	**46.9%**	**485**	**3.2%**
K-6	2	8,773	8,027	91.5%	1,372	15.6%
7-12	2	7,144	4,855	68.0%	219	3.1%
Subcouncil Total	**2**	**15,917**	**12,882**	**80.9%**	**1,591**	**10.0%**
K-6	3	9,257	5,145	55.6%	1,270	13.7%
7-12	3	5,756	2,686	46.7%	198	3.4%
Subcouncil Total	**3**	**15,013**	**7,831**	**52.2%**	**1,468**	**9.8%**
K-6	4	12,232	2,438	19.9%	281	2.3%
7-12	4	10,444	1,701	16.3%	62	0.6%
Subcouncil Total	**4**	**22,676**	**4,139**	**18.3%**	**343**	**1.5%**
K-6	5	12,086	7,975	66.0%	2,937	24.3%
7-12	5	10,168	6,013	59.1%	490	4.8%
Subcouncil Total	**5**	**22,254**	**13,988**	**62.9%**	**3,427**	**15.4%**
K-6	6	12,182	2,140	17.6%	198	1.6%
7-12	6	9,468	1,451	15.3%	30	0.3%
Subcouncil Total	**6**	**21,650**	**3,591**	**16.6%**	**228**	**1.1%**
K-6	LC	62,788	29,122	46.4%	6,354	10.1%
7-12	LC	49,710	20,335	40.9%	1,188	2.4%
Subcouncil Total	**LC**	**112,498**	**49,457**	**44.0%**	**7,542**	**6.7%**

- Student enrollment in the six Subcouncils ranges from 14,988 in Subcouncil 1 to 22,676 in Subcouncil 4.

- The percentage of students who qualify for FRL varies greatly, from approximately 18% and 17% in Subcouncils 4 and 6, respectively, to nearly 81% in Subcouncil 2. Subcouncils 1, 3, and 5 are above 44%, which is the FRL percentage for the total Learning Community.

- At 15%, Subcouncil 5 has the highest percentage of English Language Learners. Subcouncils 1, 4, and 6 have the lowest and are lower than the percentage in the Learning Community as a whole (6.7%).

Demographic Comparisons: 2011-2012 and 2012-2013

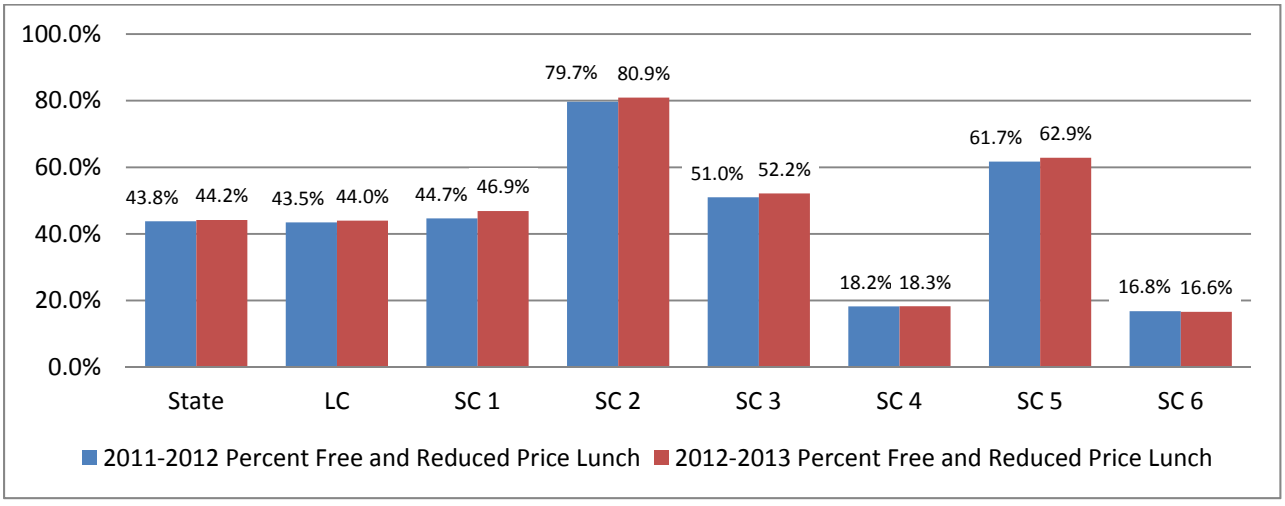
Table II.2 compares enrollment and Figures II.1 and II.2 (page 68) compare FRL and ELL in each Subcouncil in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

Table II.2: 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 Enrollment by Subcouncil

	2011-2012 Enrollment	2012-2013 Enrollment	Percent Change
Subcouncil 1	14,676	14,988	2.13%
Subcouncil 2	16,223	15,917	-1.89%
Subcouncil 3	14,809	15,013	1.38%
Subcouncil 4	22,408	22,676	1.20%
Subcouncil 5	22,050	22,254	0.93%
Subcouncil 6	20,728	21,650	4.45%
Total	110,894	112,498	1.45%

- Enrollment in the Learning Community increased by 1.45% (approximately 1,600 students).
- The enrollment in all Subcouncils except Subcouncil 2 increased. Subcouncil 2, which declined by almost 2%, covers the northeastern part of the Omaha Public Schools district.
- The greatest increase is in Subcouncil 6, which is comprised of the Districts in the southwest portion of the Learning Community: Papillion-La Vista, Elkhorn, Gretna, Douglas County West and Springfield Platteview.

Figure II.1: 2011-12 and 2012-13 Free and Reduced Lunch by Subcouncil

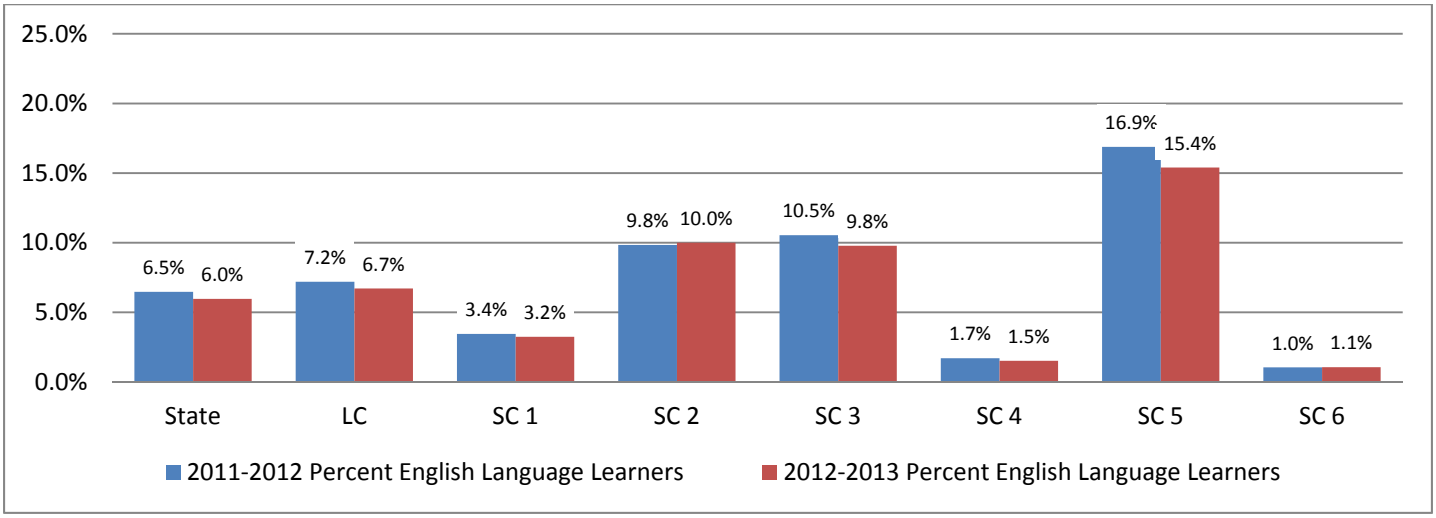


- The percentage of Learning Community students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch increased by approximately one-half percent, slightly more than the increase in the State.

- From these data economic diversity does not show any indication of movement toward geographic equalization.
    - Subcouncil 6, which has the lowest proportion of FRL, was the only area of the Learning Community that showed a decrease in FRL percentage and the increase in Subcouncil 4, which has the second lowest percentage of FRL, was negligible (0.1%).
    - The three Subcouncils with the highest percentage of FRL each increased by 1.2%, a rate greater than the State and the Learning Community as a whole.

- Subcouncil 1, which covers Bennington and the northern most portion of OPS, had the largest increase (2.2%).

Figure II.2: 2011-12 and 2012-13 ELL by Subcouncil



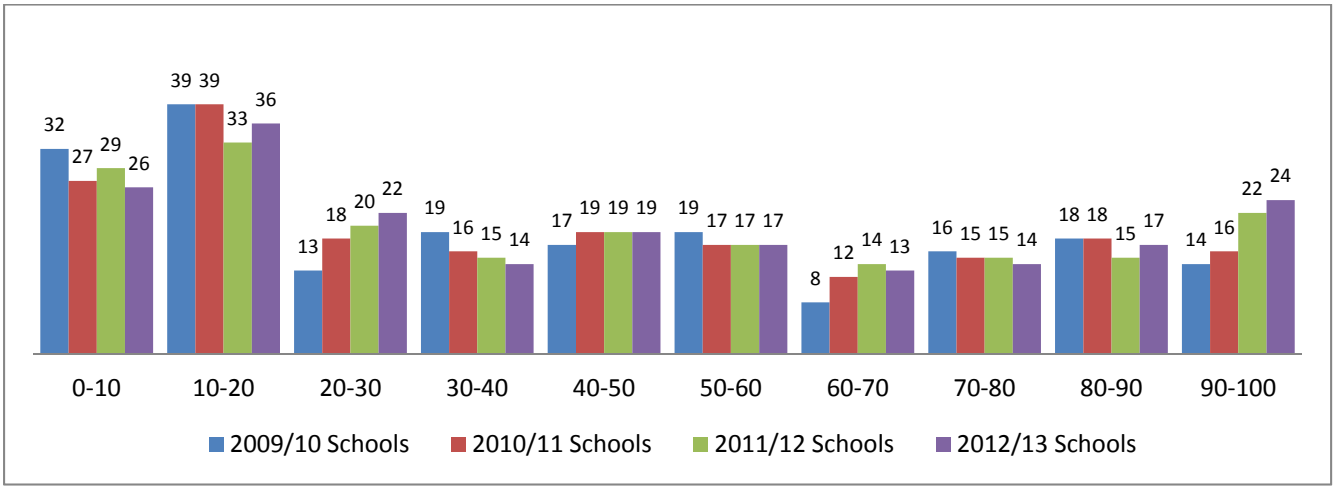
- The percentage of ELL declined in both the State and the Learning Community and declined or remained approximately the same in each Subcouncil.

- In Subcouncil 5, which has the highest proportion of ELL students, the percentage declined by 1.5%.

Free and Reduced Lunch Concentration

Figure II.3 (page 69) provides additional information about the concentration of poverty within the Learning Community. The graph shows the number of schools that have FRL percentages within ranges of 10%. For example, in 2009-10, there were 32 Learning Community schools in which the percentage of students who qualified for FRL was less than 10%, while in 2012-2013 there were 26 schools in that range.

Figure II.3: Four-Year Comparison of the Number of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10%

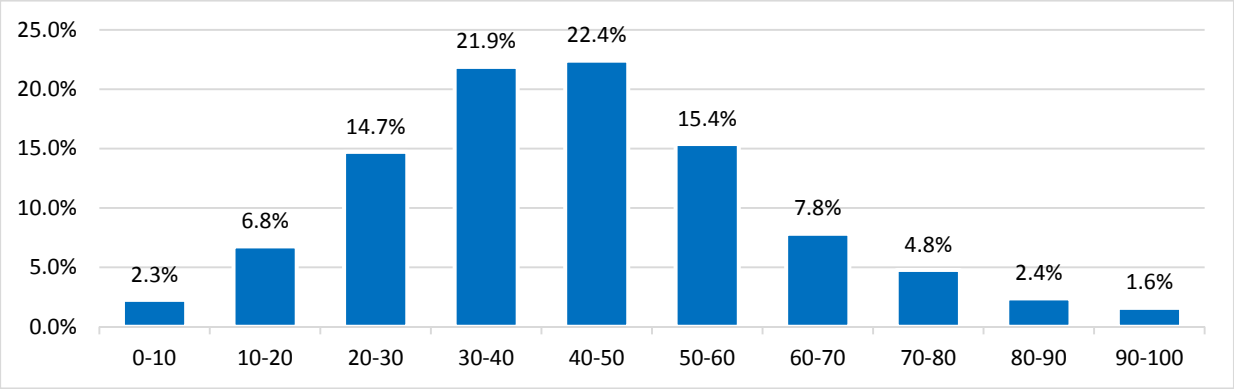


A primary goal of Open Enrollment is to improve the economic diversity of Learning Community schools. Progress toward this goal would be illustrated by an increase in the number of schools in the middle ranges of the graph and a decline in the number on either end. That trend, however, is not occurring. The number of low poverty schools is decreasing; the number of high poverty schools is increasing; and the number of schools in the middle ranges has remained fairly constant.

- In 2012-13 more than half of the schools in the Learning Community could be described as economically segregated, 62 schools have FRL percentages of 20% or less and 41 have 80% or more.
- There are more high poverty and fewer low poverty schools now than four years ago. Comparing 2009-10 and 2012-13, nine fewer schools had less than 20% FRL, and nine more schools were in the 80% and above range.
- The number of schools in the middle range (40 to 60 percent) has remained constant, with 36 schools falling within that range in each of the four years of the Open Enrollment program.
- Expanding the middle range to include all schools in the 30% to 70% range does not change the picture. In both 2009-10 and 2012-13, 63 Learning Community schools fell within the 30 to 70 percent range.

Figures II.4 and II.5 (page 70) provide a comparison of Learning Community schools with other Nebraska schools. Figure II.4 shows the percentage of schools in Nebraska (excluding Learning Community schools), in each of the 10% ranges of FRL and Figure I.5 shows the percentages in the Learning Community.

Figure II.4: 2012-2013 Percentage of Nebraska Schools in FRL intervals of 10% (Excluding Learning Community)

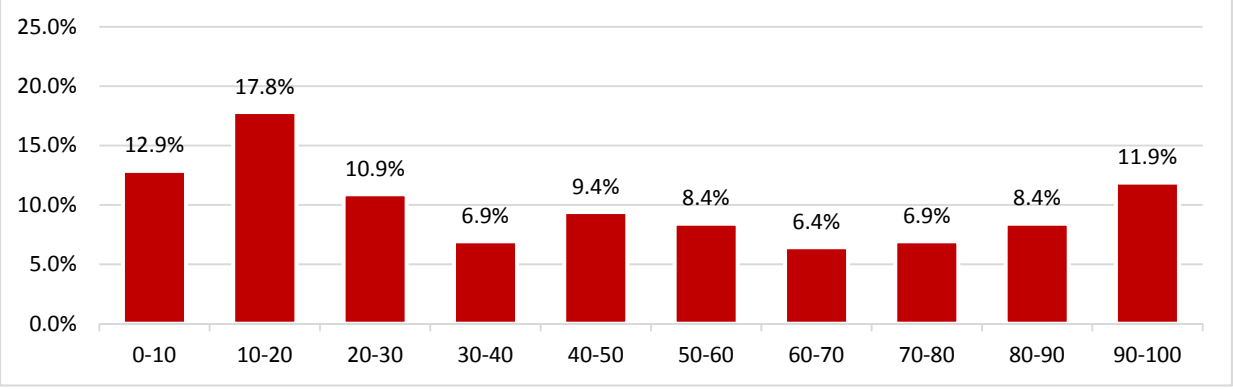


As shown in the Figure II.4, most Nebraska schools fall in the middle ranges of free and reduced lunch concentrations, and few schools fall in the very low and very high ranges.

- Approximately 38% of all Nebraska schools outside the Learning Community fall in the middle ranges (40% to 60% FRL), and approximately two-thirds of the schools (67.5%) have FRL percentages between 30% and 70%.
- Only 4% of the Nebraska schools outside the Learning Community have FRL percentages of more than 80%, and only slightly over 9% of the schools have FRL percentages of 20% or less.

Figure II.5 shows the distribution of schools within the Learning Community. These data present a very different picture of the economic distribution. In the Learning Community, far more schools fall in the very high and very low ranges, while fewer schools are in the middle ranges.

Figure II.5: 2012-2013 Percentage of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10%



- Only 17.8% of the Learning Community schools fall in the 40% to 60% range.

- Expanding the range results in similar discrepancies between the Learning Community and other Nebraska schools. In the Learning Community only 31.1% of the schools are in the 30% to 70% range while in the rest of the State more than twice that number (67.5%) are within the 30% to 70% range.

- Almost a third (30.7%) of the Learning Community schools have 20% or fewer students who qualify for FRL, while in the rest of the State only 9.1% have a FRL percentage of 20% or less.

- Similarly, in 20.3% of the Learning Community schools, more than 80% of the students qualify for FRL, while in the rest of the State only 4% of the schools fall within that high poverty range.

These data clearly demonstrate the dramatic difference in the economic diversity of Learning Community schools and other schools in Nebraska. The majority of schools in Nebraska are relatively diverse economically, while the majority of schools in the Learning Community are segregated economically into schools with relatively low and relatively high concentrations of poverty. Students outside the Learning Community are more likely to be enrolled in an economically diverse school, while students in the Learning Community are more likely to be enrolled in an economically segregated school. A primary goal of Open Enrollment is to create greater diversity. However, it has not had that effect thus far. There has been little change in the number of schools in the middle ranges and at the extremes. The majority of schools in the Learning Community continue to be economically segregated.

Open Enrollment

Section III – Open Enrollment

This section of the report describes the status of Open Enrollment. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) provided enrollment data and Learning Community school districts provided information about the number of Open Enrollment applications and their approval. Before presenting the Open Enrollment data, it is important to have a common understanding of application procedures and the difference between *Open* Enrollment and *Option* Enrollment.

Application Process

Each year, applications are available in November and must be submitted to the requested districts by March 15th. Applicants may submit applications to multiple districts and may list as many as three schools of choice in each district. The applications include self-reported eligibility for free or reduced price lunch (FRL) based on federal guidelines provided with the application. School districts approve or deny an application based on the capacity[7] available and following the priority sequence outlined in the Learning Community Diversity Plan:

1) First priority goes to students who have a sibling who currently attends, and will also be attending, the requested school the year the Open Enrollment applicant first attends.

2) Second preference goes to students who contribute to the socioeconomic diversity of the school. In schools with a percentage of students qualifying for FRL that is greater than the total of all schools in the Learning Community (approximately 44% in 2012-2013), the priority goes to students who **do not** qualify for FRL and, in schools that have a lower percentage of FRL-eligible students than the Learning Community total, the priority goes to students who **do** qualify for FRL.

3) After approving all applicants in the first and second priority categories, all other applications become eligible. At each level of priority, if there is not capacity to accept all applications in that category, a lottery is conducted.

[7] Capacity at each grade, in each school, is determined through a systematic process jointly developed by school district and Learning Community Coordinating Council representatives. Each year school districts submit documentation of capacity to the Learning Community's Chief Executive Officer.

Districts must notify applicants of approval or denial by April 5th, and applicants must notify the districts of their acceptance by April 25th. Although families may apply to multiple school districts, they may accept Open Enrollment in only one district. As required by Nebraska Statute, the number of applications received and approved is submitted to the Learning Community by member school districts in September of each year.

Open and Option Enrollment

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, school districts' reports to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) included identifying students as *open* enrolled or *option* enrolled.

- *Open Enrollment* refers to students who transfer to another school or school district through the Learning Community's Open Enrollment process, which went into effect in the 2010-2011 school year.

- *Option Enrollment* designates students who transferred between school districts prior to the 2010-2011 school year through a process that was implemented Statewide in 1993. Students who reside outside the Learning Community two-county area, and transfer to a Learning Community school, continue to be classified as Option Enrollment.

An important difference between Option and Open Enrollment is the application of the priority sequence described above. Under Option Enrollment it was not required that priority be given to students who could potentially improve the diversity of a school.

Learning Community schools may currently have both Open Enrollment and Option Enrollment students. All students who transferred among Learning Community districts, beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, are classified as Open Enrollment students. Those who transferred prior to the 2010-2011 school year are, for the most part, still classified as Option Enrollment students, although districts report that some students who previously were classified as Option Enrollment have changed their status to Open Enrollment by going through the Open Enrollment process. One other variation is noteworthy. Some districts use the Open Enrollment process for some or all students who request a transfer to another school within their resident district, while others do not.

The Status of Open Enrollment

Table III.1 (page 74) shows the number of new Open Enrollment students and the percent qualifying for FRL in each of the three years of Open Enrollment. These numbers reflect the enrollment as reported in Nebraska Department of Education Fall Membership for the 2012-2013 school year. The total represents the number of students who have accessed the Open Enrollment option and who, at one point in time, were enrolled as Open Enrollment students. It does not represent the total number enrolled in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.

Table III.1 Number of Students Open Enrolled for the First Time in 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 and Percent FRL

Year	Number New Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership	Percent New Open Enrollment Students Who Qualify for FRL	Learning Community Percent FRL
2010-2011	2,563	41.98%	41.86%
2011-2012	2,463	44.62%	43.48%
2012-2013	2,315	42.33%	43.96%
Total	7,341		

- The number of students who open enroll has remained fairly constant with just a slight decline each year.

- In each of the three years, the percentage of new Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL has been similar to that of the Learning Community as a whole; although, in 2012-13, the percentage was slightly lower than the Learning Community, while in the previous two years it was the same or greater than that of the Learning Community.

Table III.2 shows the current Open Enrollment numbers in each year of the program. The total each year includes the new students reported in Table III.1 and the number of Open Enrollment students from the previous years who continued as Open Enrollment students.

Table III.2 Total Number of Open-Enrolled Students and FRL Percentages for 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013

Year	Total Number of Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership	Percent of Total Open Enrollment Students who Qualify for FRL	Learning Community Percent FRL
2010-2011	2,563	41.98%	41.86%
2011-2012	4,334	42.52%	43.48%
2012-2013	5,769	40.65%	43.96%

The total number of current Open Enrollment students (5,769) is 1,572 less than the total number of new Open Enrollment students across the three years of the program (7,341). These 1,572 students were, at one time, Open Enrolled and in 2012-13 are no longer classified as Open Enrollment students. In 2011 and 2012, a total of 383 Open Enrollment students were seniors.

In addition to their graduation, a number of factors might account for the drop-off.

- Moving out of the Learning Community
- Moving into the Open Enrollment district, therefore becoming a resident student
- Moving to a different school district within the Learning Community and choosing to attend a school in that district
- Returning to their resident school and district

- Each year, as shown in Table III.1 (p. 74), the percentage of newly enrolled FRL Open Enrollment students has been similar to that of the Learning Community. However, in 2012-2013, among the 5,769 Open Enrollment students, 40.65% qualify for FRL, approximately 3.3% less than the total in the Learning Community. This means that a higher percentage of FRL Open Enrollment students than Non-FRL students have been among those who were once classified as Open Enrollment and are no longer. This may be related to the fact that lower income families tend to change residence more frequently than higher income families. Many of the explanations for a student's change in classification from Open Enrollment to resident (described above) involve moving to a new residence.

Table III.3 (page 76) shows the number of Open Enrollment students in each grade in all three years of the program and the degree of change (increases or decreases) from year to year. The numbers in the 2012-2013 column are cumulative. They include students who enrolled for the first time in the 2012-2013 school year, as well as those who enrolled in the two previous school years, and continued to be open enrolled in the 2012-2013 school year. The number at a particular grade reflects students who newly enrolled at that grade level and those who were one grade below that grade in 2011-2012. For example, the 2012-2013 first grade enrollment of 645 includes 2011-2012 kindergartners who continued as Open Enrollment first graders and first grade students who were newly enrolled in 2012-2013.

Table III.3: Open Enrollment Students by Grade in 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013

Grade Level	2010-11 Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership	2011-12 Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership	2012-13 Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership	Percent Change from 2010-11 to 2011-12	Percent Change from 2011-12 to 2012-13
KG	512	605	583	18.16%	-3.64%
1	165	576	645	249.09%	11.98%
2	182	260	639	42.86%	145.77%
3	150	283	313	88.67%	10.60%
4	150	250	374	66.67%	49.60%
5	124	234	324	88.71%	38.46%
6	118	258	311	118.64%	20.54%
7	219	273	371	24.66%	35.90%
8	105	286	349	172.38%	22.03%
9	387	385	482	-0.52%	25.19%
10	152	386	485	153.95%	25.65%
11	167	287	480	71.86%	67.25%
12	132	251	413	90.15%	64.54%
Total	**2,563**	**4,334**	**5,769**	**69.10%**	**33.11%**

- Between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, Kindergarten was the only grade in which the number of Open Enrollment students declined. This was likely due to a change in State Statute, which had the effect of narrowing the age range for Kindergarten entry in the 2012-2013 school year.

- The large increase in Grade 1 between 2010 and 2011 and in Grade 2 in 2012 (highlighted in yellow) is caused by the progression, through the grades, of the first group of Open Enrollment Kindergartners. This cohort of students enrolled in Kindergarten in 2010, first grade in 2011, and second grade in the 2012. More Kindergarten students than any other grade open enroll. As that cohort of students moves through the grades, the number of Open Enrollment students at each grade level will increase and capacity to accept students at grade levels at and below that grade can be expected to decline.

As previously described, Open Enrollment potentially contributes to a school's economic diversity in two ways:

1) Students who qualify for FRL enroll in schools with relatively lower percentages of FRL students.
2) Students who do not qualify for FRL enroll in schools with relatively higher percentages of FRL students.

Table III.4 (page 77) shows the number of FRL-eligible Open Enrollment students who are enrolled in schools that are below the percentage of the total Learning Community and the number of

students who do not qualify for FRL enrolled in schools that have FRL percentages above that of the total Learning Community (approximately 44%). It is important to understand that we cannot say that the general diversity of the schools has actually changed to the degree the table might imply. Open enrolled students' resident school is not known. The FRL-eligible student who transfers to a school with a low percentage of FRL students, but whose resident school also has a relatively low concentration of FRL, has not positively affected diversity. The school she or he left is potentially less diverse because of the transfer. The same, of course, is true of the Non-FRL student who enrolls in a school with a large proportion of FRL. If that student's resident school is also a high FRL school, diversity has likely not been improved. Although they may positively affect the diversity of the school in which they open enroll, their transfer potentially has a negative effect on the diversity of the school they left.

Table III.4 Number and Percent of FRL-Eligible Open Enrollment Students in Schools with Lower Concentrations of FRL than the Learning Community Total and Number of Open Enrollment Non-FRL Students and Enrolled in Higher FRL Schools

Year	Total Open Enrolled	Number FRL in Schools with FRL Percentage < LC Total	Percent FRL in Schools with FRL Percentage < LC Total	Number Non-FRL in Schools with FRL Percentage > LC Total	Percent Non-FRL in Schools with FRL Percentage > LC Total
2010-2011	2,563	647	25.24%	233	9.09%
2011-2012	4,334	908	20.95%	267	6.16%
2012-2013	5,769	1,500	26.00%	548	9.50%

Table III.4 shows that more than a third of the total number of Open Enrollment students are enrolled in schools that follow the intention of the Learning Community Diversity Plan. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the students who qualify for FRL are enrolled in schools with relatively lower percentages of FRL, and 9.5% of the students who do not qualify for FRL are enrolled schools with relatively higher percentages of FRL. Whether they are contributing to diversity, however, is not known. To determine the effect on school diversity would require knowing the FRL percentage of their resident school, as well as the FRL percentage in the school to which they open enrolled.

District Participation in Open Enrollment

This section provides Open Enrollment information for each of the 11 member school districts, including the number of applications received and approved and the number of students designated as Open Enrollment students.

As required by Nebraska Statute, application information was submitted to the Learning Community by each school district. Enrollment data were supplied by NDE and reflect Fall enrollment Membership (counts on the last Friday of September). Table III.5 (page 78) shows the number of Open Enrollment applications received and approved and the number enrolled in the 2012-2013 school year. A six-week time lapse between the date for reporting application-related information to

the Learning Community and enrollment information to NDE for Fall Membership, account for what may appear to be illogical differences between the number of applications received and the number enrolled (i.e., enrollment number is greater than approval number). School districts are required, by statute, to report their application and approval data to the Learning Community by September 1 of each year. For consistency and to accommodate the September 1 deadline, districts use their counts as of August 20. Districts report fall enrollment data to NDE, as of the last Friday in September, approximately six weeks after the September I report to the Learning Community. Over this six-week span of time, districts may receive and approve additional applications.

Some districts, in some situations, use the Open Enrollment process for transfers from one school to another within the district, while other districts have different procedures for within district transfers.[8] This distinction is made in the tables that follow.

Table III.5 Number of New Applications Received and Approved and Number Enrolled for the 2012-2013 School Year

School District	Applications Received and Approved for 2012-13					2012-13 New Open Enrollment Students		
	Non-resident Applicants	Resident Applicants	Total Applicants	Total Approved	Percent Approved	Enrolled Non-resident Students	Enrolled Resident Students	Total Enrolled
OPS	266	149	415	390	94.0%	237	20	257
Elkhorn	96	2	98	32	32.7%	12	0	12
DC West	43	0	43	43	100.0%	37	0	37
Millard	817	185	1002	756	75.4%	502	202	704
Ralston	248	0	248	223	89.9%	185	0	185
Bennington	60	0	60	11	18.3%	6	0	6
Westside	651	0	651	475	73.0%	380	0	380
Bellevue	466	0	466	388	83.3%	388	0	388
Pap-LV	511	23	534	466	87.3%	284	27	311
Gretna	16	0	16	8	50.0%	6	0	6
Springfield	38	2	40	40	100.0%	29	0	29
Total	**3,212**	**361**	**3,573**	**2,832**	**79.3%**	**2,066**	**249**	**2,315**

The differences across districts are attributable primarily to differences in the capacity to accept students from other districts at the grade level and in the school requested. Some districts are growing rapidly, and schools may already be crowded, while other districts have greater capacity to add students from other districts.

- Overall, approximately 79% of the applications were approved.

[8] Districts may give school transfer priority to resident students who request the transfer before February 15.

- The two smallest school districts, DC West and Springfield Platteview, both approved all the applications they received and increased their enrollments by 37 and 29 students, respectively.

- The most rapidly growing districts, Elkhorn, Bennington, and Gretna, understandably had the lowest approval rates.

- The number of approved applications (2,832) is 517 more than the number enrolled. This is, in part, due to the fact that families can apply to multiple school districts; 2,832 represents the number of *applications* approved, not the number of *students* approved. Multiple school districts may have approved the same student's application. The difference between the number of applications and the number of students who actually enrolled can be attributed to a number of other factors as well, such as moving between the time of the approval and the start of the school year or deciding to stay in their resident school.

Table III.6 shows the number of Open Enrollment students who are enrolled in a school, which is not within their home districts' boundaries. It excludes those who transferred to a school within their resident district through Open Enrollment. It also shows the proportion of non-resident Open Enrollment students in each district's total enrollment. These data are from NDE Fall Membership.

Table III.6: Percent of Non-Resident Open Enrollment Students in School Districts' Total Enrollment for the 2012-2013 School Year

School District	Total Fall Membership Enrollment	Non-resident Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership	Percent of Non-resident Open Enrolled Students in Total Enrollment
OPS	48,086	551	1.15%
Elkhorn	6,276	36	0.57%
DC West	675	50	7.41%
Millard	22,676	1,589	7.01%
Ralston	2,875	375	13.04%
Bennington	1,557	14	0.90%
Westside	5,985	866	14.47%
Bellevue	9,669	1,000	10.34%
Pap-LV	10,389	620	5.97%
Gretna	3,346	24	0.72%
Springfield	964	81	8.40%
Total	**112,498**	**5,206**	**4.63%**

- After three years of the Open Enrollment program, over 5,000 students are classified as Open Enrollment and are enrolled in a school outside their resident district. However, the proportion of total enrollment that number represents (4.63%) is relatively small.

- Millard has the greatest number of non-resident, open-enrolled students, but those students represent only 7.05% of its enrollment.

- At 14.42%, Westside has the largest proportion of non-resident Open Enrollment students, followed by Ralston and Bellevue.

Table III.7 shows the number of applications school districts received and approved for the 2013-2014 school year. School districts reported these data to the Learning Community in the September 1, 2013, Open Enrollment Report. The data apply only to applications, not enrollment. Enrollment data for 2013-14 will be included in the 2014 Annual Report. As described previously, some districts use the Open Enrollment process for transfers from one school to another within the same district, while other districts have different procedures for transfers within the district. Districts supplied both the number of applications received from students who resided outside their district boundaries and the number of resident students who used the Open Enrollment process as the means of requesting a within-district transfer.

Table III.7: 2013-14 Open Enrollment Resident and Non-Resident Applications Received and Approved by Districts

School District	Applications Received and Approved for 2013-14				
	Non-resident Applicants	Resident Applicants	Total Applicants	Total Approved	Percent Approved
OPS	345	221	566	458	80.92%
Elkhorn	109	12	121	23	19.01%
DC West	68	0	68	68	100.00%
Millard	828	46	874	728	83.30%
Ralston	351	0	351	346	98.58%
Bennington	24	0	24	3	12.50%
Westside	651	0	651	505	77.57%
Bellevue	313	0	313	273	87.22%
Pap-LV	522	20	542	447	82.47%
Gretna	19	0	19	10	52.63%
Springfield	62	0	62	62	100.00%
Total	**3,292**	**299**	**3,591**	**2,923**	**81.40%**

Approval is based solely on the availability of space at the student's grade level in one of the schools requested on the application. This year seven districts either did not have any resident student requests for transfer or they did not use the Open Enrollment process for the within-district transfer requests they received. Springfield Platteview and DC West, as in the previous year, approved 100% of the applications they received. Ralston, too, approved nearly all applications, while the rapidly growing districts approved few. The number of applications received and approved for 2013-2014 is similar to numbers reported for 2012-13 in Table III.4 (page 77).

Student Performance

Section IV – Student Performance

The Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests are the only common assessments administered in all schools in the Learning Community and the State and, therefore, the only consistent measures of student academic performance available for this report. All other tests, including nationally standardized norm-referenced tests, vary among the districts so comparative analyses and interpretations are not possible. In the 2012-2013 school year, the Reading and Mathematics assessments were administered in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11. Reading and Mathematics test results are included in this report. Performance on the assessments is described as a percent proficient (passing). This designation is based on passing scores, which are determined using established statistical standard setting methods.

Additional information about NeSA can be found on the NDE (Nebraska Department of Education) website at: http://www.education.ne.gov/index.html

- Additional Learning Community test results can be found at: http://reportcard.education.ne.gov/Default.aspx?AgencyID=00-9000-000

- Links to technical information about the tests can be found at: http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/NeSA_Reading.htm and http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/NeSA_Math.htm

Nebraska State Assessments

NeSA Reading and Mathematics are multiple-choice tests administered in a six-week window beginning in late March and ending in early May. The 2012-2013 school year was the fourth year of the Reading test, the third year for Mathematics.

Test results for all schools and school districts, as well as the Learning Community as a whole, are available to the public in the State of the Schools report published on the NDE website. Results for all schools and school districts are disaggregated by gender, race, FRL status and ELL.

This document provides test data analyses that are not included in the NDE State of the Schools Report and that may be relevant to the Learning Community goal of closing the achievement gap. Analyses related to the following questions are provided:

1. How does the proficiency rate in the Learning Community compare to the State?

2. How have proficiency rates in the Learning Community changed in the last three years?

3. What is the difference in the proficiency rate of students who do and do not qualify for FRL ("the performance gap") and how does the gap between the two groups in 2013 compare to past years?

4. How does the gap in the Learning Community compare to the State?

The data presented on the tables and graphs in this section of the report provide opportunity for multiple comparisons, but all comparisons should be made with caution. In some cases, the sizes of the groups being compared are quite different. It is also important to be aware that Learning Community students make up approximately 38% of the total enrollment in the State. When the performance of Learning Community students and all students in the State is compared, we are comparing a subgroup of the total population to the total population, which includes that subgroup (Learning Community students). If the results of Learning Community students were removed from the State groups, differences between State and Learning Community proficiency rates would be greater.

We should be particularly cautious about comparing the performance of Learning Community students who qualify for FRL with the performance of all students in the State who qualify for FRL. Although the State and Learning Community have similar proportions of students who qualify for FRL (43.79% in the State and 43.96% in the Learning Community), the students in the Learning Community FRL group and those in the State may be quite different. Certainly, most students who qualify for FRL are at a disadvantage, but the degree of disadvantage can vary greatly. There is a large difference in family income levels of students who are eligible for free lunch and those who are eligible for reduced-price lunch. The proportion of students, who qualify for *free* rather than reduced price, may be considerably different in the Learning Community and the State. In addition, the home and community environment of the two groups are also different. The Learning Community FRL group is composed almost totally of students living in urban areas, while the State group includes many rural students. Urban and rural students of poverty live in vastly different environments.

2013 State and Learning Community NeSA Reading Proficiency Rate Comparisons

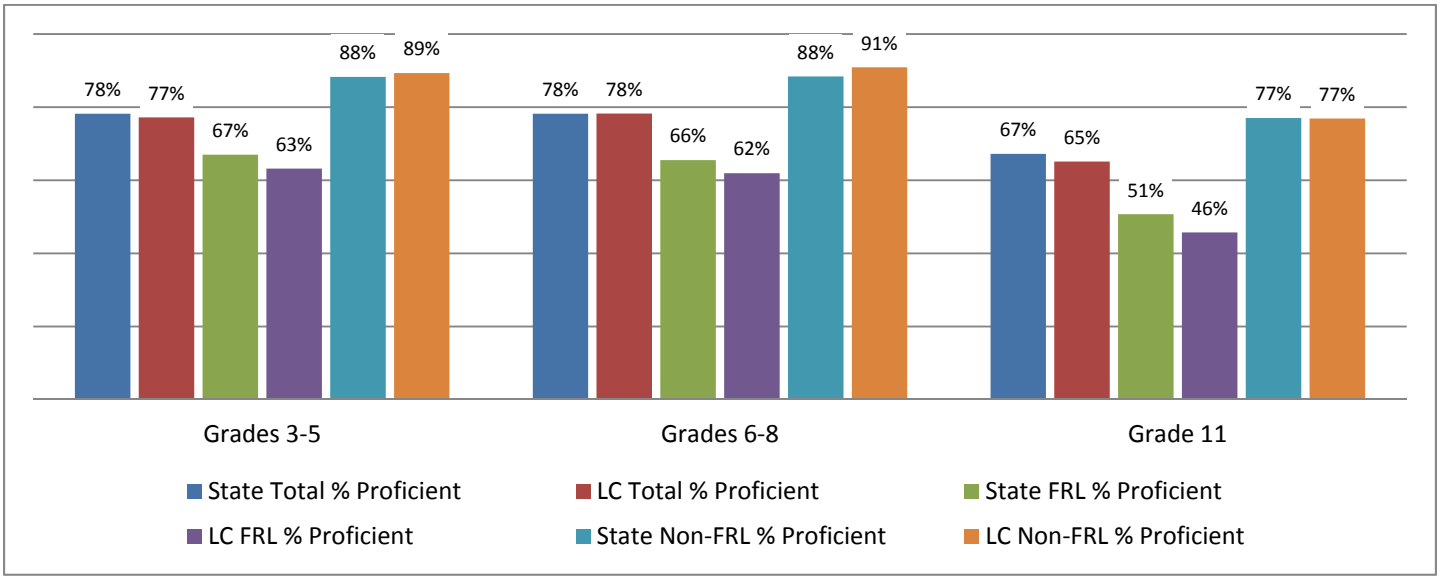
Table IV.1 (page 84) and Figure IV.1 (page 84) show the 2013 Reading Assessment proficiency rates for the State and the Learning Community. The percent proficient (percent passing) for all students, FRL, and Non-FRL students are presented for grades 3 through 5, 6 through 8, and grade 11.

Table IV.1: 2013 State and Learning Community NeSA Reading Percent Proficient

	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11
State Total Assessed	67,861	65,306	21,256
State Total % Proficient	78.24%	78.22%	67.24%
LC Total Assessed	26,960	25,147	7,991
LC Total % Proficient	77.20%	78.27%	65.11%
State FRL Assessed	32,033	29,106	7,902
State FRL % Proficient	66.99%	65.53%	50.70%
LC FRL Assessed	12,500	10,974	3,026
LC FRL % Proficient	63.20%	61.92%	45.74%
State Non-FRL Assessed	35,828	36,200	13,354
State Non-FRL % Proficient	88.29%	88.42%	77.03%
LC Non-FRL Assessed	14,460	14,173	4,965
LC Non-FRL % Proficient	89.32%	90.93%	76.92%

Figure IV.1 has three sets of bars, reporting grades 3-5, 6-8, and grade 11. In each grouping, the first two bars represent the proficiency rate for all students (Total) in the State and in the Learning Community. The middle two bars represent the performance of students who qualify for FRL, and the last two show the performance of students who do not qualify for FRL (Non-FRL).

Figure IV.1: 2013 State and Learning Community NeSA Reading Percent Proficient



The data presented in Table IV.1 and Figure IV.1 provide the opportunity for many comparisons between the State and Learning Community. Some of those comparisons follow:

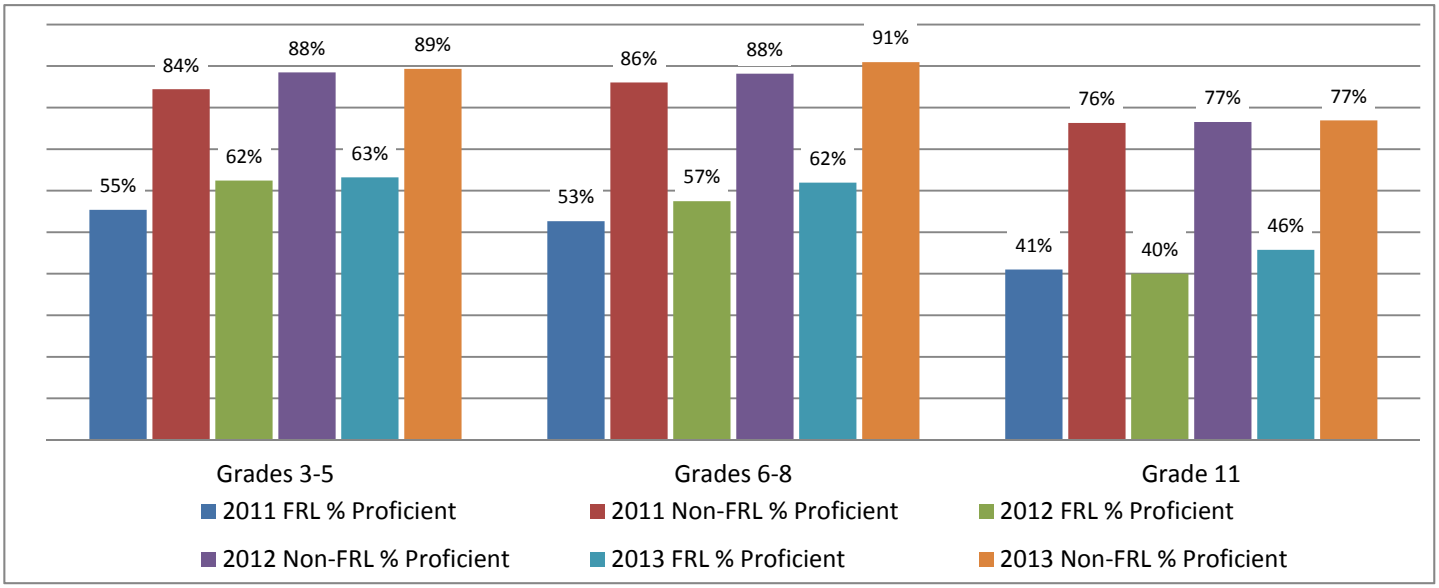
- The performance of all students in the State and the Learning Community is very similar, approximately 2% or less difference at each grade level grouping.

- Proficiency rates of students who qualify for FRL, in both the State and the Learning Community, are considerably lower than the performance of students who do not qualify for FRL, and are somewhat lower for the Learning Community than Statewide.
    - Learning Community proficiency rates for this group of students range from 45.7% in grade 11 to 63% in grades 3-5.
    - The State proficiency rates range from 51% in grade 11 to 67% in grades 3-5.
- Proficiency rates for the non-FRL group are 1% to 3% higher in the Learning Community than in the State in the elementary and middle grade groupings, and approximately the same in grade 11.

Learning Community NeSA Reading Proficiency Rates Compared Across Time

Figure IV.2 shows the proficiency rates in the Learning Community for the past three years. The first two bars for each grade grouping show the proficiency rates for FRL and non-FRL in 2011; the middle two show rates for 2012; and the last two are for 2013.

Figure IV.2 Learning Community FRL and Non-FRL NeSA Reading Proficiency Rates for 2011, 2012, and 2013



As illustrated by this graph, between 2011 and 2013, the proficiency rate increased in all three grade levels and in both the FRL and non-FRL groups. However, the increase was far greater at the elementary and middle levels than in grade 11.

- At the elementary and middle levels the increase between 2011 and 2013 in the non-FRL group was 5%.

- In the FRL groups at the elementary and middle level, the increase was approximately 8% and 9%, respectively. This indicates some closure in the performance differences between Non-FRL and FRL since the improvement was greater in the FRL group than in the Non-FRL group.

- In 11th grade, the FRL group's proficiency rate increased by 4.7%, but the non-FRL group increased by less than one percent (.63%)[9].

State and Learning Community Three-Year FRL and Non-FRL Reading Proficiency Comparisons: "The Performance Gap"

The primary goal of the Learning Community is to improve the academic performance of its students, particularly those who live in poverty (defined as FRL eligibility in this report). As the tables and graphs have shown, far fewer students in the FRL groups, than in the non-FRL groups demonstrate proficiency on the NeSA Reading test. This difference is referred to as the "performance gap." The increase in proficiency rates across years shown in Figure IV.2 demonstrates that the FRL gains were proportionately greater than the non-FRL. This results in a narrowing of the gap between the two groups. However, the gap in performance between the two groups is still large. Table IV.2 shows three years of State and the Learning Community proficiency rates for students who qualify for FRL and those who do not (Non-FRL). The shaded rows in the table show the difference ("performance gap") in the proficiency rate of the two groups (Non-FRL% minus FRL %) for the State and the Learning Community.

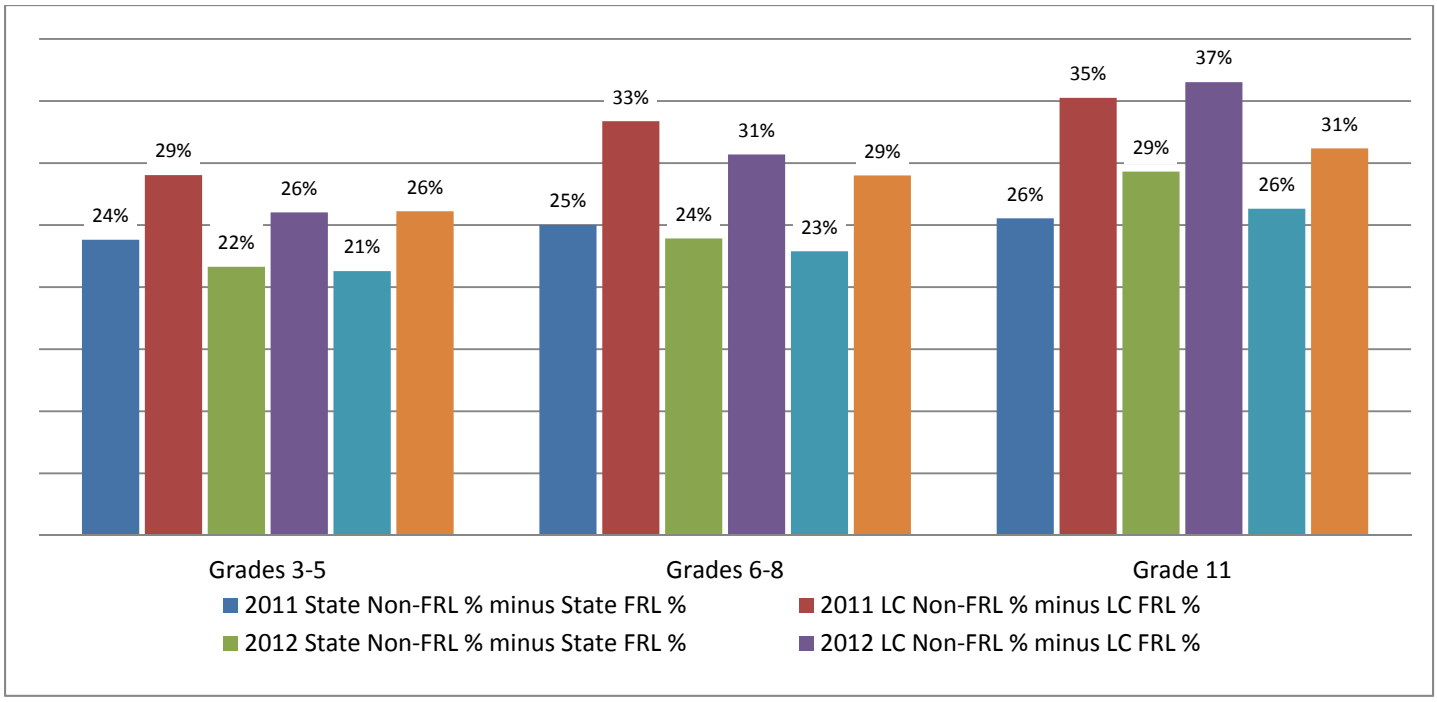
Table IV.2: State and Learning Community 2011, 2012, and 2013 NeSA Reading Percent Difference Between FRL and Non-FRL Proficiency Rates: "The Performance Gap"

	2011			2012			2013		
	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11
State FRL % Proficient	59.45%	59.06%	50.77%	65.03%	61.70%	46.16%	66.99%	65.53%	50.70%
State Non-FRL % Proficient	83.27%	84.07%	76.32%	86.68%	85.63%	75.47%	88.29%	88.42%	77.03%
State Non-FRL % minus State FRL %	23.82%	25.01%	25.55%	21.65%	23.93%	29.31%	21.29%	22.89%	26.33%
LC FRL % Proficient	55.38%	52.66%	41.03%	62.43%	57.46%	40.01%	63.20%	61.92%	45.74%
LC Non-FRL % Proficient	84.41%	86.02%	76.29%	88.45%	88.15%	76.53%	89.32%	90.93%	76.92%
LC Non-FRL % minus LC FRL %	29.03%	33.37%	35.26%	26.02%	30.69%	36.52%	26.12%	29.01%	31.18%

[9] Percentages in the graphs are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Figure IV.3 presents these differences graphically. The first and second bars in each group represent the State and Learning Community "performance gap" in 2011. The middle two bars in each grouping show the gap in 2012, and the last two bars are for 2013.

Figure IV.3: State and Learning Community 2011, 2012, and 2013 NeSA Reading Percent Difference Between FRL and Non-FRL Proficiency Rates: "The Performance Gap"



The following are some observations from Table IV.2 (page 86) and Figure IV.3.

- In the Learning Community the gaps in 2013 range from a low of approximately 26% in the State grade 3-5 group to a high of approximately 31% in the Learning Community 11th grade.

- Across the three years, change in the gap in the Learning Community follows the same pattern as the State. In most cases the gap has consistently closed. However, at each grade level, the gap is somewhat wider in the Learning Community than in the State.

- In grade 11, in both the State and the Learning Community, there was an increase in the size of the gap between 2011 and 2012; however, between 2011 and 2013 the 11th grade gap was reduced by approximately 4% in the Learning Community, while in the State remained approximately the same.
- Although the proficiency rates of students who qualify for FRL are still low, the Learning Community performance gaps closed by approximately 3 to 4 percent at each grade level between 2011 and 2013.

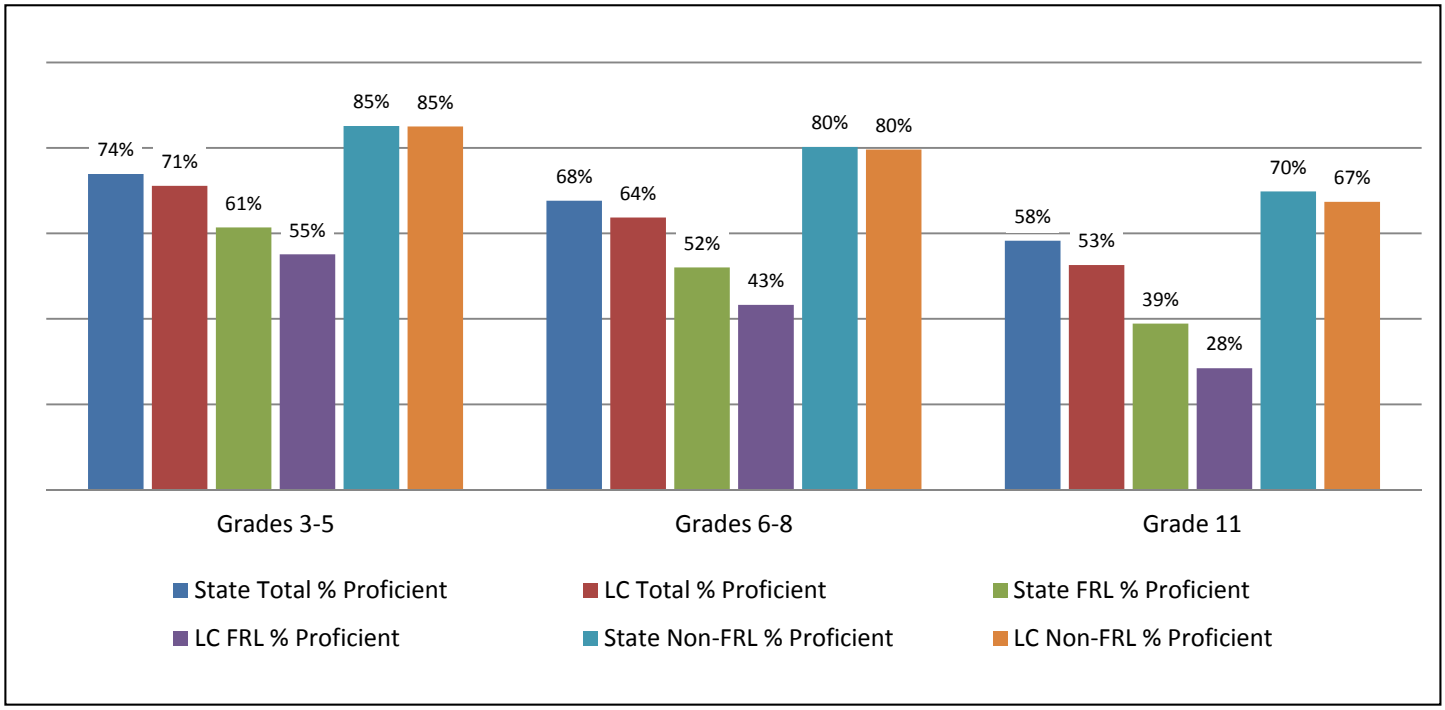
2013 State and Learning Community NeSA Mathematics Proficiency Rate Comparisons

Tables IV.3 and Figure IV.4 show Mathematics proficiency rates for the State and the Learning Community. The percent proficient for all students, FRL, and Non-FRL, are presented in the same manner as the Reading proficiency rates were presented in previous tables and graphs.

Table IV.3: 2013 State and Learning Community NeSA Mathematics Percent Proficient

	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11
State Total Assessed	68,015	65,448	21,273
State Total % Proficient	73.92%	67.64%	58.30%
LC Total Assessed	27,033	25,222	8,000
LC Total % Proficient	71.12%	63.71%	52.59%
State FRL Assessed	32,178	29,230	7,923
State FRL % Proficient	61.41%	52.02%	38.90%
LC FRL Assessed	12,567	11,031	3,041
LC FRL % Proficient	55.12%	43.28%	28.44%
State Non-FRL Assessed	35,837	36,218	13,350
State Non-FRL % Proficient	85.15%	80.24%	69.82%
LC Non-FRL Assessed	12,299	11,294	3,342
LC Non-FRL % Proficient	85.04%	79.64%	67.39%

Figure IV.4: 2013 State and Learning Community NeSA Mathematics Percent Proficient



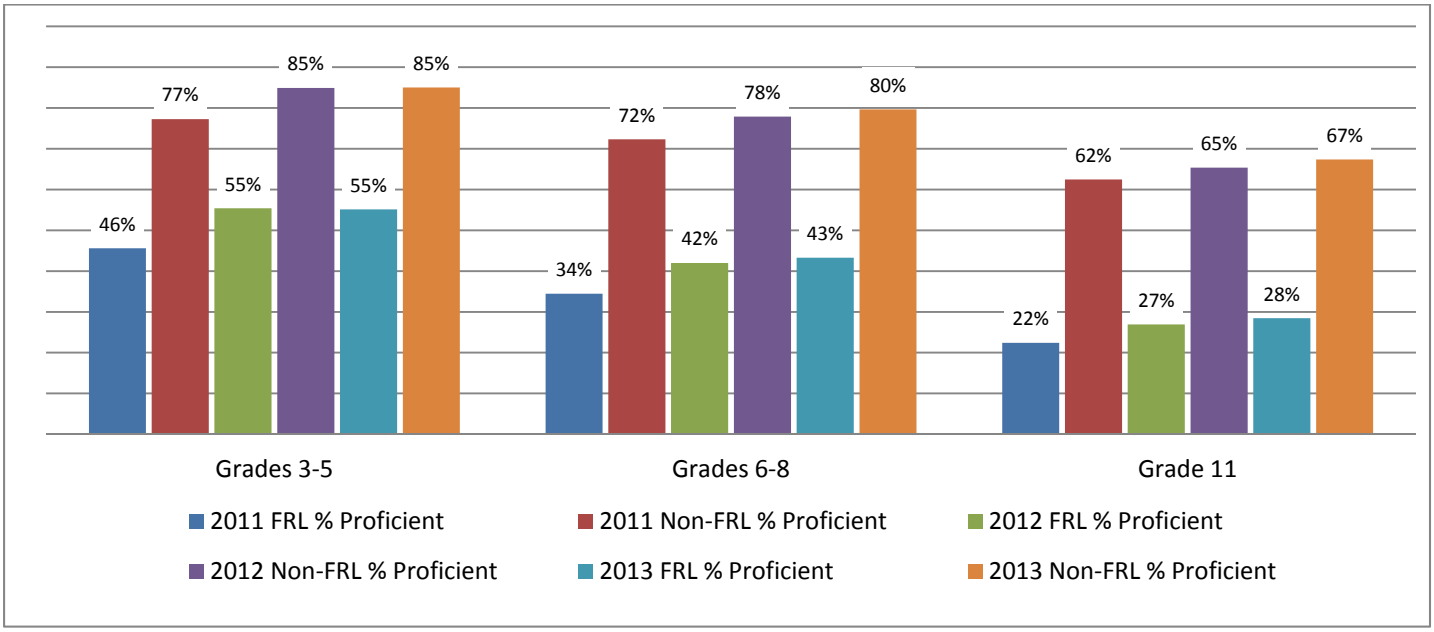
The data in the Mathematics tables and graphs, provide the opportunity for many comparisons– between FRL and Non-FRL, between the State and the Learning Community, and between Mathematics and Reading results. Descriptions of some of those comparisons follow:

- In general, proficiency rates are considerably lower in Mathematics than in Reading both statewide and in the Learning Community. Only the non-FRL groups, at the elementary and middle grades, have proficiency rates of 80% or more.
- Proficiency rates of the Learning Community and State are approximately equal in the non-FRL groups, except in grade 11 where there is a 3% difference.
- Differences between the State and Learning Community FRL groups are greater and increase as the grade level goes up – 6% in the 3-5 group, 9% in the middle group and 11% in grade 11.
- Proficiency rates of all groups, in the State and Learning Community, decline as the grade levels go up. The decline is particularly dramatic in the FRL group.
    - In the Learning Community, the proficiency rate goes from a high of 55% in grade 3 through 5, to a low of 28% in grade 11, a 27% decline.
    - In the State, in the same grades, the rate declines from 61% to 39%, a decline of 22%.
- The proficiency of the non-FRL group is also relatively low in grade 11, 67% for the Learning Community and 70% for the State.
    - In the Learning Community, this is 10% lower than the Reading proficiency rate.
    - In the Learning Community, the proficiency rate of the non-FRL group is 18% lower in grade 11 than in the 3-5 group.
    - In the State, the difference between the performance of the grade 3-5 group and 11th grade is 15%.

Learning Community NeSA Mathematics Proficiency Rates Compared Across Time

Figure IV.5 (page 90) shows the proficiency rates in the Learning Community across years. The first two bars for each grade grouping show the proficiency rates for FRL and non-FRL in 2011; the middle two, in 2012; and the last two, in 2013.

Figure IV.5 Learning Community FRL and Non-FRL Mathematics Proficiency Rates for 2011, 2012, and 2013



- The Mathematics proficiency rate increased between 2011 and 2013 in all three grade levels in both the FRL and non-FRL groups. Just as in Reading, the increases were greater in the elementary and middle levels than in 11th grade and somewhat greater in the FRL group than in the Non-FRL group.
    - In both the elementary and middle grades, the FRL groups' proficiency increased by 9% and non-FRL by 8%.
    - In 11th grade, FRL increased by 6% and non-FRL by 5%.
- Increases in the percent proficient were greater between the first two years (2010 to 2011) than between 2012 and 2013.
    - In the grade 3-5 FRL group, proficiency increased by 9% the first year, but stayed the same in 2013.
    - In grades 6-8, FRL proficiency increased by 8% between 2011 and 2012, but only 1% from 2012 to 2013.
    - Similarly, in grade 11, the increase was approximately 5% the first year and 1% in 2013.

Three-Year FRL and Non-FRL Mathematics Proficiency Comparisons: "The Performance Gap"

In Mathematics, as in Reading, the percentage of students passing the test increased in both the FRL and non-FRL groups, and gains of the FRL groups were proportionately greater than the Non-FRL groups. As in Reading, this proportionately greater improvement in the FRL group results in a narrowing of the gap between the two groups, although less so than in Reading.

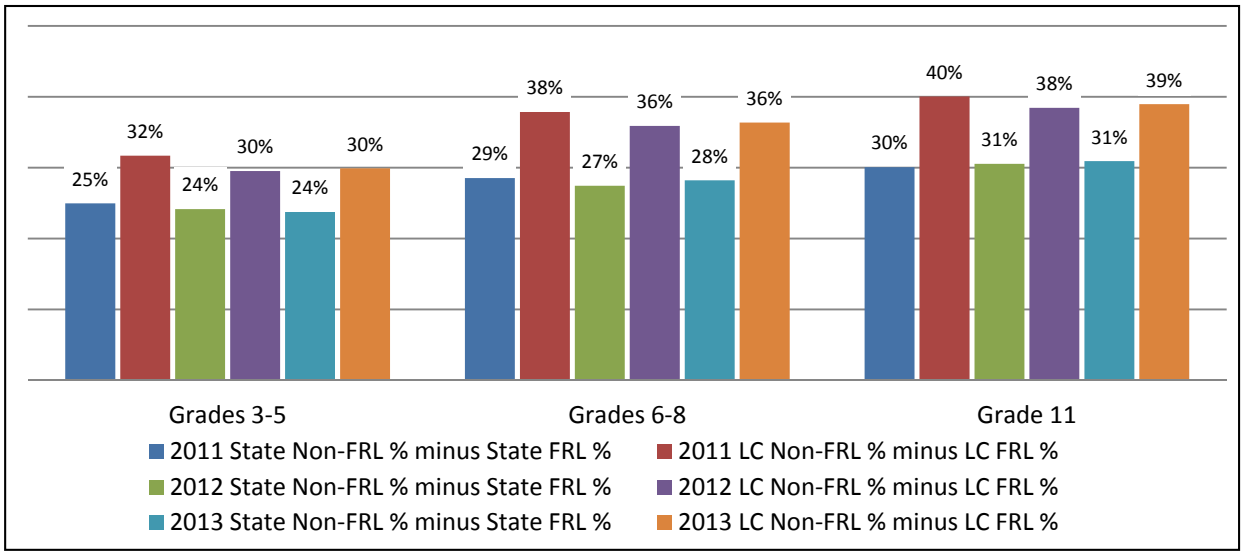
Tables IV.4 shows three years of State and the Learning Community proficiency rates for students who qualify for FRL and those who do not (Non-FRL). The shaded rows in the table show the difference ("performance gap") in the proficiency rate of the two groups (Non-FRL% proficient minus FRL% proficient) for the State and the Learning Community.

Table IV.4: State and Learning Community 2011, 2012, and 2013 NeSA Mathematics Percent Difference Between FRL and Non-FRL Proficiency Rates: "The Performance Gap"

	2011			2012			2013		
	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 11
State FRL % Proficient	53.73%	45.67%	34.39%	60.00%	50.42%	36.47%	61.41%	52.02%	38.90%
State Non-FRL % Proficient	78.69%	74.20%	64.47%	84.16%	77.87%	67.02%	85.15%	80.24%	69.82%
State Non-FRL % minus State FRL %	24.96%	28.54%	30.08%	24.16%	27.45%	30.55%	23.75%	28.22%	30.92%
LC FRL % Proficient	45.59%	34.45%	22.42%	55.41%	41.97%	26.94%	55.12%	43.28%	28.44%
LC Non-FRL % Proficient	77.28%	72.30%	62.47%	84.93%	77.87%	65.39%	85.04%	79.64%	67.39%
LC Non-FRL % minus LC FRL %	31.69%	37.85%	40.05%	29.52%	35.90%	38.45%	29.92%	36.36%	38.95%

The differences in proficiency rates are graphically displayed in Figure IV.6 (page 92). The first and second bars in each group represent the State and Learning Community "performance gap" in 2011. The middle two bars in each grouping show the gap in 2012, and the last two bars are for 2013.

Figure IV.6: State and Learning Community 2011, 2012, and 2013 NeSA Mathematics Percent Difference Between FRL and Non-FRL Proficiency Rates: “The Performance Gap”



The following are some observations from Table IV.4 (page 91) and Figure IV.6:

- The performance gaps in Mathematics are somewhat greater than in Reading. In the Learning Community the difference in the 2013 proficiency rates of FRL-eligible students and those who are not eligible for FRL ranges from approximately 30% in the elementary grades to 39% in grade 11.

- The gap between the performance of the non-FRL and FRL groups in Mathematics, at each of the three grade levels, has closed less than 2% (Table IV.4 page 91) over the three years of testing.

- The magnitude of the gap increases as grade levels go up. In 2013, the gap in the Learning Community is approximately 6% greater in the middle level than in the elementary level, and 3% greater in 11th grade than in the middle grades.

- The performance gaps in the Learning Community are 6 to 8 percent greater than in the State. However, there has been slightly less improvement in the magnitude of the gap in the State than in the Learning Community.

Summary of NeSA Performance

In summary, the four questions raised at the beginning of this section of the report are addressed below:

1. How does the proficiency rate in the Learning Community compare to the State?
    - In the Non-FRL groups, proficiency rates in both Reading and Mathematics are similar in the State and Learning Community, but the proficiency rate of students who qualify for FRL is somewhat higher Statewide.
    - In 11th grade, the Mathematics proficiency rates in both the State and the Learning Community are low, but this is particularly true of the FRL group. In the Learning Community, only 28% of that group of students were proficient and in the State 39% were proficient.

2. How have proficiency rates in the Learning Community changed in the last three years?
    - In both Reading and Math, FRL and Non-FRL groups have consistently increased in the elementary and middle grades.
    - In 11th grade, proficiency rates for both groups increased in Math.
    - In 11th grade Reading, the proficiency rate of the FRL group increased, but it has not changed in the Non-FRL group. In that group it ranged from slightly over 76% in 2011 to slightly under 77% in 2013.

3. What is the difference in the proficiency rate of students who do and do not qualify for FRL ("the performance gap") and how does the gap between the two groups in 2013 compare to past years?
    - In both the State and the Learning Community, the gap between FRL and Non-FRL groups remains large. In the Learning Community, differences between the two groups range from 26% in grade 3-5 Reading to 39% in 11th grade Math.
    - The gaps are greater in the 11th grade and grades 6 through 8 than in the elementary grades, and the gaps are somewhat larger in Mathematics than in Reading.
    - Although the change was not great, in all grades on both tests, the gaps in the proficiency rates of Learning Community students, who qualify for FRL and those who do not, decreased between 2011 and 2013.

4. How does the gap in the Learning Community compare to the State, as a whole?
    - The gaps are consistently lower in the State than in the Learning Community, but in the State the gaps have not closed to the degree they have in the Learning Community. In the State there has been virtually no change in the gap in grades 6 - 8 Math, 11th grade Math, and 11th grade Reading, while in the Learning Community the gap at all grade levels in both Reading and Math has decreased.

Comparing Performance of Resident and Open Enrollment Students

The overarching goal of the Learning Community is closing the achievement gap. The hope is that Open Enrollment, by creating a more balanced socioeconomic school environment, will contribute to that goal. As stated throughout this report, a school's diversity can be increased, through Open Enrollment, in two ways:

1) Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL enroll in a school with a FRL percentage less than the Learning Community, as a whole (approximately 44%).
2) Open Enrollment students who do not qualify for FRL (Non-FRL) enroll in a school with a FRL percentage greater than that of the Learning Community.

The performance comparisons of these two groups of Open Enrollment students with students who are not open-enrolled (resident students) is highly relevant to the question of whether Open Enrollment is associated with student achievement. However, there are significant limitations in making these comparisons.

For the second year, we examined the differences in the NeSA Reading and Mathematics performance of resident[10] and Open Enrollment students in grades 3 through 8, analyzing differences associated with FRL status and the percentage of FRL-qualifying students in the school. The question of whether Open Enrollment has a direct effect on the performance of any group of students in either direction cannot be answered by these data. There are a multitude of variables that cannot be controlled or eliminated. For example, families who choose to open-enroll, particularly those who transfer from a high FRL school to a school with a relatively low percentage of FRL, may have different home environments and be highly motivated to seek out the best possible educational environment.

The proficiency rates shown in the tables and graphs that follow are based on an entire population of students who took the test, rather than a sample, so statistical tests of significance are not necessary. However, the observed differences are true only for this particular administration of the tests. We cannot say whether the same differences will be present next year or even on another administration of the tests at any point in time. In addition, the proficiency percentages are likely to be less stable; that is, they are more likely to change from year to year because of the relatively low number of students in Open Enrollment groups. The number of non-FRL, open-enrolled students in schools with more than 44% FRL is particularly small (116 in grades 3, 4, and 5 and 76 in grades 6, 7, and 8). Comparisons including these groups must be made with extreme caution. What appears to be a relatively large difference in the proficiency rate of this group and another group is a result of the performance of very few students.

[10] The resident group includes all students in the NDE Fall Membership count who were not designated by Learning Community School Districts as Open Enrollment, including Option Enrollment students.

In addition, we do not know whether the proficiency percentages for Open Enrollment students represent a change in their performance from past years. The performance of the students in the Open Enrollment groups may not differ from their performance in past years in the resident school they came from.

It is also important to remember that the Open Enrollment students in these groups had all been in their new schools for less than three years when the tests were administered. Approximately half had been in their new schools for just seven to eight months. It is unlikely that such a short time in a new school would greatly affect performance on the tests. Some have had several years of schooling in their previous schools that would contribute to their performance.

The data included in the tables that follow were provided by the Nebraska Department of Education. They show the proficiency rates on the NeSA Reading and Mathematics assessments. Each table displays the performance of eight groups of students in schools with FRL concentrations greater and less than the Learning Community total (44%). Another caution is related to this dichotomous grouping of schools by FRL concentration. Within the group of schools that has less than 44% FRL, there is obviously a wide range of FRL concentration, from less than 10% to 43.96% (the precise Learning Community total, which was used to separate the two groups of schools). Likewise, the range is broad in the group of high concentration FRL schools. There are a number of schools in each group in the middle range, a little less or a little more than 43.96%, whose percentages of FRL students differ very little.

NeSA Proficiency Rate Group Comparisons

Tables IV.5, IV.6, IV.7, and IV.8 (page 96) show the proficiency rates on the 2013 NeSA Reading and Mathematics assessments and number of students in each of eight classifications. The cells in the tables divide all students in grades 3-5 and grades 6-8 into groups designated as FRL or Non-FRL, open-enrolled or resident, and enrolled in low FRL or high FRL schools (< 44% or > 44%).

Eight groups of students, in two grade level groupings, on two assessments, present a multitude of possible comparisons. The comparisons most relevant to Open Enrollment policies are those comparing the Open Enrollment groups that have the potential to increase economic diversity (FRL students enrolled in schools with lower percentages of FRL and Non-FRL students in schools with higher percentages of FRL) to their resident counterparts. These two groups are shaded in blue and green in the tables. Because the Open Enrollment students' resident school might have either a relatively high or low percentage of FRL, comparisons are made between the Open Enrollment groups and residents in both high and low FRL schools (bottom four cells in each table).

Questions to be addressed are:

- How do the proficiency rates of Open Enrollment, FRL-eligible students in schools with < 44% FRL compare to resident students' proficiency rates?

- How do the proficiency rates of Open Enrollment, Non-FRL students in schools with > 44% FRL compare to resident students' proficiency rates?

Table IV.5: Grades 3-5 Open Enrollment and Resident 2013 NeSA Reading Proficiency Rates

	FRL Students		Non FRL Students	
	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%
Open Enrollment Students	75.95% N = 237	77.42% N = 248	89.45% N = 379	79.31% N = 116
Resident Students	76.17% N = 2,430	59.23% N = 9,585	90.82% N = 10,926	84.27% N = 3,039

Table IV.6: Grades 3-5 Open Enrollment and Resident 2013 NeSA Mathematics Proficiency Rates

	FRL Students		Non FRL Students	
	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%
Open Enrollment Students	71.19% N = 236	66.53% N = 248	81.53% N = 379	72.41% N = 116
Resident Students	67.90% N = 2,436	51.21% N = 9,647	87.21% N = 10,925	78.07% N = 3,046

Table IV.7: Grades 6-8 Open Enrollment and Resident 2013 NeSA Reading Proficiency Rates

	FRL Students		Non FRL Students	
	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%
Open Enrollment Students	80.31% N = 320	71.04% N = 183	87.53% N = 433	89.47% N = 76
Resident Students	79.07% N = 2,613	55.26% N = 7,858	93.06% N = 10,887	83.21% N = 2,775

Table IV.8: Grades 6-8 Open Enrollment and Resident 2013 NeSA Mathematics Proficiency Rates

	FRL Students		Non FRL Students	
	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%	Schools < 44%	Schools > 44%
Open Enrollment Students	67.08% N = 319	51.37% N = 183	77.01% N = 435	73.68% N = 76
Resident Students	62.11% N = 2,613	35.91% N = 7,916	83.10% N = 10,897	66.45% N = 2,781

Open Enrollment, FRL-eligible students in schools with < 44% FRL compared to resident students' proficiency rates:

- As to be expected, in all grades, in both Reading and Mathematics, open enrolled groups' proficiency rates were dramatically higher than residents in high FRL schools (> 44%). This was also true in 2012.
- In Mathematics, the open enrolled students' proficiency rates were also slightly higher than resident students in *low* FRL schools, but differences were small and were not consistent with last year's results.
- In Reading, the open enrolled groups' performance was about the same as resident students attending low FRL schools (< 44%).

Open Enrollment, Non-FRL students in schools with > 44% FRL compared to resident students' proficiency rates:

- In all cases (both grade groups on both tests), the proficiency rate of Open Enrollment Non-FRL students in schools with a higher percentage of FRL students (> 44%) are lower than Non-FRL resident students in low FRL schools (< 44%). This is consistent with last year's results.
- In grades 3-5 the proficiency rate of Open Enrollment Non-FRL students are also lower than Non-FRL resident students. This, too, is consistent with last year's results.
- In grades 6-8, this Open Enrollment group (Non-FRL in high FRL schools) was higher than the resident group in the high FRL schools. Again this was consistent with last year's results.

The 2012 Annual Report concluded with the following statement:

> "It will be important to continue to make comparisons among these groups, monitoring trends across years. If differences in the same directions continue, we can become more confident that true differences exist."

In some comparisons, the pattern of differences in the proficiency rates among the eight groups in 2013 followed the same pattern as last year. However, as stated in the beginning of this section, we must be cautious in drawing conclusions. Many extraneous variables come into play. The low number of students in some groups makes findings less reliable; and the analysis itself, dividing the schools into just two groups (above and below 44% FRL) is artificial. With those cautions in mind, from two years of data, two patterns that may be relevant to Open Enrollment policy were found:

FRL Open Enrollment students in schools with < 44% FRL: At both grade levels, in

both Reading and Mathematics, performance (proficiency rates) of this group was higher than, or equal to, resident students in both low *and* high FRL schools.

Non-FRL Open Enrollment students in schools with > 44% FRL: At both grade levels, in both Reading and Mathematics, proficiency rates of this group were lower than resident student in low FRL schools, and at the elementary level (3-5), they were lower than resident students in both low *and* high FRL schools.

It is important to continue to make comparison among the groups and, as the number of Open Enrollment students increases, it may be possible to apply better methods of analysis that address the problems associated with grouping schools into just two categories.

However, even then, if consistent patterns of difference emerge, we cannot attribute the *cause* of the differences to Open Enrollment or any other single variable. The reasons that one group of students performs better than another on any assessment are extremely complex with a multitude of variables affecting student performance. The most we will be able to conclude, even in the future, is that Open Enrollment is, or is not, correlated with student performance on standardized tests, such as NeSA.