learning community OF DOUGLAS AND SARPY COUNTIES

2015–2016
EVALUATION REPORT

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

Learning Community Coordinating Council

Subcouncil 1
Jeanne Anderson
Nancy Jacobson
Matthew Wickham

Subcouncil 2
Kris Carter
Roger Holthaus
Yolanda Williams

Subcouncil 3
Lorraine Chang
Jack Heidel
Beth Morrissette

Subcouncil 4
Amy Friedman
Allen Hager
Mike Pate

Subcouncil 5
D. Paul Hartnett
Tonya Ward
Nina Wolford

Subcouncil 6
Mike Avery
Kyle Fisher
Jeremy Kinsey
Blaine McCulloh

Lorraine Chang
Chair, Learning Community Coordinating Council

Mike Avery
Vice Chair, Learning Community Coordinating Council

Learning Community Staff

David J. Patton
Chief Executive Officer

Patti Benzel
Council Operations Manager

Paula Erlewine
Executive Assistant

Renee Franklin
Executive Director, Elementary Learning Centers

David Moon
Finance Director

Jamalia Parker
Director of Family Engagement Services

Data and Evaluation Consultants
Dr. Barb Jackson and Dr. Jolene Johnson – Section I
Dr. Christine Maxwell – Section II
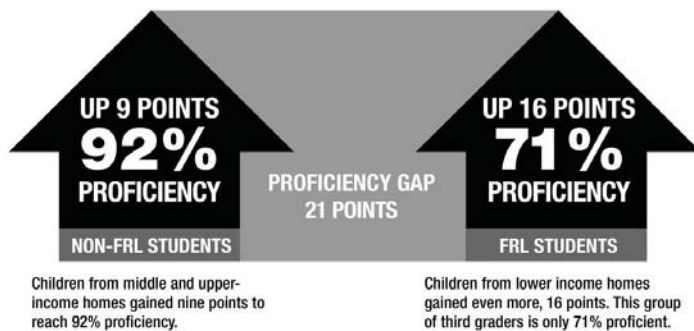David Moon – Section III and IV

Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to share this Annual Evaluation of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, the only political subdivision in the State of Nebraska focused on the educational needs of children in poverty. If you are just becoming familiar with our mission, I too look at this effort with fresh eyes since becoming chief executive office July 1. As an educator with experience in large and small school districts, I am pleased to share strong evidence that a systematic approach is working.

The obstacles to learning that confront children and families in poverty statewide are many, but these are promising times in the Learning Community. Our school district and community partnerships thrive in a culture of continuous improvement. Together, we have created a collaborative environment that allows us to do more and do better for children.

IMPROVING PROFICIENCY

Our school districts have made great progress improving student achievement. Over a five year period, the number of children in poverty continues to grow, creating new demands in our classrooms. This proficiency snapshot of Learning Community third graders from 2010 to 2016 illustrates our challenge.

UP 9 POINTS
92% PROFICIENCY
NON-FRL STUDENTS

PROFICIENCY GAP 21 POINTS

UP 16 POINTS
71% PROFICIENCY
FRL STUDENTS

Children from middle and upper-income homes gained nine points to reach 92% proficiency.

Children from lower income homes gained even more, 16 points. This group of third graders is only 71% proficient.

The 21-point difference between these two groups of children is the proficiency gap. Our purpose is to identify the best research-based answers to accelerate progress and then demonstrate success within our school communities. When a third of our children in poverty are not reading at a basic level in third grade, *early intervention is critical.*

Our new and innovative programs have a common-sense edge that comes from parents who want something better for their children. Effective parenting is a powerful factor in a child's academic success and central to our two-generation approach.

MEASURING PROGRESS

The Learning Community is aiming for the big gains that children need. Independent and rigorous program evaluations summarized below validate strong progress.

Learning Community Center of North Omaha *Early Childhood |Family Engagement*	Exceeding Expectations	Research benchmark; National goal, State standards
Learning Community Center of South Omaha *Family Learning*	Exceeding Expectations	State Standards, recognized rating scales
Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan	Progressing	Evaluation, Jan. 2017
District Pilot Programs		Local district standards
Instructional Coaching	Progressing	
Jumpstart to Kindergarten	Progressing	
Extended Learning	Meeting Expectations	

Our nationally recognized Family Learning program, based in the **Learning Community Center of South Omaha**, builds on family strengths. Our first group of students to reach grade three surpassed average proficiency within their local school district and is close to the statewide proficiency level for all children. We are encouraged to see the achievement gap shrink for this group of children.

The childhood poverty rate around **our Learning Community Center of North Omaha** is more than double the national average, so our work is complex. Our intensive early childhood teaching teams are hitting the mark for high quality. As it completes its first year, our family engagement program is also exceeding expectations. Our centers are further enhanced by community partners generously sharing an astounding level of donated expertise. This is the strength of the Omaha community at work. It is a tremendous asset.

The **Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan** successfully unifies all eleven school districts with a level of collaboration unheard of nationwide. With guidance from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, the program is already working well with families and demonstrating significant impact.   In the year ahead, educators across the Learning Community will continue to gain from expert professional development. We all need greater understanding of the social, emotional and cognitive development that is foundational to a child's academic success. We expect more detailed evaluation data the end of January.

COLLABORATING FOR COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT
Later this year, the Learning Community looks forward to sharing our first Community Achievement Plan, an element of LB 1067. This three-year collaborative approach strives to improve student achievement and learning opportunities across all eleven school districts. Our superintendents, school districts, ESU and community partners have worked closely with the Nebraska Department of Education to align our visions. The Community Achievement Plan is on a path to meet the needs of our students today and in the future.

In this time of economic challenge, we see firsthand how extreme poverty impacts education. The crisis facing children and families in poverty is nationwide but the answers must come from us. We appreciate your support as the Learning Community and its partners step up to the challenge.

Sincerely,

David Patton
CEO, Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

Table of Contents

Introduction

Learning Community Mission

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

The primary goal of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties is to invest in students and families to ensure that students receive high quality education and families obtain the necessary supports for their students to succeed in school. This is achieved by building and implementing programs that are proven to change students and families' lives. This year the Learning Community has invested in four primary programs: Learning Community Center of North Omaha/Early Childhood and Family Engagement, Learning Community Center of South Omaha/Family Learning, school district pilot programs, and the Superintendent's plan. This report will describe the programs and summarize the evaluation findings.

RATIONALE

The Learning Community strategically chose and implemented strategies that were built on research. These strategies are based on one or more of the following principals: 1) students benefit from high quality classrooms, 2) reflective coaching adds value to the classroom, 3) family engagement is critical for a child's success in school; and 4) students' early childhood outcomes predict later success.

Need for quality classrooms. Quality early childhood programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term, positive academic performance (Burchinal, et al., 2010; Barnett, 2008). Classroom settings themselves are associated with both positive and negative effects on young students' motivation (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Although the relationship between classroom environment and motivation is complex, current research suggests that, "…students in classrooms characterized by minimal pressure to perform, ample child choice in activities, encouragement of collaboration, and more nurturing teacher-child interactions show more engagement when working on achievement tasks" (Stipek et al., 1995; 1998 as cited by Shonkoff & Phillips, pg. 158, 2000).

Coaching adds value to the classroom. Coaching teachers in instructional practices is proving to be an effective and feasible professional development method in improving teacher instruction. Coaching methods that combine the elements of modeling, observation and direct feedback have been found to increase implementation of proactive strategies, particularly in regards to classroom management (Reinke et al., 2014, Kamps et al., 2015). The coaching relationship continues to be paramount in instructional coaching as research indicates that the most effective coaching models are those adapted to each individual's needs and situations (Bradshaw et al., 2013). The differentiation and individualization of coaching is effective for both new and veteran teachers alike (Reddy et al., 2013).

Family engagement with their child's school is critical for students' success. Family engagement with their children and their schools is a key element for student school success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Partnerships between home and school are especially important for children who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Jeynes, 2005). Parent involvement positively influences academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005), as well as social emotional competence (Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002).

Preschool child outcomes predict later school success. School readiness is an essential concern for students entering the educational system. Preparation to perform in an educational setting is a significant benefit for students, especially those who are from diverse backgrounds, with a greater number of risk factors. These students typically have poorer school performance compared to their economically advantaged counterparts (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Students who have limited vocabularies at a very young age are likely to have more difficulty increasing their vocabulary to a level similar to those whose vocabulary is greater to start (Hart & Risley, 1995).Young children between birth and age five make rapid developmental progress, yet are also susceptible to challenges which may negatively impact development. Although the mechanisms involved in this delicate interplay are complex, it is clear that development can be positively impacted when attention is focused on areas of concern at an early age (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Students enrolled earlier and for a longer duration demonstrate better short and long-term results (Barnett, 2008).

EVALUATION

A comprehensive evaluation process using a Utilization-Focused evaluation design (Patton, 2012) was conducted to monitor the implementation of the Learning Community programs and assess progress towards identified program outcomes. Data was shared throughout the year to support program improvement.

Based upon the evaluation plan, the evaluation employed multiple methods to describe and measure the quality of implementation, the nature of programming, and to report outcomes demonstrated by the programs funded by the Learning Community (LC). The evaluation report is structured to report in five areas: Implementation Strategies, Child and Family Demographics, Quality Instructional Practices, Child and Family Outcomes and Community Practices and Use of Data. The findings will reflect the collective experiences of the child and family through participation in the program as well as other factors (e.g., school district efforts, other community services and family support). The overarching evaluation questions were:

Implementation: What was the nature of the implementation strategies? Was there variation in implementation and if so, what factors contributed?

Demographics*:* Who accessed and participated in the program?

Quality Practices: To what extent did instructional practices and/or professional development improve classroom practices?

Child and Family Outcomes*:* What were the outcomes related to academic achievement? Did family parenting skills improve? To what extent are parents engaged in their child's learning? Did parent's relationship with their child improve?

Community Practices and Use of Data: How did programs use their data? What changes occurred as a result of this continuous improvement process?

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

How do you know if a strategy is making a difference?

The answer to this question can be found by reviewing both the quantitative and qualitative data that are summarized in this report. Typically in this report the quantitative data will include scores between two groups (e.g., students who are English Language Learners compared to students whose native language is English) or scores of a group over time (e.g., students' fall language compared to their spring language). Statistical analyses will provide information to determine if there were significant changes in the outcomes (p value) and if those significant values were meaningful (d value or effect size). The effect size is the most helpful in determining "how well did the intervention work" (Coe, 2002). Qualitative data will provide more detailed insight to how the program is working and outcomes from key informants' perspectives.

What have we learned about interpreting effect sizes?

Effect size can be affected by factors related to measurement error and duration of intervention. Both the type of assessment and the age of the child are critical factors that may contribute to measurement error.   The following are examples of potential sources of measurement error that reduce the magnitude of the standardized effect size:

- **The age of the child influences the measurement error**. The infant measures often contain more measurement error because they have a smaller range of skills, which are more often influenced by external factors (e.g., fatigue) (Neisser, 1996).
- **Type of assessments influence measurement error**. It has been found that observations, surveys, and rating scales have more measurement error (Burchinal, 2008). More broad-based cognitive skills have smaller effect sizes than those that are more targeted (e.g., literacy and knowledge that can be mastered in a short time) (Barnett, 2008).
- **Developmental domain assessed influence measurement error**. Language, cognitive, and academic skills have less measurement error than those assessments that include rating social-emotional or behavioral skills.
- **The duration and intensity of the intervention impacts the magnitude of the effect size**. The length and intensity of intervention can influence the magnitude of change.

How are effect sizes interpreted in this evaluation report?

Research literature that matches the Learning Community work (e.g., based on population, measures, and target intervention) will help guide recommendations of benchmarks for interpreting effect size for each set of evaluation data. The three factors described above that influence measurement error will inform the establishment of the bench marks for this report. Appendix B will provide the evidence that support the established benchmark used in this report. If the benchmark is achieved, it will be reported as a substantial meaningful change in the report. For areas that do not have research-based support for established benchmarks, Cohen's recommendations will be adopted (minimal =.20, moderate =.50, and substantial =.80).

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA

Early Childhood and Family Engagement

Learning Community Center of North Omaha/Early Childhood and Family Engagement (LCCNO)

The LCCNO provides innovative, demonstrative programing to improve educational outcomes of young students. Leadership and program staff work together to provide a comprehensive mix of research-based programs to the students and families from neighborhoods within the attendance boundaries of Conestoga Magnet and Kellom Elementary schools. The LCCNO encompasses four primary programs: intensive early childhood programs in public school settings, Parent University, child care director training, and future teacher clinical training. Descriptions of each program and evaluations findings are summarized in this section.

Intensive Early Childhood Programs

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Eight intensive early childhood classrooms at Kellom and Conestoga elementary schools were designed to include the key features of a national evidenced-based model. These features include intensive teaching teams (early childhood and resource teachers, paraprofessionals and family support workers), an inclusive model, and up to 15 days of additional professional development for the entire team. The early childhood programs were also enhanced through instructional coaching model and all of the families are eligible to participate in the Parent University.

Early childhood interventions. Intensive early childhood teams are an integrated system of teachers, leadership and family support staff that supports the implementation of a system of services and supports for the students and families they serve. The leadership team included an early childhood specialist and two coaches. Each classroom had a lead early childhood teacher and paraprofessional staff.

Leadership Staff & Coaches

Teaching Staff

Family Support Staff

Children & Families

Family engagement. Family liaisons and family support staff both worked with families to help them access needed services and to support parent engagement with their child's school. The goal of this component was to support parents to enhance their child's educational experience. Students participated in a full day preschool program and families had the option of before and after school programing. In order to provide a continuity of care, the before and after school programs are led by the same paraprofessionals who are in the classrooms. In addition to school sponsored family engagement opportunities, Parent University was offered to families.

Reflective Coaching.   Full time coaches provide reflective consultation to the teaching staff. They use the unique coaching approach adopted by Omaha Public Schools (i.e., *coaching with Powerful Interactions*). Monica McCarthy, M.Ed. provided ongoing reflective consultation to the two coaches. Coaches provided individualized sessions using photos, videotaped segments and coaching statements in order to build confidence and increase
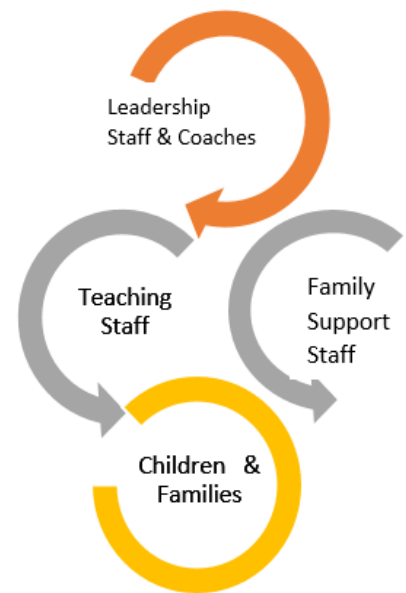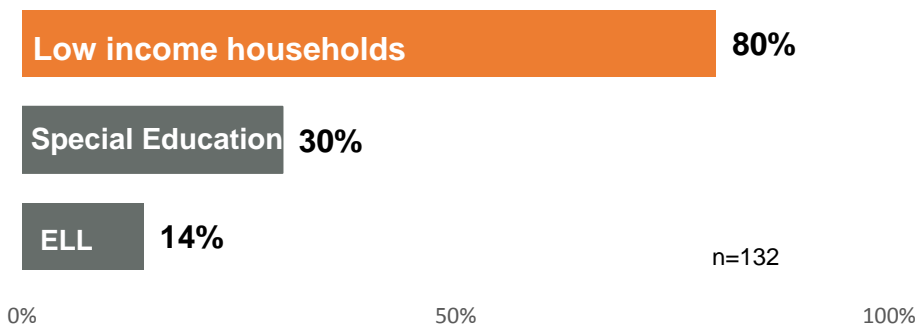
teachers' active problem solving skills. The Early Childhood Specialist provided support to the coaches and principals at each school and was responsible for overseeing the program. Long term positive student outcomes are predicted with the continuity of coaching that is occurring through first grade.
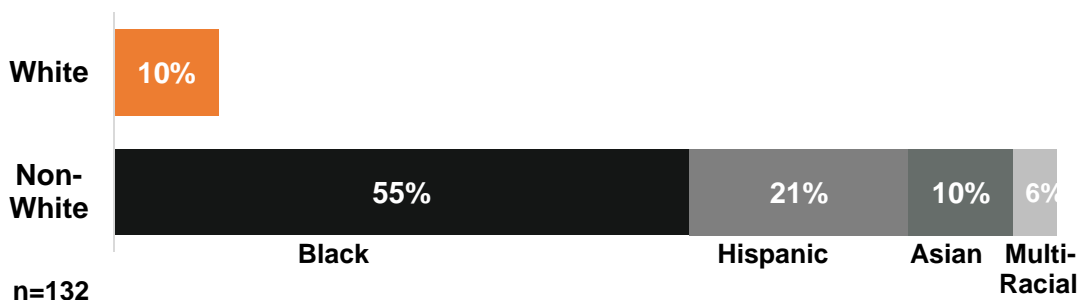
DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2015-2016, the Intensive Childhood Program served 132 early childhood students and their families from their attendance area. Many of the students served were at risk for school failure due to poverty. Demographic information was collected to help interpret the evaluation findings including: eligibility for free and reduced lunch (a proxy for low income households), English Language Learners, and/or enrolled in special education services.

Intensive Early Childhood Program serves a diverse population of students.

Low income households — 80%

Special Education — 30%

ELL — 14%

n=132

0%   50%   100%

Most of the students served represented ethnic or racial minorities.

White — 10%

Non-White — Black 55% | Hispanic 21% | Asian 10% | Multi-Racial 6%

n=132

The Intensive Early Children program served more females (55%) than males (45%). The majority of the students (60%) served were four years of age. This year 79% of the students were in the program for the full school year. On average, students participated 8.3 months during this school year. Only five percent left the program in the first semester. The average days of attendance was 140 with a range from 11 to 168. The results suggest students were consistently participating in the educational program with little student turnover. This is the first year of collecting attendance data and will continue to be monitored in future years.

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Method. Two tools were chosen to evaluate the quality of the eight intensive early childhood classrooms in Early Childhood Intensive program: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales-Revised (ECERS-R). The ECERS-R assesses classroom quality, with a focus on classroom structure, activities, and play materials. The CLASS assesses classroom instruction across three dimensions.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Results

The Pre-K CLASS has three dimensions. Dimensions include emotional, organizational, and instructional supports. Instructional Support tends to be the domain with the most opportunity for improvement as it challenges teachers to effectively extend language, to model advanced language, and to promote higher-order thinking skills.

Emotional Support
•Positive Climate
•Teacher Sensitivity
•Regard for Student's Perspective

Classroom Organization
•Behavior Management
•Productivity
•Instructional Learning Formats

Instructional Support
•Concept Development
•Quality of Feedback
•Language Modeling

Research on the CLASS indicates ratings of 5 or higher within the domains of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, and 3.25 or higher within the domain of Instructional Support, are necessary to have impacts on student achievement (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010).

Kellom and Conestoga met the recommended scores to have an impact on child outcomes.

2015 Instructional Supports	**3.61**
2014 3.01	
2013 2.88	
2015 Classroom Organization	**6.68**
2014 6.26	
6.03	
2015 Emotional Climate	**6.59**
2014 6.27	
2013 6.09	

0.00   3.50   7.00

n=7
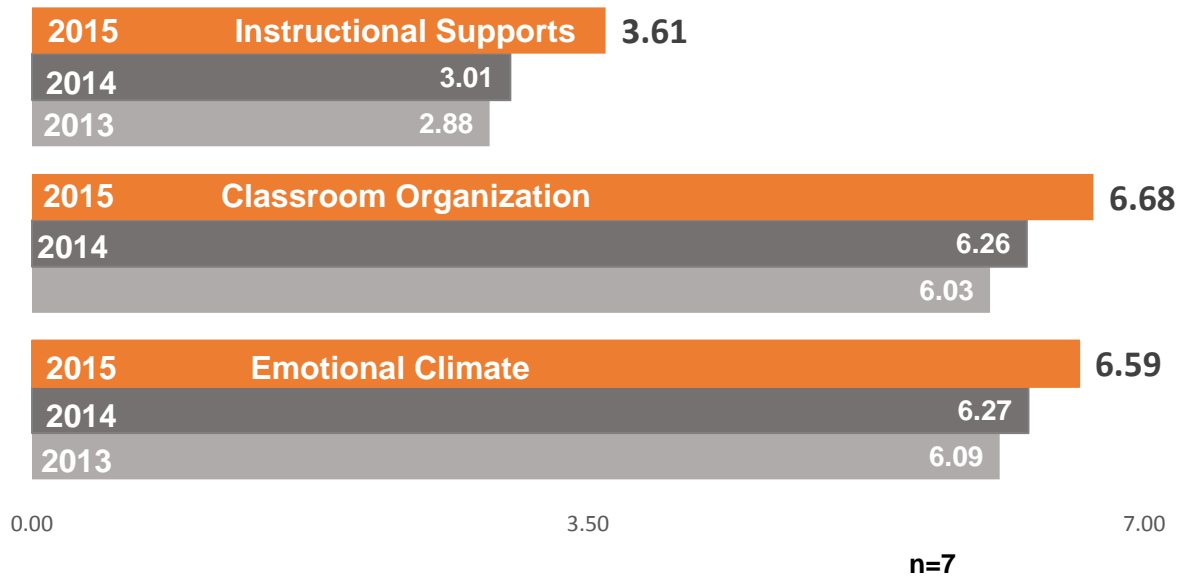
Instructional practices improved over the three years of the project. The scores on the CLASS exceeded research reported expectations necessary to have impacts on student achievement. Emotional Support and Classroom Organization were within the high quality range and Instructional Support was within the mid-range of quality, which is higher than the national benchmark that is necessary to have impact on student achievement. Teachers' instructional support practices showed the most gains. Coaching efforts focused on improving the CLASS teaching strategies. Continued focus on instructional support strategies is recommended.

Teachers demonstrated a 20% increase in their use of "instructional support strategies" over the previous year.

During the 2014-2015 program year, the Office of Head Start (OHS) used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Pre-K Teacher-Child Observation Instrument during its on-site reviews of grantees. Data from this report (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/class-reports/class-data-2015.html) was compared to the results of the Intensive Childhood Program data. Intensive Childhood Program teachers demonstrated classroom practices that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start classrooms nationally (e.g., Instructional Supports (3.6), Classroom Organization (6.3) and Emotional Climate (6.4).

Intensive Early Childhood Program teachers demonstrated scores that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start programs nationally.
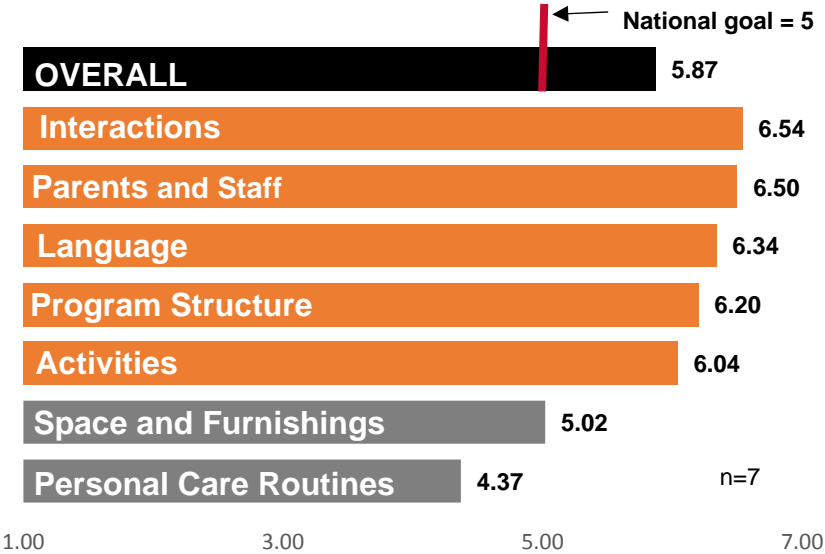
Early Childhood Ratings Scales-revised (ECERS-R) Results

The ECERS-R is based on a three-hour, in-person observation. Scoring is based on a 7 point scale with 7 indicating highest quality. The following graph shows ECERS-R subscale and overall averages of the classrooms across schools. Intensive Early Childhood classrooms continued to rate highly on the ECERS-R, meeting the tool's benchmark of quality (rating of 5 overall). The strengths of the program were in the teaching interactions (activities, language and interaction), and parent and staff supports. Spaces and furnishing which met the program goal was one of the lower rated areas and was in part limited by the structure of the classroom facilities. Lower Personal Care Routines scores are typical for programs statewide and nationally.

In 2015-2016, classroom quality ratings exceeded 2014-15 in every area with a **10% increase** in the overall **score**.

Intensive Early Childhood classrooms met the tool's benchmark of quality.

National goal = 5

OVERALL	5.87
Interactions	6.54
Parents and Staff	6.50
Language	6.34
Program Structure	6.20
Activities	6.04
Space and Furnishings	5.02
Personal Care Routines	4.37

n=7

1.00   3.00   5.00   7.00

STUDENT LANGUAGE OUTCOMES

Method. The vocabulary of students is an important factor to explore when considering how students may fare as they progress through school. Students who have limited vocabularies at a very young age are likely to continue to fall behind their peers in this area and others (e.g., reading) over time. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–IV (PPVT-IV), a direct child assessment measuring vocabulary, was administrated in the fall and spring.

Vocabulary Assessment Results

Fall-spring comparisons were made using a paired-samples t-test. The results found that students made significant gains in their vocabulary skills over the course of the year (t=-5.690, *p<.001*, *d*=0.57) suggesting substantial meaningful change. The spring vocabulary average standard score of students in Intensive Early Childhood programs were compared across years. Comparisons over the three years of the project found that the last two years the results have similar patterns with higher scores in the spring and significant change from fall to spring. The majority of the children were scoring below the mid-point of average. By the spring, 64.0% of the children were within the average range. This was a 17.0% increase from the number of children that were within the average range in the fall. It is important to interpret these results taking into account that 30% of the children in these classrooms were in Special Education and on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Identifying additional strategies to promote language skills to enhance skills in this area is recommended.

By the spring, **67.0%** of the children scored within the **average range.**

Each year students' vocabulary skills significantly improved and were approaching the mid-point of the average range.
Students made larger gains in 2015-2016.
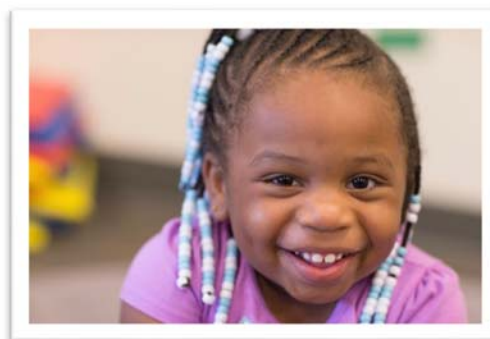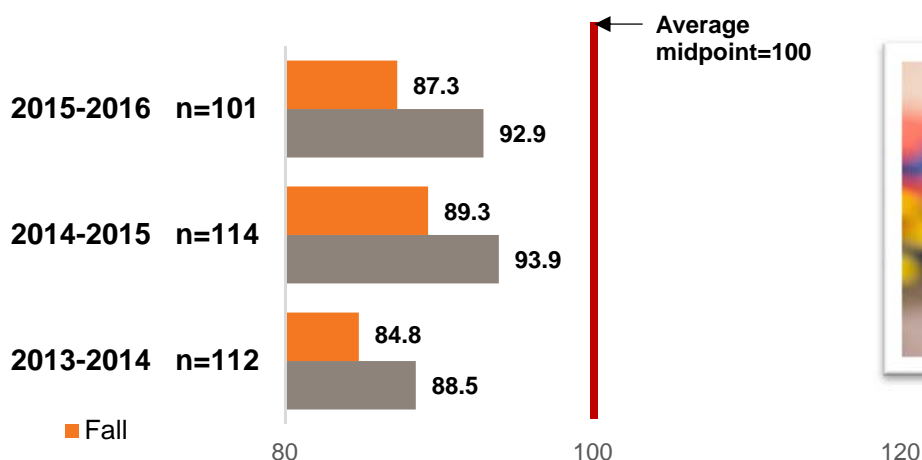
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

Method. This year the evaluation team incorporated the BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3 BESS) as part of the assessment battery. The BESS is designed to assess behavioral and emotional strengths and challenges in young children. The purpose is to identify children at risk for potential behavioral or emotional concerns. It is a survey assessment that is completed by the student's teacher. The BESS was administered in the spring to 84 students.

Social Emotional Assessment Results

The majority (79%) of the students were in the typical range suggesting they were not a risk for developing behavioral, social or emotional problems. A total of 21% of the children had elevated risk factors on this scale. These students should be monitored closely and may need additional support in the classroom and at home. Continued support to families of these children from family liaison and family support workers would be recommended.

High percentages of students demonstrated social emotional skills within the normal range.

Extremely Elevated Risk 4%

Elevated Risk 17%

Typically Developing 79%

Typical Developing 79%
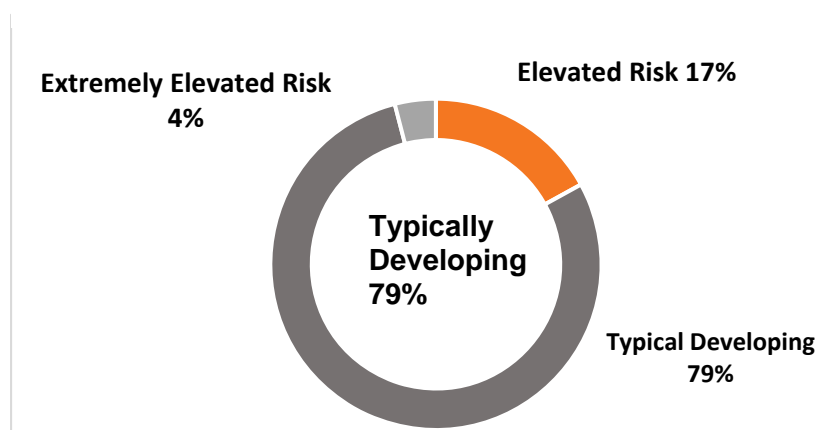
School Readiness Outcomes

Method. Many factors contribute to a young child's skills that support their success in grade school or what has been commonly labeled as school readiness. The importance of concept development, particularly for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, has been demonstrated in numerous research studies (Neuman, 2006; Panter and Bracken, 2009). Some researchers 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 assessment selected to measure kindergarten student's academic 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.

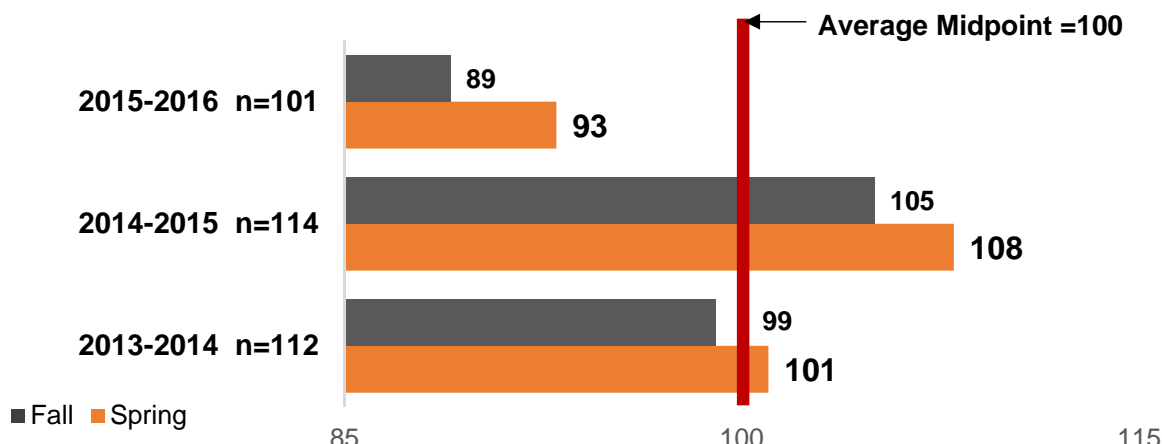**School Readiness Assessment Results**

Fall-spring comparisons were made using a paired-samples t-test. The results found that students made significant gains in their school readiness skills over the course of this year (t=-5.343, *p<.001*, *d*=0.53) suggesting substantial meaningful change. The school readiness average standard score of students in the Intensive Early Childhood Program were compared across years. Comparisons over the three years of the project found that each year there were significant and substantial meaningful changes. This year the children started in the fall considerably lower than in previous years. The majority scored below the mid-point of the national average. This year more children attended the program who were from the local neighborhood. This may have influenced the low baseline scores.

By the spring, there were **26.6%** more students scoring within the **average range** than in the fall.

By the spring, 64.7% of the children were within the average range. This was a 26.6% increase from the number of children that were within the average range in the fall. It is important to interpret these results taking into account that 30% of the children in these classrooms were on an IEP.

Students in the Intensive Early Childhood program made significant gains in

Average Midpoint =100

2015-2016 n=101
89
93

2014-2015 n=114
105
108

2013-2014 n=112
99
101

■ Fall ■ Spring

85   100   115

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Method. Parents of students who attended an Intensive Early Childhood program were asked to complete a Child-Parent Relationship Scale. This is a measure of parent and child closeness and parent and child conflict (Pianta, 1992). This tool is set up to measure these constructs on a 5 point scale with 5 being "definitely applies" and 1 being "definitely does not apply." The hope is Closeness is rated closer to 5 and Conflict is rated closer to 1, acknowledging that there is natural variation and some degree lower or higher is not significant.

Parent-Child Relationship Assessment Results

The results of the assessment found that parents' had positive relationship with their children with few reporting conflicts. Based on the paired-samples t-test, similar results in both the spring and the fall suggesting that families' relationships were stable over time, with no significant changes found.

Student caregivers demonstrated positive relationships with their children.

Relationships were stable over the year.

Conflict
2.11
2.27

Closeness
4.77
4.70

■ **Fall** ■ **Spring**   n=19
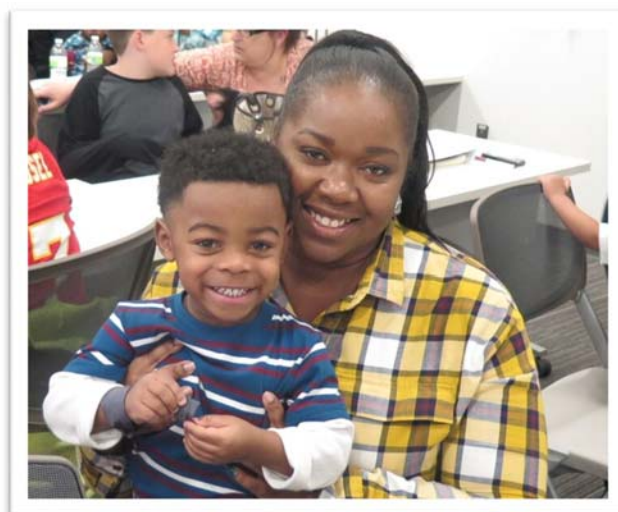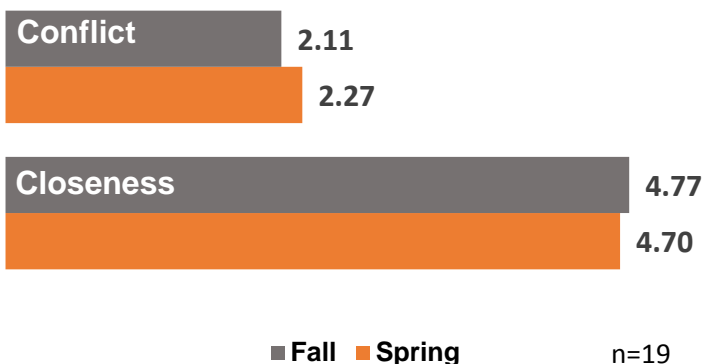
Community of Practice: Use of Data

Use of Data with Schools and Programs

Upon completion of the classroom observations and child assessments, evaluation staff joined teachers and leadership staff at each school. Meetings were completed with each school's teaching teams to further support their use of data. Using a continuous quality improvement model, strengths as well as areas for improvement were discussed with each teaching team. These data were used for individual instruction for students and improve classroom practices.   Information from the data also informed coaching sessions. In addition, team meetings were held to review cross-classroom data to address system level improvements.

Using data to……..

- discuss how to **improve practices** in the classroom
- **inform how coaching and professional development** could be improved to support teachers
- discuss **implications** for program planning for **specific children**

What were the reflections of program staff?

Two focus groups were held with the nine teaching staff at each school. In addition, the coaches at each school participated in a third focus group.   The purpose of the focus group was to receive feedback on how the coaching process was working and to determine recommendations to improve the process.   The following is a summary of the major key findings.

Key finding: Teachers reported benefits of coaching

The coaches were seen as experts in a wide range of topics, having the ability to access the answer to an educator's question immediately. Moreover, coaches provided the research to back up recommendations, so educators felt confident in their suggestions. This way of coaching also allowed educators to make educated decisions about what they did or did not want to use in their classroom and professionally justify their decisions to others.

"Coaching allowed you the opportunity to stop from your everyday lesson planning….and allowed us time to sit with an educated professional on what we are doing in our classrooms and **how we can make it better."**

Many educators articulated the value of the role of the coach, saying the coach "helped me tremendously." These educators reported the coach helped them meet personal and professional goals, identified their own skills and "then showing me what I could do to go to the next level with my students." The coaches "challenged my thinking" and pushed them to go beyond their comfort zones, and reassured them when they struggled. Educators reported that the coach built up a relationship with them, offering them support and stories about how she had struggled with similar experiences early in her own teaching career.

Key finding: Common traits of effective coaching emerged

Teachers and coaches both together identified key elements that they thought were important to successful coaching.

Guide & Reflect on Practices

The most commonly mentioned element of coaching was to guide educators through reflection into adopting new practices. As one coach indicated, "I think coaching and this program has made them not only to reflect, but to gain knowledge. It is an ongoing process, constant learning and re-inventing themselves." I think that the teachers are "more reflective than then your average teacher." "They extend the reflective practice into their practices (i.e., use of reflection with teacher assistants). I see that as extremely powerful."

Demonstrate Patience

A teacher added, "But she was so patient with us." And another, "She knew we weren't ready to receive everything, ECERS and CLASS." The conversation continued, "She was right there along the way." She came in and rolled it out in a way you could digest it and implement it piece by piece. Not like, 'this is all wrong, fix it.'"

Build on Strengths

Another valued trait was recognizing that every teacher has different strengths and preferences. Successful coaches built on the strengths of the educator and adapted coaching strategies based on the individual teacher. "They used the same framework, but different coaching styles based on the individual needs."

Provide Content Expertise

Moreover, a successful coach would present new material to the educators and then work with them until they understood it, supporting them through and after the learning process. As one educator noted, "Yeah, we had a training, but then we had someone there to help us throughout the process, not just 'here's a training; have at it.' It was nice to have someone there to support you along the way." One educator lauded her coach with the comment, "I think that was really beneficial, her knowledge and experience that she brought to the table. And that she was a person that was thirsty for more information to better equip us."

Build Relationships

As one educator with a successful coaching relationship noted, "I feel like she respected each of us as an individual teacher, how we approached instruction, and coached us based off of our style versus how she would have done it." Recognizing different personalities and being able to "mesh" with the coach, even if she held a differing opinion, was noted as essential to establishing a quality relationship.

Key finding: Positive outcomes in instructional practices were attributed to coaching

In their interview, coaches reported their teachers were making a number of advances in their teaching skills, "even those who didn't outwardly embrace coaching" and now the teachers are starting to see the results in their students' increased social and academic skills. "They are starting to see joy in children." One coach summarized with, "Listening to them speak [about their students' learning] is the most pride I have in my work, in my life. To see where they started and where they are now, is incredible."

Coaches noted that educators took what they were learning back to their teaching teams (including para professionals) and were more likely to collaborate with one another and use of reflection with their team than before receiving coaching; "I think the teachers are a closer team." Moreover, "I think coaching and this program has made them not only to reflect, but to gain knowledge."

Key finding: Role of the coach needs to be further clarified

As one respondent stated, the "coaching role is so broad." Some educators noted that they do not have a good sense of what the coach does, so they have a hard time understanding what can and cannot be expected from the coach. Teachers wanted to ensure that a coach had time to dedicate specifically to coaching tasks versus being pulled into other "leadership" duties such as lunch supervision.

The coaches also spontaneously shared their perception that the coach's role is unclear. One commented, "We are supposed to be the supporter and sometimes they look at us as a supervisor and it can't be. Teachers need to trust us." She went on, "… it is blurry on what the role is, even to us. If we are instructional leaders, it is not black and white, what our jobs really are. There is a fine line between being an instructional leader, team player and not going over the line and be true as a coach. You can't be a coach and fulfill that role if you have gone too far."

Key finding: Successful coaching requires educators put in extra time

Educators admitted that it is on them to put in the extra time and effort needed to see any benefits to the coaching experience. As one educator said, "When you have a coach, there's more to your job description. You're digging deeper into all these other areas that you want to improve on, but that also takes time." One of the biggest barriers to getting educators on board with the extra work involved in coaching, however, was the extra time it required. Given that a majority of an educator's day is already reserved for their daily tasks, coaching sessions often had to be fit in during personal time; planning time, before or after school, or even outside of the school, completely on the educator's personal time.

Key Finding: Professional Development is viewed as helpful

Educators noted liking the Professional Development (PD) sessions. "It's just knowledge that you wouldn't have time to seek otherwise. It gives you an opportunity." Educators noted that they liked when the PD sessions were in smaller groups, focused specifically on their schools and those that let them discuss topics with other Educators in similar environments. The small group, tailored PD sessions also allowed for continued follow up on the topics they had discussed in previous PD sessions. Focus group participants at both locations spontaneously noted the benefit of having the PD during the school day. Doing so was easier on their own personal scheduling needs and allowed them to concentrate better during these sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

High quality classrooms were the results of many contributing factors including professional development opportunities, coaching and the dedication of the staff to implement change. It is important that these strategies continue to be implemented for continued success in this area. It was clear from all that the coaching role was valuable and the role needs to be protected from other responsibilities that take them away from their coaching role. Children were positively impacted in several areas including vocabulary and school readiness skills. It will be important in next year's evaluation to begin to evaluate the extent the program has long-term impact by examining academic skills in grade school. The question becomes, Are there long term impacts?

Parent University

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Parent University is a comprehensive program based on research and best practices. This family engagement program began in February 2015. Families helped to shape the direction of Parent University. The strands were based on families' needs that were identified from focus groups with parents. Families associated with the Intensive Early Childhood Program were the target population in addition to children birth through five that live in the school attendance area.

Implementation of the first phase was the establishment of an array of courses. Parent University is comprised of four primary components to support families:

- o *Parenting:* Parents learn effective ways to parent their child (ren) and ways to support child development and learning through classes and individualized home visits; both designed to strengthen the parent-child bond and interactions.

- o *Life Skills and Wellness:* Understanding families need stability in order to support their students' education, Parent University partners with organizations to provide family self-sufficiency such as adult basic literacy, ESL classes, and employment skills.

- o *School Success:* In order to become full partners in their child's education, parents have access to classes and workshops which emphasize the importance of their roles, responsibilities, and engagement opportunities.

Parent University Courses (Sample)

Parenting
- Circle of Security
- Common Sense Parenting

Life Skills and Wellness
- ESL/GED
- Healthy Living

School Success
- ADHD/Autism
- Child School Success
- Prime Time Reading

Leadership
- Bridges Out of Poverty

- *Leadership:* Classes are available to empower parents to take on more active roles in their child's school and in their community.

Program staff tracked parents' participation in the classes that were related to the four primary components of Parent University. Parents participated in a total of 277 courses sessions with a range from 1 to 37 sessions. The most sessions were offered in the English as a Second Language and GED courses.

Most parents participated in courses related to Parenting and Life Skills.

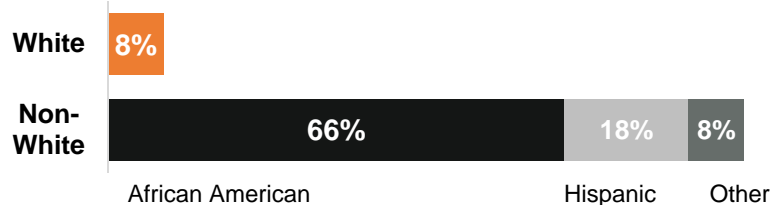Few participated in courses related to Leadership.

Category	Percent
Parenting	43%
Life Skills	36%
School Success	20%
Leadership	1%

n=277

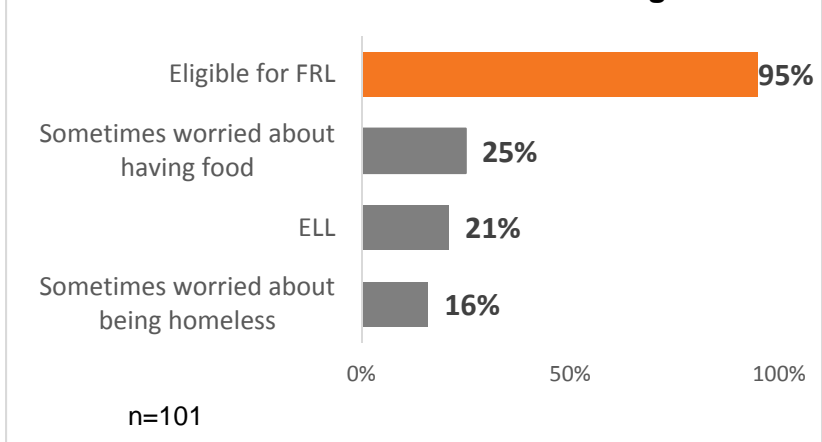0%   25%   50%
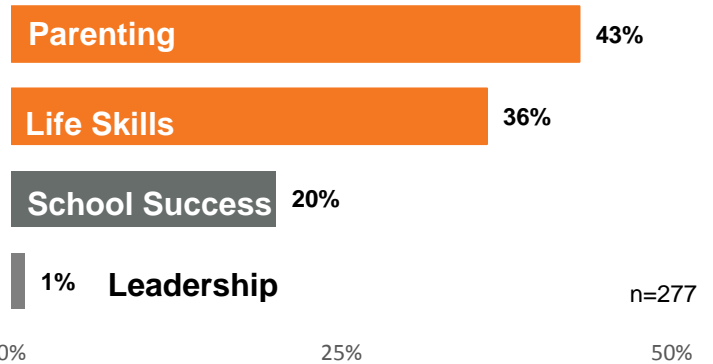
DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 101 parents were enrolled in Parent University. There more females (72%) than males (28%). The majority of the parents represent ethnic or racial minorities. Most of the parents were African American.

Many parents in the program reported facing a number of challenges. Many parents (68%) access some type of government assistance (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, TANF, and Title XX). Food insecurities (worried about having adequate food for the family) or homeless were concerns for approximately a quarter of the families. Several (21%) of the parents were English Language Learners. These challenges that many families face point to the complexity of the lives of the parents served by this project and provide a context for interpreting the results of this report.

Most of the parents served represented ethnic or racial minorities.

White	8%
Non-White	66% African American	18% Hispanic	8% Other

Parents face a diverse number of challenges

Challenge	Percent
Eligible for FRL	95%
Sometimes worried about having food	25%
ELL	21%
Sometimes worried about being homeless	16%

0%   50%   100%

n=101

Outcomes

Family Outcomes

### How did Parent University impact parents' protective factors?

Method. The adoption of a strengths-based prevention model embracing protective factors are thought to be important approach to prevent child abuse (Langford, J., & Harper-Browne, C., in press). In order to assess family protective factors, parents completed the FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS), a broad measure of family well-being, who were in the program six months or longer. The survey assesses five areas: Family Resiliency, Social Supports, Concrete Supports, Child Development Knowledge, and Nurturing and Attachment. A total of 21 families completed the PFS in the spring using a pre-post retrospective assessment process. The PFS is based on a 7 point scale with 7 indicating strong protective factors.

The results found that parents' attachment skills were the highest rated area. Paired sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there were significant changes in protective factors across time. There were significant improvements found between initial and current assessments in the areas of: family resilience [$t(16)=-5.911$, $p< .001$, $d=1.32$, two-tailed test]; **social support** [$t(20)=-2.216$, $p=.038$, $d=0.483$, two-tailed test]; **nurturing and attachment** [$t(19)=-2.774$, $p=.012$, $d=0.620$, two-tailed test]. These results found a substantial meaningful positive change in the areas of family resilience (family's ability to openly share experience to solve and manage problems) and social support. There were moderate meaningful improvements in nurturing and attachment.

Parents demonstrated strong protective factors across all areas.
Significant improvements were found in Nurturing and Attachment, Social Supports and Family Reslience.
Significant decrease was found in Concrete Supports.

n=21
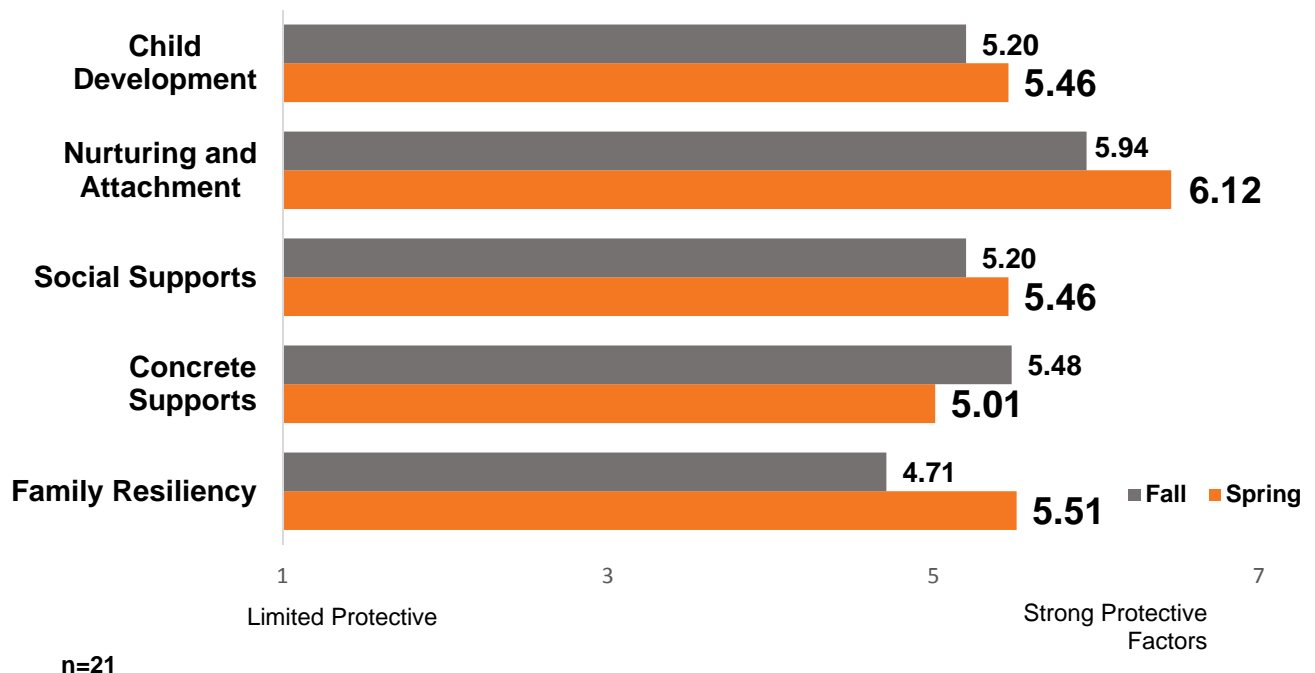
The concrete supports sub-domain measures parents perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need. There was a significant decrease found over time in the **concrete supports** ratings: [t(19))=-2.30, $p=.033$, d=0.514, two-tailed test). These results found a substantial meaningful. These findings suggest the need to continue to provide family support to help them access needed concrete supports (e.g., housing, food, etc.).

How did Parent University impact parenting skills?

Common Sense Parenting is a parent-training workshop developed by Boys Town for parents of school-aged children. Parents attend six weekly two-hour sessions. Customized content is delivered via structured learning activities including direct skill instruction, live modeled examples of skills, discussion of videotaped scenes depicting correct and incorrect application of skills, and guided skills practice/role play. Homework activities are assigned so parents can practice the skills at home.

Common Sense Parenting (CSP)

Four Common Sense Parenting (CSP) sessions were conducted during the past year. A total of 36 parents participated. These parents had 98 children.

Method. The **Parenting Children and Adolescents Scale (PARCA)** was completed by parents as a pre-test and post-test. This 19 item assessment has a total score that evaluates parent's skills in supporting good behavior, setting limits and being proactive in their parenting. The second assessment used was the **Parental Stress Scale (PSS)**, which is a self-report scale that contains 18 items. This scale assesses parental stress. Respondents are asked to agree or disagree with items in terms of their typical relationship with their child or children and to rate each item on a five-point scale: strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). Higher scores on the scale indicate greater stress.

Parenting Assessment Results

A total of 7 parents completed the PARCA. A statistical analysis (a paired-samples t-test) was completed to determine if there was a significant change in participants' perception by the end of the CPS. There were significant positive differences found between scores at the beginning compared to the end of the CSP [$p<.011$, $d=1.04$]. These results suggest substantial meaningful change.

Parenting Stress Results

A total of 8 parents completed the PSS. A statistical analysis (a paired t-test) was completed to determine if there was a significant change in parent stress by the end of the CSP session. There were significant positive differences found between scores at the beginning compared to the end of the PSS [$p=.128$, $d=0.41$]. Although there were not significant decreases in stress there was moderate meaningful change. These results were affected by the small number assessed.

Parents significantly improved their parenting skills.

Pre: 4.89
Post: 5.87

■ Pre ■ Post   n=7
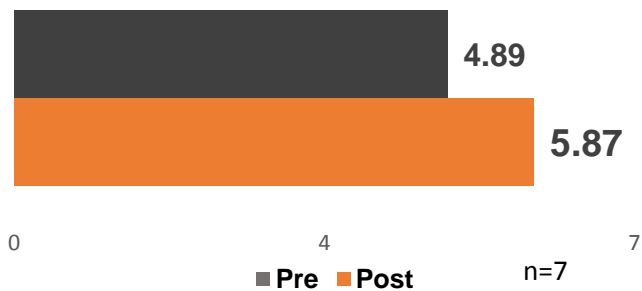
Parents demonstrated moderate decreases in stress.

Pre: 39.38
Post: 34.38

■ Pre ■ Post   n=8
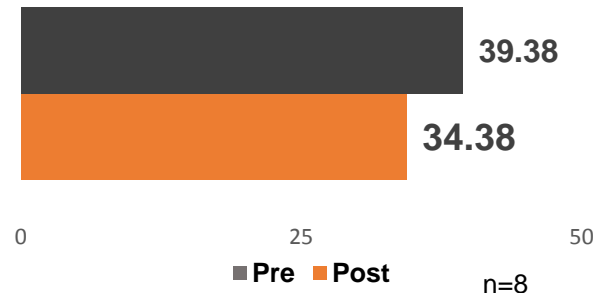
Circle of Security™-Parenting (COS-P)

Circle of Security™-Parenting is an 8-week parenting program based on years of research about how to build strong attachment relationships between parent and child. It is designed to help parents learn how to respond to their child's needs in a way that enhances the attachment between parent and child.

COS-P was another core parenting course provided at Parent University. Five courses were offered. A total of 35 participants enrolled across the five COS-P courses. These parents had 105 children.

The majority of the parents' children were preschool and school age.

School-Age: 34%
Kindergarten: 13%
Preschool: 37%
Infant: 16%

n=105

0%   20%   40%
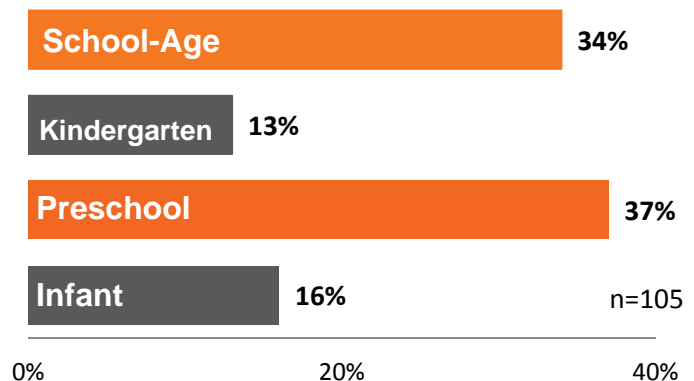
Method. Participants were asked to rate a series of questions that were related to caregiver stress, their relationship with their children, and confidence in their parenting skills. A total of 35 individuals completed the survey.

Parenting Assessment Results

A statistical analysis (a paired t-test) was completed to determine if there was a significant change in participants' perception by the end of the COS-P series across the program identified outcomes. There were significant positive differences found between scores at the beginning of the group and scores at the groups' conclusion in: parenting skills [$t(29)$=-7.954, $p<.001$, d=1.82, two-tailed test]; lowering stress [$t(33)$=-5.857, $p<.001$, d=1.00]; and positive relationships with their children [$t(31)$=-3.840, $p<.001$, d=0.679]. These results suggest a substantial meaningful change in program outcomes with a strong effect size. The strengths on this scale were related to parenting and parent-child interaction.

Parents demonstrated significant improvements in their parenting strategies and their relationships with their children.
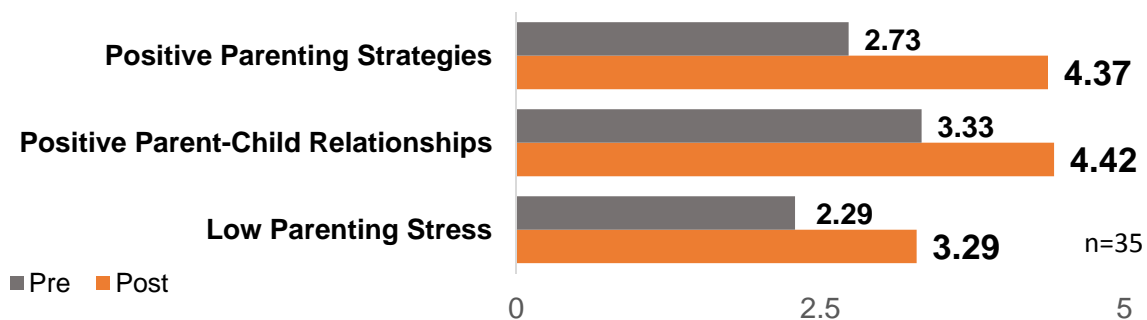
What did participants and facilitators tell us about their experience?

Participants were very positive about their COS-P experience, using descriptors such as: "awesome experience", "fun", and "very helpful". Many commented on the benefits of participating in the sessions, specifically how the sessions helped them to gain skills to "better myself as a parent" and "learned different parenting techniques." It provided them with a set of tools to use with their children. As one parent said, "It was packed with common sense information." Most importantly they described that by participating, they "built a better relationship with my child."

Nearly all of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the group format was helpful and the COS-P Facilitator did a good job facilitating the group.
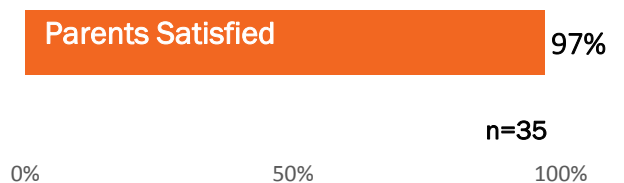
"I thought it was a great class I think all parents should take it."

"I am starting to share what I've learned with others."

Parents evaluate COS-P

How did Parent University benefit parents' own education?

Parents were provided with the opportunities to enroll in either English as a Second Language Classes (ESL) or GED classes. A total of seven parents participated in one of these two options. Pre-post assessments were obtained from six parents, five from ESL and one in GED classes. On average, these parents participated in the classes for nine months. The BEST assessment was used to assess their English proficiency. All five parents began the program in the first level, Beginning ESL Literacy. Of those five parents, 40% improved one or more levels.

How did families benefit from receiving crisis services?

Method. Families who received crisis services from family liaisons completed additional tools including a stress index, the strengths and difficulties questionnaire and the trauma symptom checklist (as appropriate). Goals for the family and student are set and measured throughout the time the family is enrolled with the program. Teachers rate each student on their skills for math, reading and writing at the end of the services. Attendance data for school age students is also collected and reported by the family liaisons.

Stress Index Findings

The results of a paired samples t-test found that parents' stress was significantly decreased after participation in Parent University (p=.002; d=2.04). These findings suggest substantial meaningful change.

Most Goals Set were Achieved or Improving when services ended

- 81% Achieved
- 4% Improving
- 15% Not Achieved

LCCNO Parent Stress Decreased Significantly (n=16, d=2.04)

Pre Rating: 7.56
Post Rating: 3.75
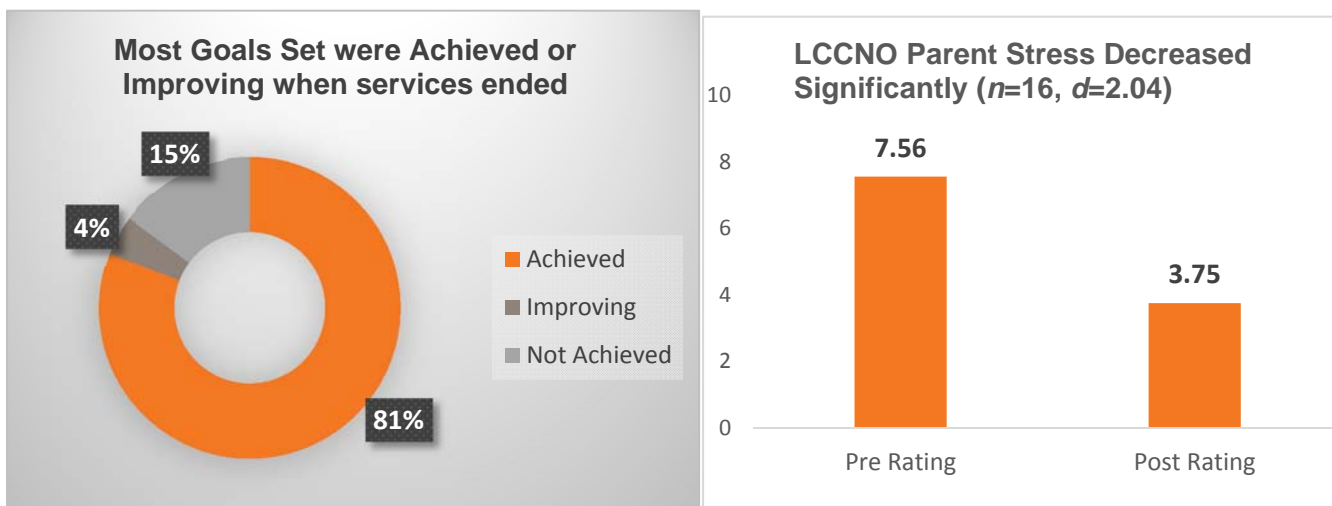
Goal Completion Findings

Families in crisis are provided the support of a family liaison. They work with families to set and achieve goals that identified by the family. Most goals were related to: Educational/Vocational: 53% and Mental Health (13%). Other goals were related to a wide range of areas including: Family: 9%, Legal: 4%, Living Situation: 6%, Other: 2%, Safety: 4%, and Social/Recreational: 2%. The majority of the parents were successful in accomplishing their set goals by the time that crisis services were completed.

What were the outcomes of students whose parents received crisis support?

For students enrolled in school (n=16), teachers were asked to rank the students' skills as either below, meeting or exceeding expectations in the areas of math, reading and writing. Overall students' strengths were in the area of math and reading with the majority (64%) meeting or exceeding expectations. Slightly fewer students met expectations in writing. Students being served by the program had excellent attendance. On average, students served missed 7.00 days of school with no students marked as truant. A total of 87% of the students were eligible for FRL and 77% identified English as their primary language.

Teacher ratings of students whose parents participated in LCCNO
Students strengths were in reading and math with 64% of the students meeting or exceeding expectations.

Rating	Below	Meets	Exceeds
Writing Rating	50%	43%	7%
Reading Rating	36%	57%	7%
Math Rating	36%	57%	7%

■ Below ■ Meets ■ Exceeds
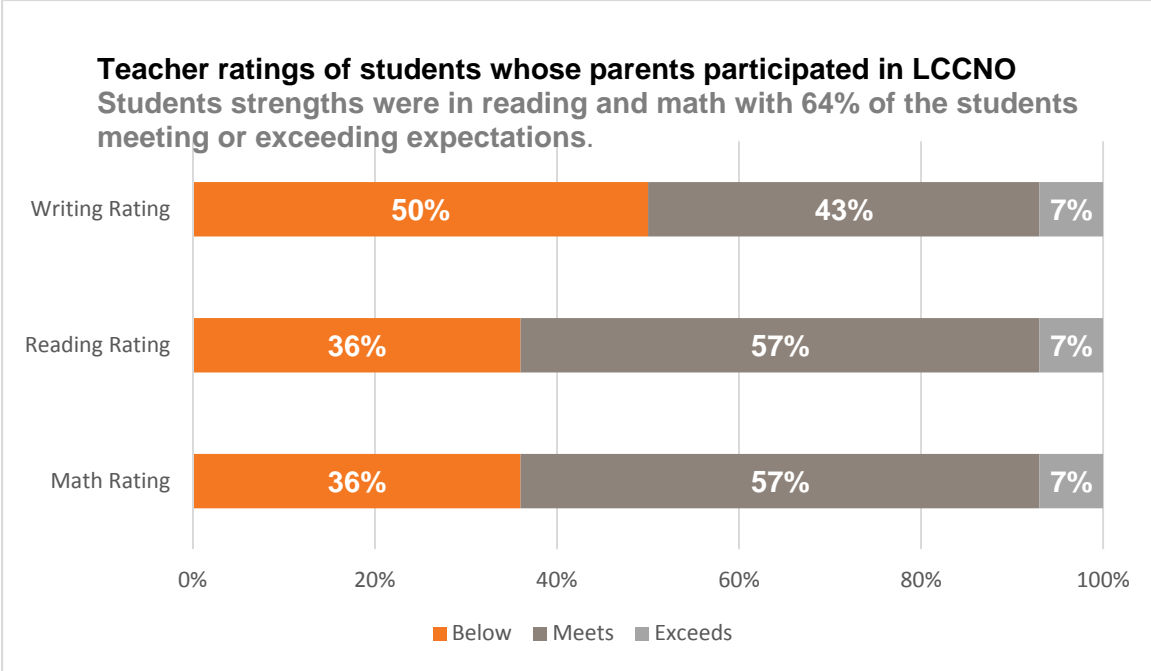
Health Outcomes

Child health outcomes were analyzed based on 101 parent responses on their intake survey. These results were compared to state health indicators (based on Nebraska Healthy People 2020: Baseline Report for Nebraska's Healthy People 2020 Objectives, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). High percentages of parents reported their children were up to date on immunizations and had access to health insurance. Parents exceeded Nebraska's indicator rate for immunizations. Most parents reported that they had a consistent medical home they take their children for health care. Most parents had taken their preschooler to the dentist.

Parents exceed the Nebraska indicators for child immunizations.

Immunizations are up to date*	98%
Access to Health Insurance	97%
Dental visits	94%
Medical home	80%

n=101

*Exceeded Nebraska Indicator rate (90%)
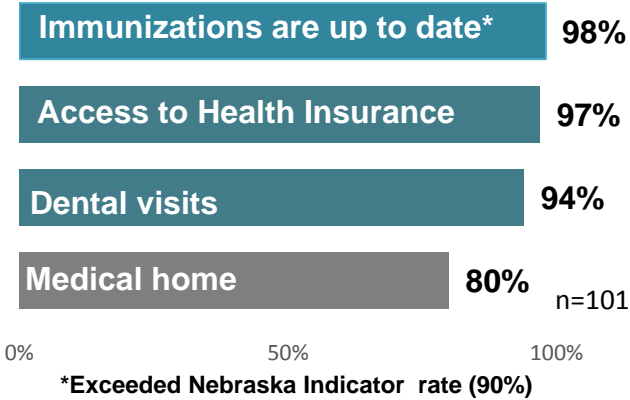
Community of Practice: Use of Data

Use of Data

This is the first year of comprehensive data collection for Parent University. Data was used to support the review the implementation strategies. Parent satisfaction surveys were reviewed by staff after each class to identify areas for improvement. Systems for ongoing data collections of parent outcomes was established and plans are to review these bi-annually with program staff as part of a continuous improvement process. Parent focus group data were also used to further improve the program.

What were the reflections of parents?

Parents were asked to join a focus group to gather their input on how Parent University was working for them and identified their recommendations for improvement. A total of 14 participants participated in one of two focus groups in May of 2016 regarding their experiences with Parent University. The following in a summary of the major key findings.

Key finding: Parents reported an increase in their parenting and interpersonal skills

Parenting skills, ranging from building positive relationships with both children and co-parents, patience, and dealing with child behaviors, were the most often noted skill learned in Parent University courses. Several parents reported the classes taught them to reframe their approaches to their children by teaching strategies they had never seen growing up or in other aspects of their lives. As one parent elaborated:

> "[Parent University] provided me with **parenting tools besides those that you grew up with**. We were raised with parents that talked at you.   Now we have learned how to talk with our children. This has **helped our relationship** with our children."

Learning to parent, and even live, differently than how you grew up can feel impossible if that way is all you know, parents reported. They see the PARENT UNIVERSITY as one step towards helping make parents and children make this shift.

For the parenting issues that they still struggled with, parents noted the Parent University courses and staff helped them get connected to resources for assistance. "There are a lot of resources here." Parents appreciated that "there were no costs" for these referrals and welcomed the advocacy of the staff to help them get their needs met.

> "Another thing that was beneficial – they had a person that talked about what your rights for children who were on IEP and 501 plan were.   This helped me, to **get the services for my child.** [The speaker] was **an advocate for me**.   You are not going in by yourself."

Key finding: Life skills courses benefited parents

Beyond parenting classes, parents reported taking courses on managing their financials and nutrition courses. Financial classes taught parents "to better manage money." Parents noted the benefits of learning about "The

spread sheet" to monitor "the different places your money is going," benefited from speakers such as, "credit advisers, MUD, etc." and they found it helpful to have a financial coach.

"Classes in cooking that help my kids eat healthy foods" were also appreciated. Having these meals together has helped the families grow together as a unit as well. That parent also noted those benefits carried over to their environment at home as well.

> **"We eat here at the table now**, more than we have done before at home.   This changes how we do things, it changes the environment for us. We laugh and talk with each other… **It makes a positive routine."**

Key Finding: Parent University courses created a community among parents

The benefits of the center, parents argued, were not limited to the courses. They established relationships with other parents in their community, creating "New networks of parents." Parents also noted that their friendships have also lead to "accountability," specifically, that other parents provided "peer pressure" to speak out about what they need.

> **"I used to just stay at home** in the house. You feel all alone. Now I am meeting more people. **We bounce ideas off each other which helps."**

Key Finding: School-parent partnership need to be developed and strengthened

Several parents noted the need for educators in the community to be aware of, and participate in, Parent University and noted three distinct benefits of promoting this relationship. Some felt the program would (or has already) helped them as teachers, others felt that showing educators how the program works would help them become advocates for the program, and another noted the potential of parent-teacher connections through joint community activities. One parent who spoke about the parent-teacher connection suggested, "It should be something that teachers all take one or two of the classes so they understand what the parents are going through" and another shared a success story of a teacher he/she knew who was strongly connected to the community:

> "For some of my toughest kids, the **kids and parents can't bond to the teacher until they see them outside of school**.   Need to bring the teachers here. I know one teacher at [School] who all the students like.   A teacher who works in our community will have a better relationship with the parents. Most don't know about our culture ...Something for [the teachers to be] more involved.   I would like them to **come to our classes**.   They could get **to know us better and learn about our kids."**

When asked how they recommended Parent University support this parent-school relationship, parents suggested things such as diversity training, teacher attendance in Parent University classes, and for educators to develop general knowledge of what was available and happening at the Learning Community. As one parent noted:

> "When we are in **class together**, **we get closer to each other**.   If we [parents and teacher] can get to 'make music' together we **will improve our relationship."**

<u>Key Finding: Parents want a continued voice in the Parent University</u>

Parents felt the Learning Community (LC) Council needed to hear from the community members regarding the Parent University, but did not currently have a way for parents to share their thoughts or experiences; they argued, the Parent University needs to "be more community driven." To address this need, participants suggested they allow parents to "have ownership of this center." Several parents noted appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback as part of their participation in the focus group. Indeed, they "would like these feedback sessions four times a year so [the LC Council] can always understand what we need or what it is doing for us."

The parents also shared the importance of having more parents take advantage of Parent University. They saw a need for more marketing. Several were willing to be advocates and promote the program themselves. They also indicated a strong desire to keep the program going and acknowledged that community support, through increased and continued parental involvement, was key to its sustainability. As one participant noted, the

> "**Goal is to go to another level. Getting more participation** and finding out what [parents] need would be good. **This is our center and we need to use it or we will lose it.** People don't think that that things in North Omaha, can work and survive.   If they don't come- they will think we don't need it."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parent University has successfully implemented a series of courses that has resulted in improved parenting and life skills.   Parents reported Parent University has made a difference in their life and has created a community of support.   Parents saw a need to expand marketing strategies to expand the number of families who will enroll in the program. Parents voiced that they would like to have a continued and expanded voice in how Parent University and the Learning Community moves forward.

Child Care Director Training Program

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Knowing most babies and toddlers with a working parent spend three-quarters of their waking hours in childcare, The Learning Community realized coaching childcare providers to support early learning is a powerful way to help children. Childcare providers want to help kids do better in elementary school, but training is not always affordable. What has been learned in earlier child care projects is that staff turnover was nearly at 70%, so in order to affect change, it was important to work with the childcare director of the center. Working with Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, the Child Care Director Training Program was initiated in the spring of 2016. Child care directors were recruited to participate in this high quality training using the model of "My Teaching Partner." This second cohort will begin in September 2016 and will be evaluated in 2016/2017 report.

Future Teacher Clinical Training
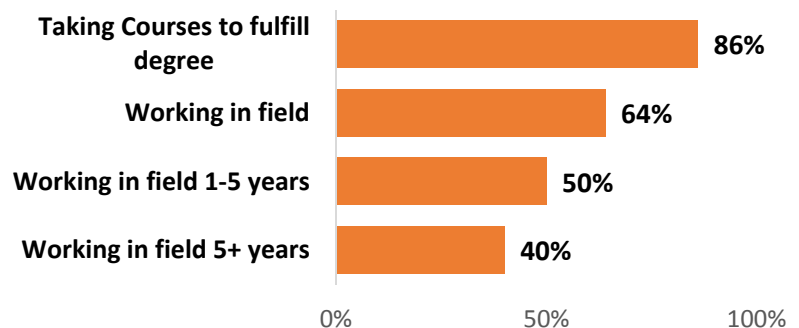
STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Metropolitan Community College (MCC) in partnership with the Learning Community and Educare developed a new approach to pre-service education to better prepare college students to teach in high poverty, early childhood and preschool classrooms. With guidance from experienced faculty, college students work directly with teaching teams at Educare, Kellom and Conestoga. The Educare classroom at LCCNO is linked to the MCC classroom via robotic cameras and audio, giving students a unique opportunity to learn while receiving real time feedback from their instructors and classmates. These strategies resulted in students receiving immediate feedback from instructors as they employed newly learned teaching techniques.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In the fall 2016, MCC had a total of 207 students that were enrolled in early childhood classes. Of the 207 students, 59 (29%) participated in classes at LCCNO. The majority of the students were females (97%). Slightly over half were white with 36% representing minority populations. The majority of the students were taking courses to fulfill a degree. Most (64%) of the students were also working in the field.

Profile of Students in the MCC Early Childhood Program

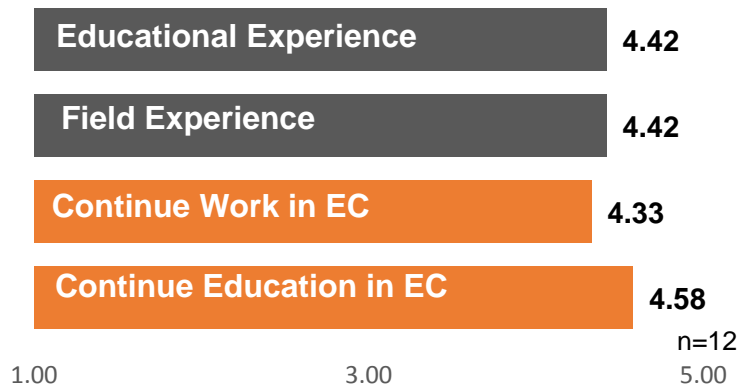|	
Taking Courses to fulfill degree	86%
Working in field	64%
Working in field 1-5 years	50%
Working in field 5+ years	40%

0%   50%   100%

A goal of the MCC Early Childhood Program was to fill a need in the community for highly trained early childhood teachers who were better equipped to meet the educational needs of children in poverty. In part the college addressed this need by graduating 59 students with early childhood associates degrees in the spring of 2016. Most graduated with a sub-specialty as an educator (71%) or generalist (24%).

Method. A survey was sent to the 59 students following graduation to evaluate their satisfaction with the program and determine their future plans. A total of 12 students responded for a return rate of 20%. Overall the students rated both of the classroom educational and their field experiences very highly. Most planned to seek or continue (for those already working in the field) to work in the early childhood field. High numbers also planned to continue their education in early childhood.

Graduates positively rated their educational experience.
High numbers plan to continue in the Early Childhood (EC) field.

Educational Experience	4.42
Field Experience	4.42
Continue Work in EC	4.33
Continue Education in EC	4.58

n=12

1.00   3.00   5.00

The students provided helpful feedback regarding the program. The hands-on opportunities to practice their skills (80%) and the opportunity to observe teachers' practices (100%) were rated as highly beneficial. Less helpful was reviewing video recordings of practices in class with discussion (40%).

A major accomplishment this year has been the establishment of an articulation agreement between MCC and Creighton University (CU). This agreement will allow MCC graduates to enroll as juniors in CU to receive an Elementary Education Degree with an Early Childhood Education endorsement.

In 2016 **MCC students** have the opportunity to continue to seek an **Elementary Education degree** at Creighton University.

A success story……

I started my journey in the summer of 2012. I was tired of working till 9 pm every night and missing out on life with my children. I knew that there would be challenges along the way, however I had no idea how my journey would change me forever. I started out thinking I was just going to get my associates degree in early childhood because the daycare that I was working at stated that we were going to either have it, or be working on it by 2014……….

I graduated with honors from Metro in May of 2016. I was very proud of myself, but was also very proud to say that I got to get instruction in my field from some wonderful teachers at Metro. I have since moved on to Creighton University, taking full advantage of the 2+2 program. I can't wait to graduate and hopefully get to come back to Metro to tell my story to new students.

Recommendations

MCC has implemented an innovative clinical approach for student training that was viewed favorably by their students. Long-term outcomes are needed to determine if these experiences increase the number of students who both feel more prepared to work with children in poverty, as well as, work in early childhood settings in the areas surrounding LCCNO and LCCSO. The evaluation needs to be expanded to gather information from employees of former students to determine the degree that the students' were prepared to work in their program.

**LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER
OF SOUTH OMAHA**

Family
Learning

Learning Community Center of South Omaha

The Family Learning Program provides parenting education, navigator services, English and Adult Learning and Crisis Intervention to provide parents with help needed to support their young child's education. The Family Learning Program operated out of three sites this year: the Learning Community Center of South Omaha (LCCSO), Educare of Omaha Indian Hill and Gateway Elementary.

Family Learning Program Model

The Family Learning Program formed in 2012 as a collaborative effort of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and *One World Community Health Centers.* The Family Learning program began in 2012 providing family literacy services to parents and their children. Parents participating in the program met an average of seven hours a week. While parents participated in educational activities, on-site activities were provided for their children.

To help children from low-income families succeed in school, the program collaborated with school districts and community partners. This collaboration activated 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 Parent Education, Educational Navigator Services, English and Adult Learning and Crisis Intervention Support.

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.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Parent Education The parenting component (2x per month) of the family learning program was carefully designed around parent needs and includes collaboration among various community organizations (often at no cost) to deliver diverse workshops (KidSquad, Visiting Nurses Association, PTI Nebraska, Financial Literacy, Bullying, etc.) Specific classes included College Prep (three sessions on student involvement, application process and financial aid), classes on helping preliterate parents prepare for parent-teacher conferences and classes on social skills and social emotional competence in students. 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 multiple-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

Educational Navigators. The family learning program employed navigators that served as personal parent advocates, helping parents gain better understanding of the public school system, community resources, child development and learning strategies. Navigators build strong relationships with participants to ensure individualized education and support using an evidence-based home visiting/parenting curriculum. The caseload for navigators is 50-55 participants.

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, these were completed approximately once every 45 days. Each participant worked with their navigator to set personal and familial goals.

Parent Education: In addition to home visits, the navigators all prepare and present parent workshops on a variety of topics. Topics include dialogic reading, math at home, prevention of summer learning loss and setting up routines and schedules for children.

English for Parents. Parents enrolled in the program attended English language classes (personalized to supporting their child's learning) two half days a week during the academic year and throughout the summer. The goal of learning English is to help parents become more confident in talking to teachers and asking questions about their child's progress as well as enabling parents to be comfortable and knowledgeable enough to use computers to access school information, write notes to teachers and use reading and learning activities to help reinforce learning in the home.

English classes were leveled based on 'BEST Plus' scores and teacher input in order to provide a more consistent learning experience. BEST Plus is the measurement tool used to assess English learning progress. In 2015-16, BEST Plus was administered by the English teachers at LCCSO.

Crisis Intervention Support. Family Liaison Services provided support to families struggling with significant needs. Crisis intervention support involves working with families to meet basic needs, set educational/vocational goals, find resources and resolve the crisis situation. The model of support continued to evolve as the family navigators and the liaisons worked collaboratively to best serve families in the program.

Interactive Parent Child Activities. Family activities were planned and implemented by the LCCSO staff and included a series of field trips to UNO to promote secondary education, graduation celebrations and parent-child time during non-school days for students. Access was provided to Joslyn museum and DoSpace for families to familiarize them with the offering. A CHI Health 10 week program called "The Big Garden" is a once a week program for families over the next there years. Other activities included a UNO music night and tickets to the Omaha Ballet.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2015-2016, the Family Learning Program served 313 families and 950 children including 404 children ages 0-8 across the three sites (LCCSO, Educare at Indian Hill and Gateway Elementary).

Free Reduced Lunch Status by Site Shows Consistent Challenges Faced by Families
Educare(n=25), Gateway (n=37), LCCSO (n=251)

Educare	Gateway	LCCSO
84%	82%	81%
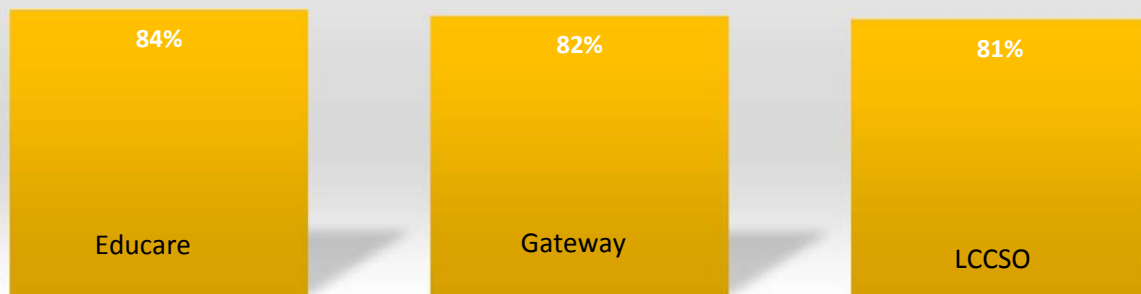
Over 80% of the families enrolled across all three sites had reported qualifying for free/reduced lunch. Students from these families attended fifteen schools in the area.

OUTCOMES

QUALITY OF PROGRAMMING

What was the quality of center-based services?

Method. 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 Group Results

Multiple focus groups were conducted in May and August 2016 to allow participants who had been with the program for six months or longer the opportunity to voice their experiences and thoughts. Questions were broad in nature and asked about the participants overall experience with the program, satisfaction levels with multiple facets of the program (navigators, parenting classes, resources, English classes) and ideas for improvements to the program.

Focus groups were split into current participants and those who were considered graduates of the Family Learning Program.

One area that underpins the others is the safe and supportive environment that has been created and fostered at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha. Participants repeatedly expressed feeling supported while adjusting to a new country/culture and while learning new skills (English and other classes).

One participant stated "I believe the value or the magnificent point about this center is their human quality, the attention they give us and the kindness with which they treat us, **they make us feel welcome as if we were coming to the family"**.

English classes were viewed by the participants as essential to experiencing success in other areas. The English taught in classes help families to engage with the school system, talk to teachers and begin integrating more into the community. Some participants talked about how learning English has given them the opportunity to stay connected to family members who only speak English. Others shared experiences about not only feeling more comfortable but being promoted at work due to having better English skills.

"Before coming here, I always used to ask for assistance everywhere I went, even at the store when I wanted to buy something or if I wanted to ask for a different size, I always asked if somebody spoke Spanish to be able to communicate better or sometimes I would leave the store without getting anything because I was afraid of communicating with the people who were there. Now it is a little bit easier, I don't speak it correctly but I have learned a lot in this program. It has also **helped me to be able to communicate with doctors and with my children's teachers**."

For graduates of the program, **100% expressed satisfaction** with the English classes, English teachers and the family navigator services. When asked about the navigators, participants responded that they received a wide variety of information and resources including medical information, academic and emotional support and how to take care of their children with special needs. They made a point to discuss how they saw the navigators as professionals and partners.

Families also appreciated the other classes offered as part of the program. The parenting, financial and healthy lifestyle classes were all mentioned in the focus groups as being necessary and positive components of the center.

"This program is excellent, it has not only helped me as a mom but also as a grandmother, or simply as a neighbor. Sometimes we see mistakes made with children and we can share and say, Look, I learned this is good for children. **Now we have a different focus on how to educate a child**."

When asked about what families need to be able to attend class, a frequent answer was the need for the daycare provided at LCCSO. Without daycare, many participants said that they would not be able to attend class. They appreciated the quality experience their children received as they attended classes. Some stated they felt their children were becoming more social while others talked about successful kindergarten entry for their children. They attributed those successes to the child learning center.

The most frequent requested improvement is to have more; participants would like more overall time in the program and more time per week. Some felt they needed more time to polish their English and needed time beyond two years. A suggestion was made to implement for evaluation assessments to gain a better understanding of the skills they needed to improve and to truly feel ready to move on to the next level. Others felt adding a conversational

English class would provide additional opportunities to practice in a secure place before moving on. Participants also suggested changes to the summer schedule with perhaps having June and July as optional months.

Not having to switch educational navigators was an improvement suggested. Participants would like to stay with the same navigator as they already have built a relationship and it is difficult to start all over again with a different person.
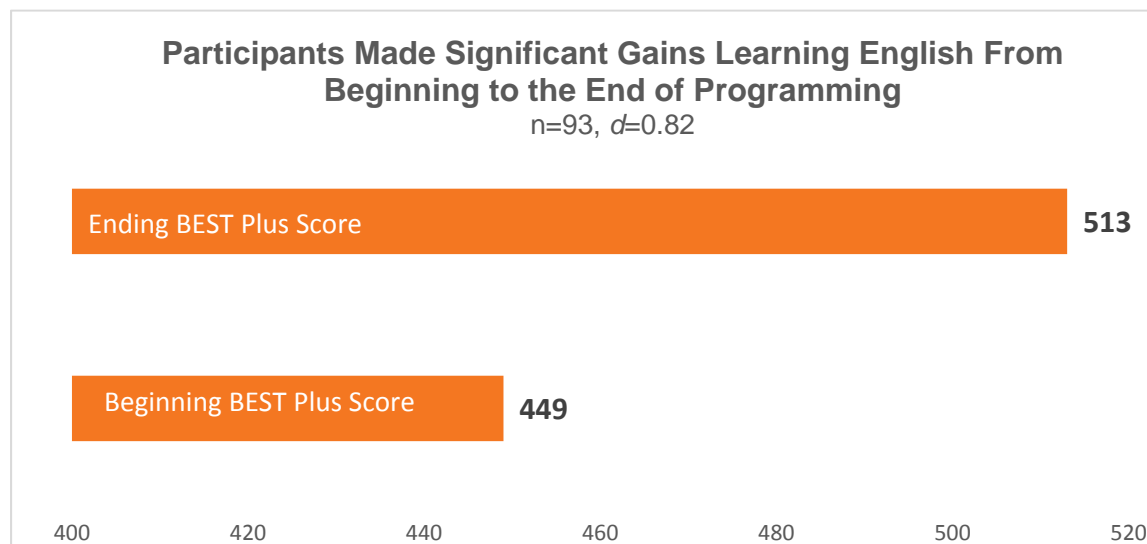
PARENT OUTCOMES

What was the impact on English and parenting?

Method. Growth in English is assessed using the BEST Plus. The tool was administered by the LCSSO English teachers after a set number of hours of English instruction. Multiple measures were used to measure growth in parenting skills and changes in parent-child interactions. The Child Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) was collected from parents at intake and again within the year. The CPRS provides scores for closeness and conflict within a relationship. For 2015-16, the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) was reintroduced to families as measure of parent-child interactions. Finally, as part of the Boys Town Common Sense parenting multiple scales were collected and are discussed later in this section.

English Language Assessment Results

On average, participants started the program knowing some basic phrases and understanding social conversations with some difficulty. At this beginning level, participants may need repetition of new vocabulary and phrasing. With the English classes provided by the program, many participants are reaching the Advanced ESL level (BEST Plus Scores of 507-540) by the time they leave. At this level, participants can function independently to meet survival needs and to navigate routine social and work situations. They have basic fluency speaking the language and can participate in most conversations. They may still need occasional repetitions or explanations of new concepts or vocabulary.

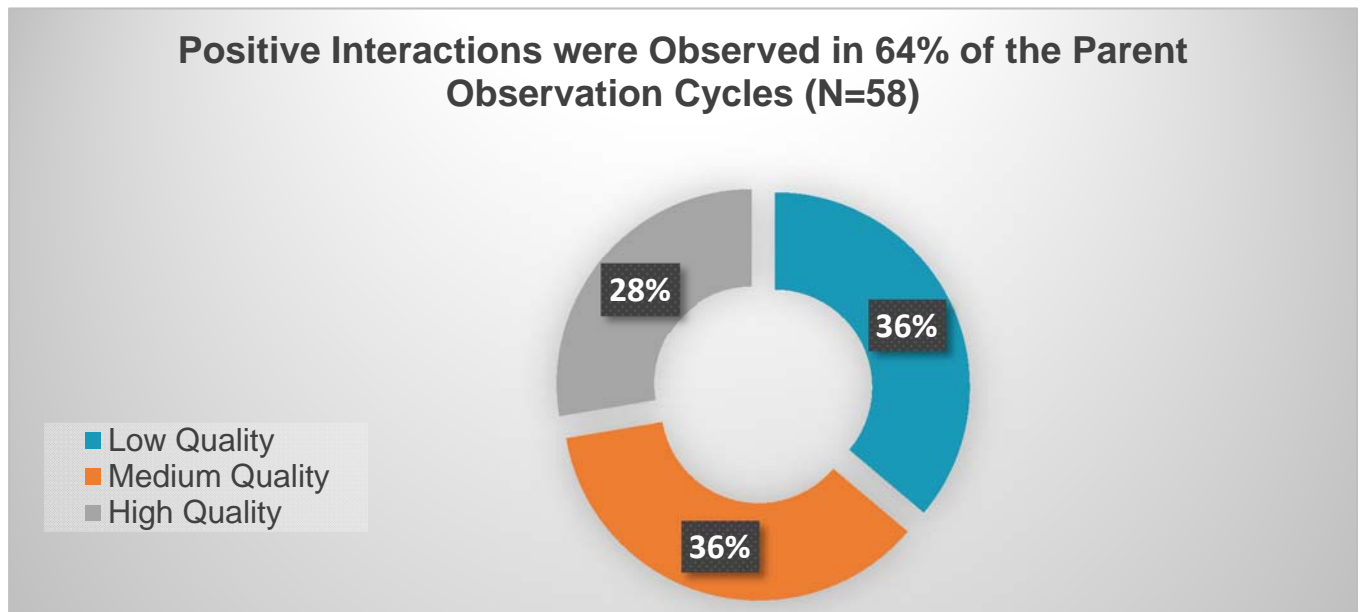Paired sample t-tests were conducted to analyze the Best Plus scores. Pre to post analysis found a significant improvement in the scores (t(93)=7.891, p<.01, d=0.82).

Participants Made Significant Gains Learning English From Beginning to the End of Programming
n=93, d=0.82

Ending BEST Plus Score	513
Beginning BEST Plus Score	449

400   420   440   460   480   500   520

Parenting Outcomes

Method. Navigators provided video observations to the evaluation team for parents in the program. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) was used to provide feedback to parents and help navigators determine which skills to focus on with parents. Feedback is provided in the following areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, Supporting Confidence and Overall score. Navigators receive a written report with scores and recommendations to use with families. For this year, 64% of the parents had interactions in the medium to high quality range. These scores are baseline scores and post scores will be collected next year.

Parent-Child Interaction Results

Positive Interactions were Observed in 64% of the Parent Observation Cycles (N=58)

- Low Quality — 36%
- Medium Quality — 36%
- High Quality — 28%

Boys Town Common Sense Parenting

Parenting Assessment Results

Data from Boys Town showed significant growth on the Parenting Children and Adolescents (PARCA) scale in the following areas: Supporting Good Behavior, Setting Limits and Proactive Parents. Using effect size as a measure of clinical improvement, the following percentages of participants had a small or greater pre-post improvement ($d > 0.2$): Supporting Good Behavior = 85%, Setting Limits = 79%, and Proactive Parenting = 67%. **Overall results indicate that 85% of participants experienced clinically significant improvements in parenting as measured by the PARCA Total Score.**

Not only did parenting practices improve on the scale but the Common Sense parenting classes were well attended with average attendance of 94% and the family participants rated the classes high on both satisfaction and knowledge gained. The most frequent improvement requested was longer class time (22% of the participants).

> "They had us practicing techniques that could improve our child's behavior; **they helped us by explaining what could possibly work.** In general everything was good and I can say it helped me a lot."

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

What were the parents' relationships with their children?

Parents of students who attended the Family Learning program were asked to complete Child Parent Relationship Scales. This is a measure of parent and child closeness and conflict (Pianta, 1992). This tool is set up to measure these constructs on a 5-point scale with 5 being "definitely applies" and 1 being "definitely does not apply." The hope is closeness is rated closer to 5 and conflict is rated closer to 1, acknowledging that there is natural variation and some degree lower or higher is not significant.

Parents demonstrated high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict.
No significant difference were found from pre to post.

	Pre	Post
Closeness	4.35	4.33
Conflict	2.19	2.35

■ **Pre** ■ **Post**

n = 67
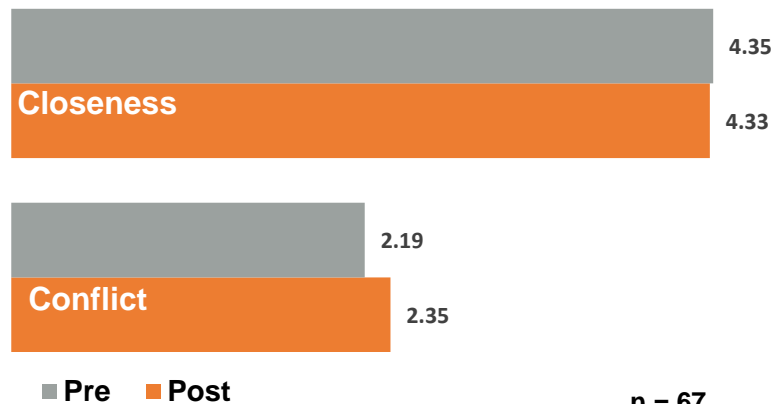
Paired sample t-tests found no significant differences between the pre and post parent ratings for both conflict ($t(65) = 1.29$, $p=0.199$ and closeness ($t(67) = 0.46$, $p = 0.649$).

How did families benefit from receiving crisis intervention support?

Method. Families who received crisis intervention support from Family Liaisons completed additional tools including a stress index, the strengths and difficulties questionnaire and the trauma symptom checklist (as appropriate). Goals for the family and student are set and measured throughout the time the family is enrolled with the program. Teachers rate each student on their skills for math, reading and writing at the end of the services.

Attendance data for school age students was also collected and reported by the liaisons.

Parent Stress Decreased Significantly after Receiving Services (n=29, d=1.88)

Pre Rating: 7.14
Post Rating: 3.79
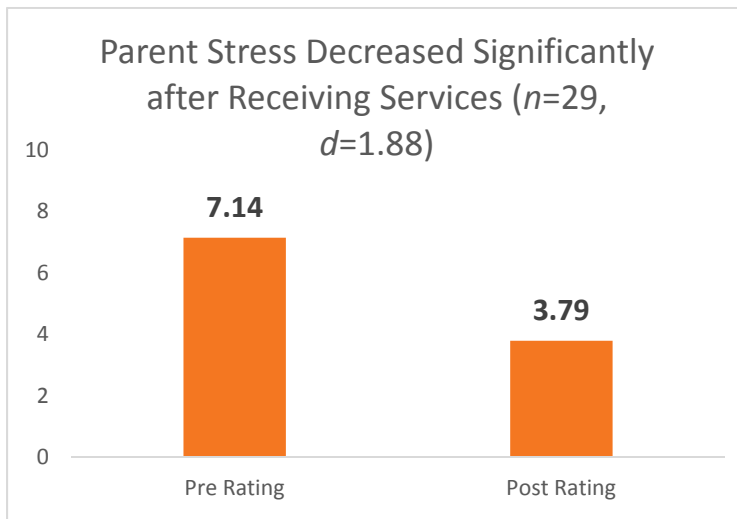
Family Demographics

89 adult participants

Education Level: 83% have less than a GED or HS diploma

96% Female

100% of families qualify for FRL

Families receiving services faced multiple challenges and barriers. The vast majority (83%) had less than a GED or high school diploma and 100% of the families qualified for free and reduced lunch. Yet, after receiving intervention support, parent stress levels decreased significantly, $t(28)=6.447$, $p<.01$, $d=1.88$).

Most Goals Set were Achieved or Improving when services ended

- Achieved: 81%
- Improving: 4%
- Not Achieved: 15%
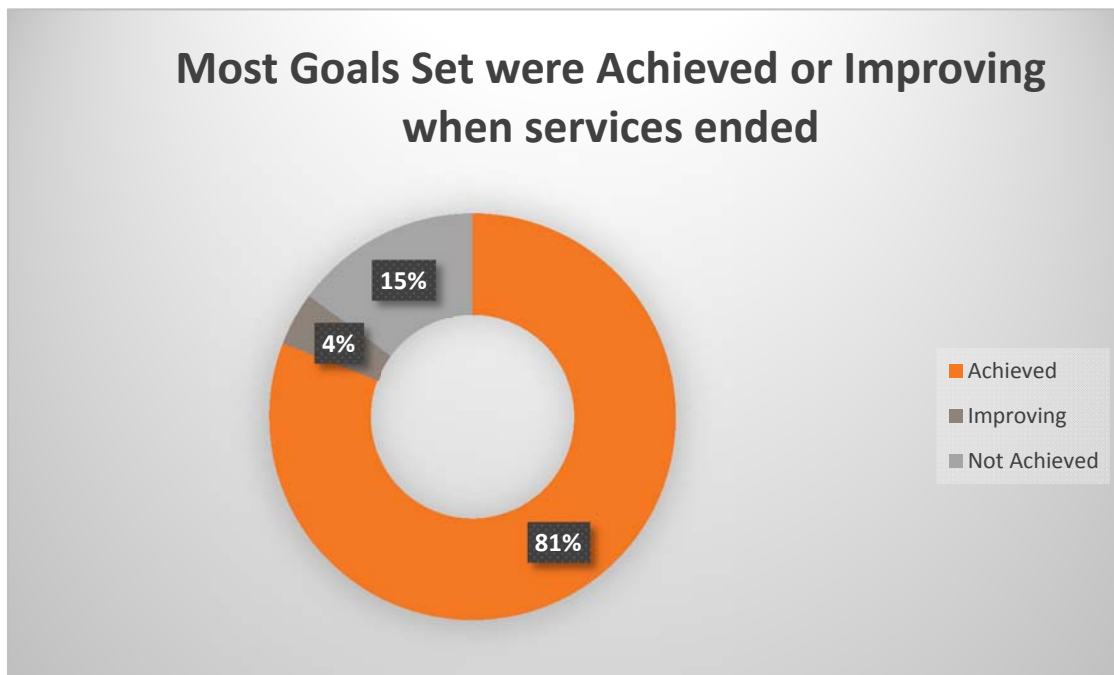
Families met the majority of the goals while in the program (81% were achieved). Goals were set by the families and the family liaison for the following areas: Educational/Vocational: 53%, Family: 9%, Legal: 4%, Living

Situation: 6%, Mental Health: 13%, Other: 2%, Safety: 4%, and Social/Recreational: 2%. As expected, most goals were in the educational/vocational area as that is the focus for the program.

For students enrolled in school (N=59), teachers were asked to rank students' skills as either below, meeting or exceeding expectations in the areas of math, reading and writing. Students demonstrated high levels of meeting expectations for math (80%) and slightly less for reading (65%) and writing (63%). Students being served by the program had excellent attendance with 72% missing 10 or fewer days of school. On average, students served missed 5.94 days of school (N=59).

TEACHER RATINGS OF STUDENTS WITH PARENTS AT LCCSO
80% OF STUDENTS WERE MEETING/EXCEEDING MATH EXPECTATIONS

Below   Meets   Exceeds

	Below	Meets	Exceeds
WRITING RATING	34%	46%	17%
READING RATING	34%	48%	17%
MATH RATING	20%	49%	31%
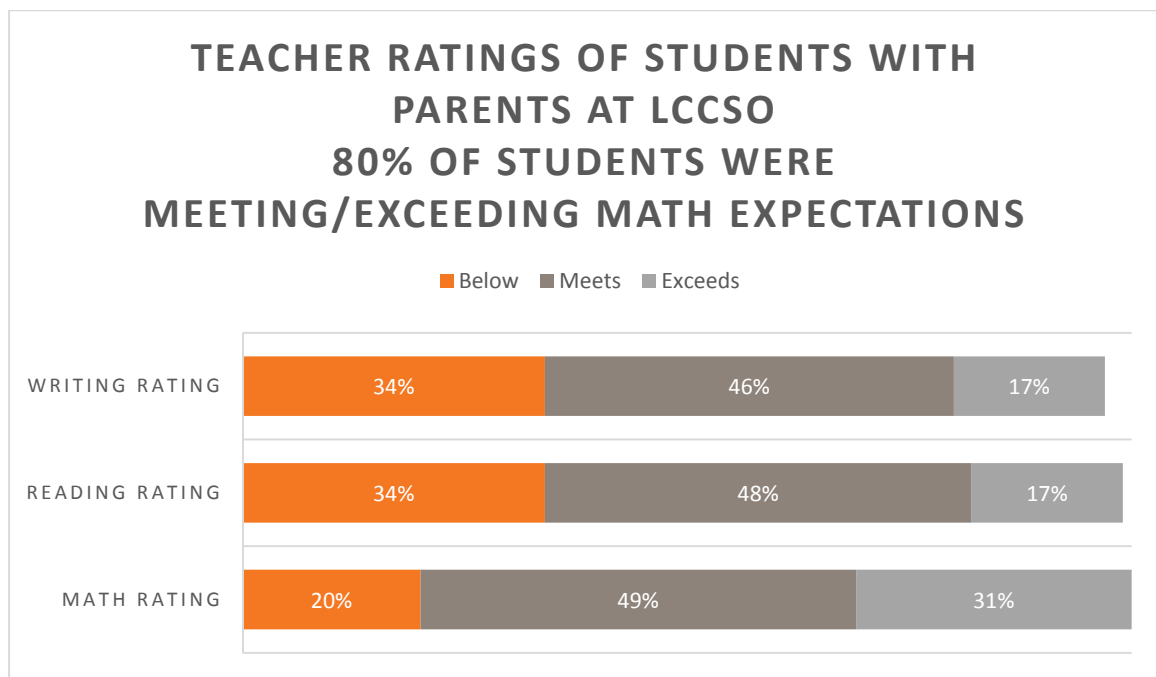
Client Satisfaction

Clients were asked to complete a survey at the end of crisis services by the family liaison. Questions on the survey asked about their knowledge and skills gained within the program as well as with their overall satisfaction level with the intervention supports that had been provided.

Families rated the services received as high quality

94% rated services as Excellent or Good

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Adequate
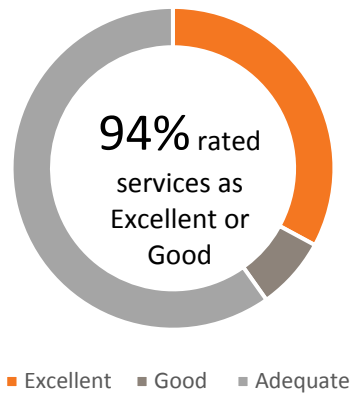
Most of the clients (n=26) who completed the survey rated the services they received from liaisons as either "excellent" or "good". In addition, they reported being more confident in supporting their child in school, understanding their child's academic needs and more understanding of how to deal with stress. Clients suggested that the program last longer than 90 days even if the services weren't as intense or frequent. They wanted to stay in touch with the liaison as a resource and possible support system.

Clients reported increased levels of understanding and confidence (n=26)

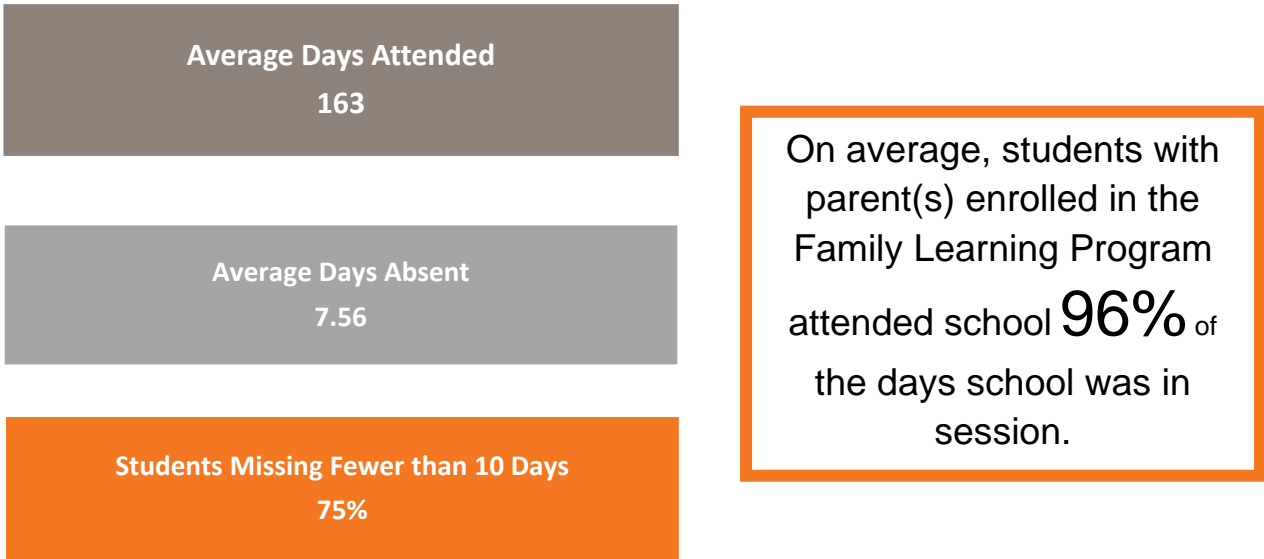|	
Better understanding of how to deal with stress	77%
Better understanding of my child's academic needs	83%
More confident in my ability to support my child academically	87%

■ Agree/Strongly Agree

STUDENT OUTCOMES

What was the impact on school attendance and performance?

Method. Student data were requested and obtained from Omaha Public Schools for the students whose families had participated for any length of time in the family learning program during the 2015-16 school year. Data included both attendance, demographics and academic achievement for reading and math. Scores were obtained for students who had taken the Nebraska State Assessments (NeSA) in reading and mathematics as well as for students who had taken the MAP reading and math assessments for 2015-16. Students included in the NeSA analysis were those students enrolled in elementary schools only. Students enrolled in middle and high schools were not included as they have not been the target population for the program. Paired sample t-tests were used to analyze the pre to post score changes with Cohen's d effect sizes calculated for those where the change in scores was statistically significant.

Attendance Data (N=158)

Average Days Attended
163

Average Days Absent
7.56

Students Missing Fewer than 10 Days
75%

On average, students with parent(s) enrolled in the Family Learning Program attended school 96% of the days school was in session.

Tracking attendance data is one way to measure parent involvement and engagement with the school system. Through the program, parents have come to understand the importance of school attendance and its relationship to their child's academic progress. Attendance data were reported for the target students of the program; those students in grades K-3 during the 2015-16 school year (N=158).

Academic Achievement Data

For the 2015-2016 year fall to spring comparisons were made using the MAP reading assessment.   The percentiles are based on a national normative population. Second grade students (n=20) with parents enrolled in LCCSO during the 2015-16 year made gains moving up within the average range.

Students demonstrated gains in reading skills on the MAP reading assessment (N=20).

| 40th Percentile Fall | → | 44th Percentile Spring |
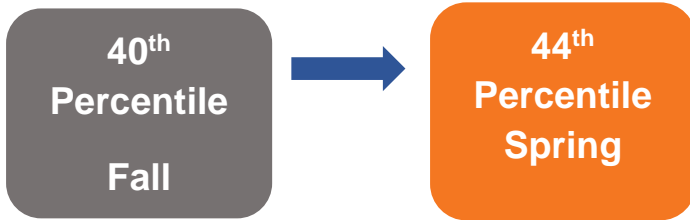
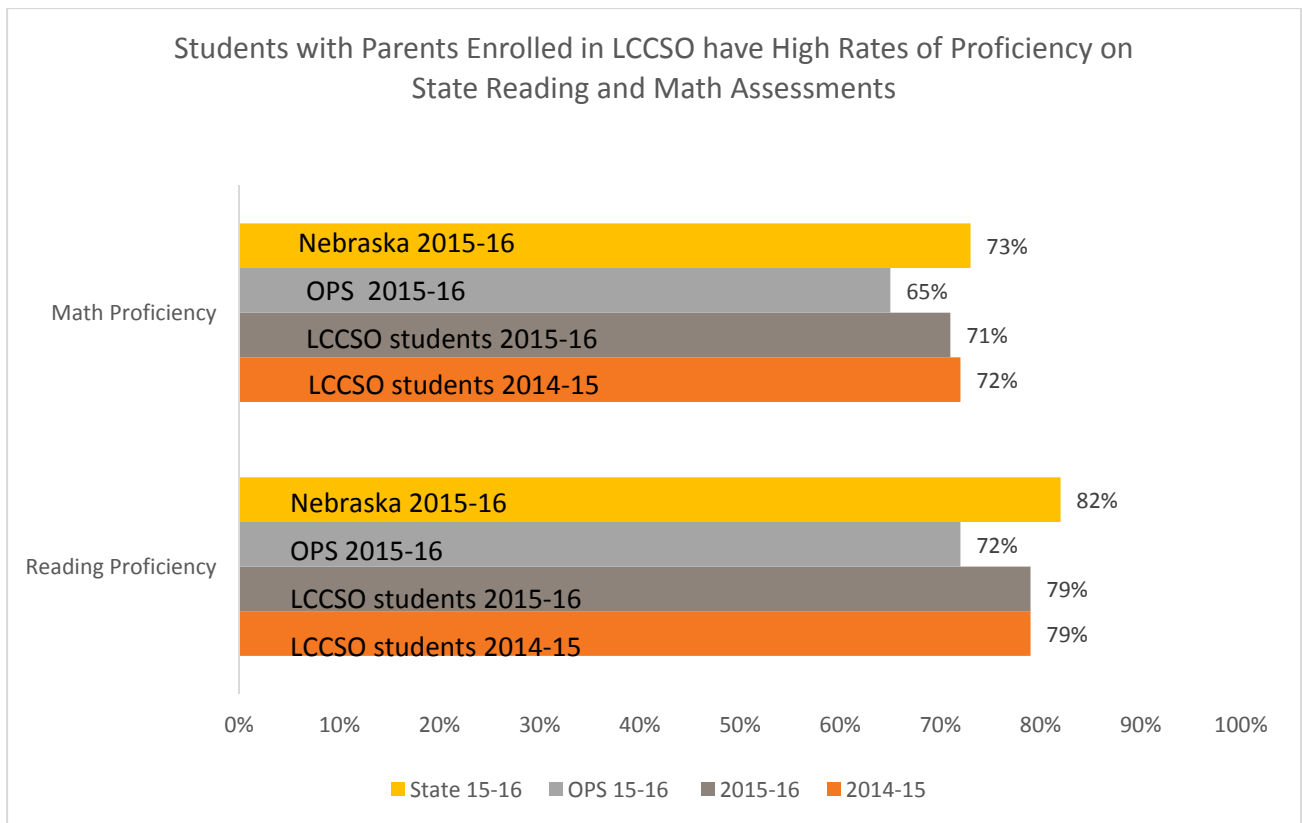In addition to the MAP Assessment, NeSA reading and math scores were obtained from Omaha Public Schools for both 2014-15 and the 2015-16 school years. Only the NESA scores for the elementary students were used in the analysis as they are the students most likely to be impacted by parent enrollment in the program. Paired sample *t*-tests were conducted on the NeSA scores and found that student scores remained stable. The changes in mean scores were not significant for reading ($t(94)=0.721$, $p=0.473$) nor for math ($t(94)= -.920$, $p=0.360$).

Students with Parents Enrolled in LCCSO have High Rates of Proficiency on State Reading and Math Assessments

Math Proficiency
- Nebraska 2015-16: 73%
- OPS 2015-16: 65%
- LCCSO students 2015-16: 71%
- LCCSO students 2014-15: 72%

Reading Proficiency
- Nebraska 2015-16: 82%
- OPS 2015-16: 72%
- LCCSO students 2015-16: 79%
- LCCSO students 2014-15: 79%

Legend: ■ State 15-16 ■ OPS 15-16 ■ 2015-16 ■ 2014-15

Student data show that students whose parents were enrolled with the Family Learning Program had high levels of proficiency and those rates have maintained for the past two years. The proficiency rates are compared to the overall district level proficiency rates. The comparison made with the district rates should be considered a rough comparison as many factors contribute to student scores. The district average most likely does not represent the demographics of the students in the LCCSO sample. However, the students in the LCCSO sample are scoring higher than the district average proficiency rates and are approaching the statewide proficiency rates (82% for reading and 73% for math, 2016 State of the Schools, NDE).

Finally, **third grade students (n=20)** were pulled separately from the overall elementary student sample. **Proficiency rates from those students were 70% proficient for reading and 60% scored in the proficient range for math**. While those proficiency rates are lower than the state and OPS averages, the rates should be considered with caution as the number of students in this sample is too small to draw any conclusions.

Community of Practice: Use of Data

How were data used by program staff?

Continuous Quality Improvement. The Learning Community Center of South Omaha focuses on being both family centered and data driven. The management team meets monthly with the evaluator to discuss the evaluation, examine data and to revisit the logic model.

Staff at the center use the data gathered for the evaluation on an ongoing basis. The intake questionnaire is used to help the navigators work with families and set personal goals while the BEST Plus assessment is used to place students in the correct level for English classes. Navigators also use the KIPS and CPRS scores to work with parents on parent-child interactions. Finally, data from the focus groups is given back to the program. The information from focus groups has been used to reconfigure classes, add financial literacy classes, tweak schedules and respond to families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One recommendation discussed with the management is better tracking of the target students. Impact of the program will be difficult to deteremine as students enter into school unless the database tracks and maintains participants even after they leave the program.

A second recommendation is to review the graduation requirements for the program participants. While some participants are ready to graduate and move on after two years, others need additional time. Families recommended testing to graduate instead of a time frame.

Third establishing a consistent crisis support model would be helpful both for families and the liaisons serving the families. A consistent model helps the center staff and the liaisons collaborate in providing the most efficient and effective services for the enrolled families.
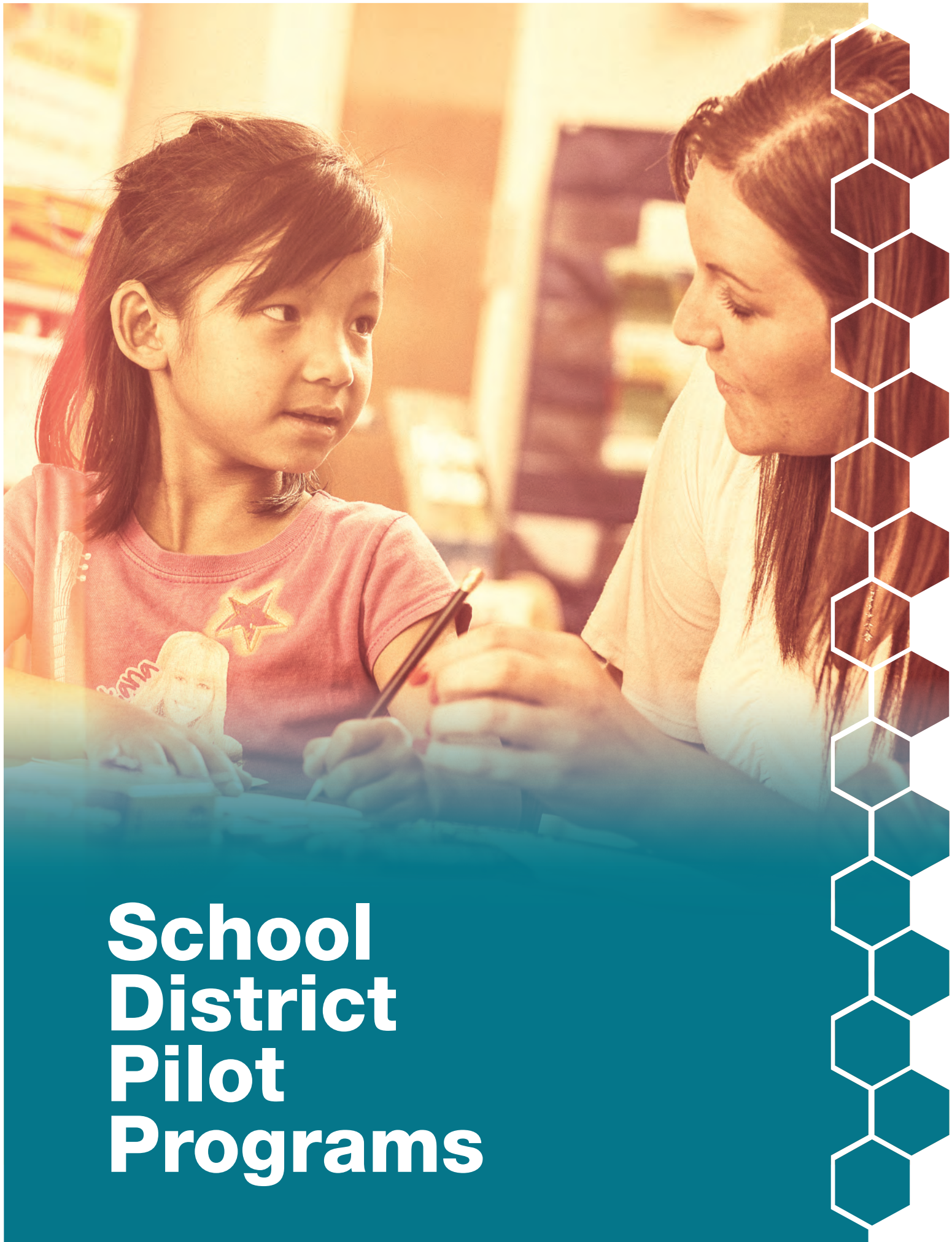
School District Pilot Programs

Pilot Programs

The Learning Community supported three pilot programs, Instructional Coaching, Extended Learning, and Jump Start to Kindergarten. The descriptions of each program and a summary of their outcome data is found in this section.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional Coaching has been an ongoing pilot program since 2012-2013 and has grown to include three Learning Community school districts (Bellevue Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools and Westside Community Schools). Each district uses a different coaching model and the focus for that model varies.

RATIONALE

Coaching adds value to the classroom. Jim Knight (2011) stated, "Coaches help teachers take all ideas and practices they are learning and bring them to life. Without coaching, too often, no significant change occurs" (p. 91). The three districts implementing instructional coaching have found that changes are occurring with teachers. In addition, the changes and improvements seen in new teachers mirrors what has been found in the coaching research. Current research indicates that while a differentiated coaching approach is beneficial to all teachers, it may be most important for teachers young in their careers (Reddy et al., 2013).

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

While each district has different implementation models of instructional coaching, some of the components are consistent across all three sites. Coaches work with teachers to provide consultation, modeling, data analysis, co-teaching and lesson planning support. All three districts have emphasized supporting new teachers and helping teachers implement new curricula.

What coaching models and strategies were implemented?

Bellevue Public Schools: Bellevue Public School combined Jim Knight's coaching framework with Charlotte Danielson's teacher evaluation model to provide coaching across seven elementary buildings using six instructional coaches. Coaching cycles were used once teachers enrolled into the coaching process. Coaching activities within a building included observations, modeling, individual student problem solving, data analysis and utilization, teacher feedback and guidance with new curriculum. Instructional coaching had the potential to reach 181 teachers and impact 1648 students.

Omaha Public Schools: Coaching Conversations with Kathy Kennedy and intense training with Irene Fountas for coaches provided the bulk of the framework for literacy facilitators in Omaha Public Schools. Coaches received multiple professional development days designed to hone skills on teaching and coaching reading instruction. The focus for the OPS coaches (n=12) was reading instruction (both large and small group) for grades K-3. A total of approximately 3900 students and their K-3 teachers were part of the coaching across 13 buildings.

Westside Community Schools: Jim Knight's coaching framework served as the base for the instructional coaching provided to two buildings in Westside. Coaches provided multiple opportunities for K-6 staff with coaching cycles required for new teachers (those within their first 3 years). Coaching activities included modeling, co-teaching, planning, video-taped observations with feedback, grade level planning and training in large groups. Coaches were expected to provide professional development and guidance to teachers implementing new reading and writing curricula. Instructional coaching has the potential to reach over 40 teachers and approximately 700 students for Westside Community Schools.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2015-2016, 23 schools, approximately 400 teachers and potentially 6681 students were served across the three participating districts. The average FRL rate combined for all three districts was 72% with building FRL rates ranging from 44%-92%. All of the schools were elementary buildings. Two districts provided coaching to all teachers, including special education staff, in their buildings. One district focused on the K-3 classroom teachers.
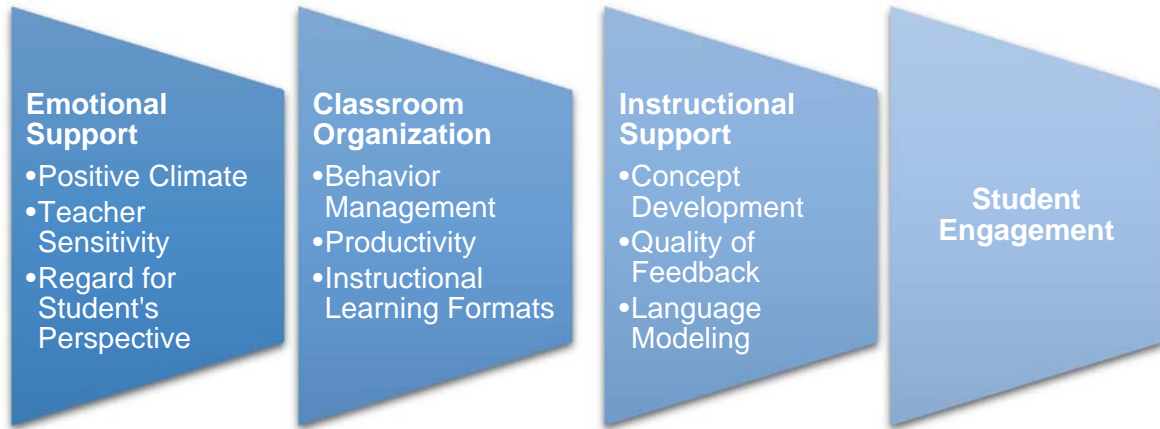
OUTCOMES

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OUTCOMES

What was the quality of classroom instruction?

Method. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was used to measure the quality of classroom instruction at two points in time. Each district submitted videos for a sample of the teachers participating in coaching.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Results
CLASS scoring was based on a two-hour videotape of classroom interactions. Scoring is based on a 7 point scale with 7 indicating highest quality. The K-3 CLASS has three main domains while the Upper Elementary tool has four. Dimensions include emotional, organizational, and instructional support. Instructional Support tends to be the domain with the most opportunity for improvement as it challenges teachers to effectively extend language, model advanced language, and to promote higher-order thinking skills. For classrooms above 3rd grade, a fourth dimension, student engagement is added to the Domains.

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Student Engagement
•Positive Climate •Teacher Sensitivity •Regard for Student's Perspective	•Behavior Management •Productivity •Instructional Learning Formats	•Concept Development •Quality of Feedback •Language Modeling	

Research on the CLASS supports ratings of 5 or higher within the domains of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, and 3.25 or higher within the domain of Instructional Support, as being necessary to have impacts on student achievement (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010).

Individual teacher reports were produced for fall and spring. These reports were shared with both the teacher and the instructional coach. The reports are for coaching processes and for this evaluation only. The CLASS reports were not shared with building principals nor central office administrators.

Five Areas of Significant Growth

Positive Climate (d =0.32)

Behavior Management (d =0.47)

Productivity (d =0.26)

Quality of Feedback (d =0.40)

Language Modeling (d =0.45)

CLASS Scores Increased Across Three Major Domains
Significant growth occurred in classroom organization and instructional support

Domain	Pre	Post
Emotional Support	5.26	5.41
Classroom Organization	6.14	6.31
Instructional Support	2.7	3.11

■ Pre ■ Post

n=65
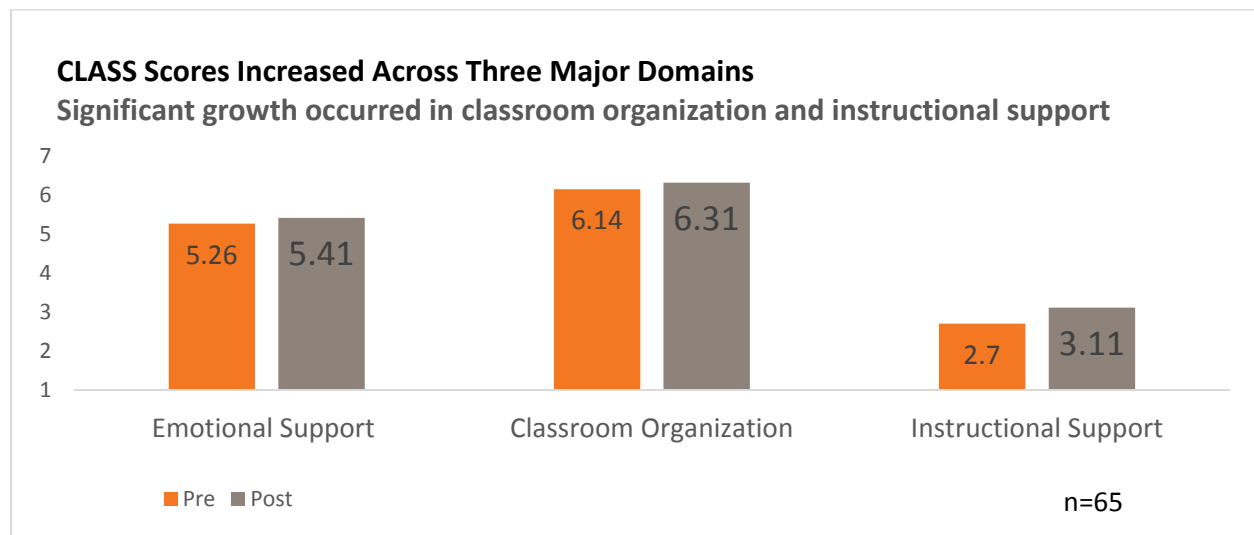
CLASS scores from pre to post had significant gains in five dimensions and two domains. Paired sample t-tests were used to analyze the data for the 65 teachers submitting pre and post CLASS videos. Cohen's *d* was calculated for each area showing significant change. Two domains showed significant improvement from pre to post (Classroom Organization, *d*=0.27 and Instructional Support, *d*=0.40). Mean scores for Classroom Organization remained in the high range (scores between 6-7) while mean scores for Instructional Support moved from the low to the mid-range.

One of the largest improvements was having a **22% decrease** in the number of teachers scoring in the low range for Instructional Support. In the pre observation, 67% scored below 3.00 while only 45% scored below 3.00 in the post observation. The increase in Instructional Support scores is consistent with the reports from coaches who observed change in those teachers entering into coaching relationships and/or coaching cycles.

Students continue to learn in organized and productive classrooms with **81%** of teachers scoring in the high range for Classroom Organization in the spring. While not a significant improvement, the Emotional Support mean scores approached the high range with 85% of teachers scoring in middle range and zero teachers with scores in the low range.
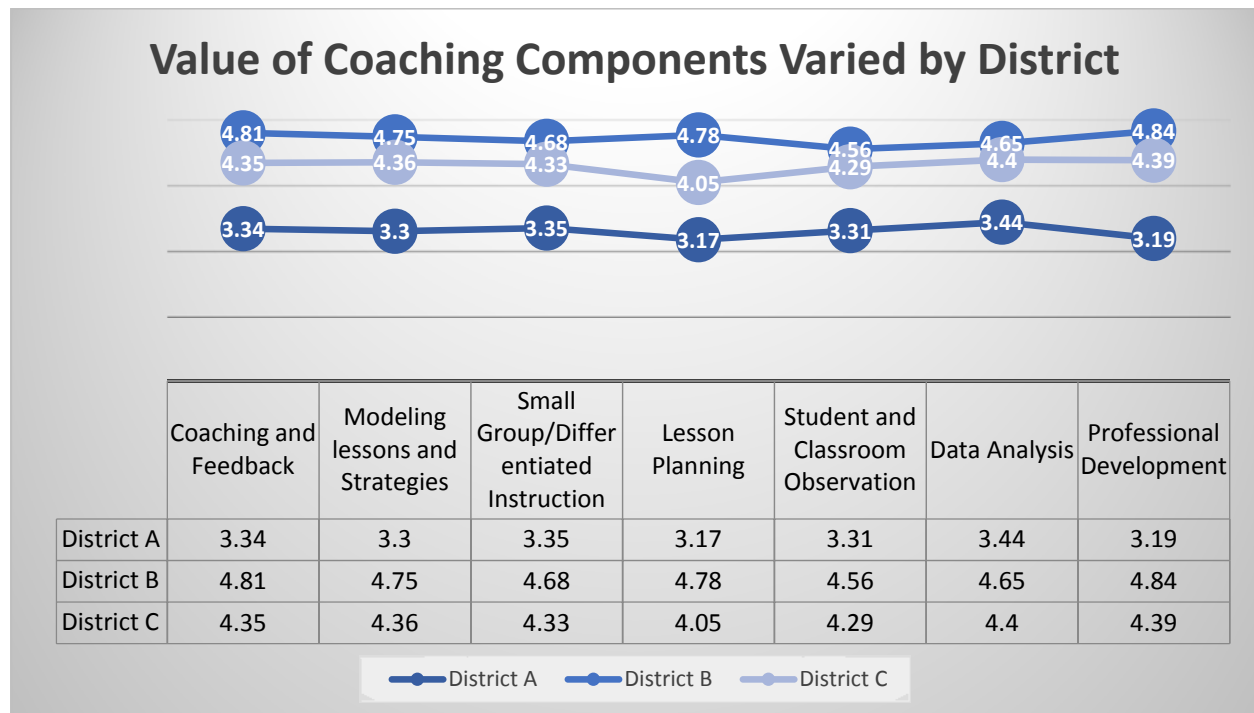
What were the reflections of teachers and coaches?

Method. A combination of teacher surveys, instructional coach focus groups and instructional coach surveys were used to gather information on how both teachers and coaches perceived the instructional coaching programs across the three participating districts.

Teacher Survey: Majority of teachers rate their coaching experience positively.
(n=272) *(1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree)*

Survey Item	Mean Scores		
	District A	District B	District C
My literacy coach/facilitator and I have a positive working relationship.	4.12	4.91	4.61
My literacy coach/facilitator listens to me.	3.93	4.91	4.59
My literacy coach/facilitator is available when I need him/her.	3.67	4.91	4.43
When I have a problem, my literacy coach/facilitator is helpful in developing a plan to address it.	3.62	4.97	4.45
My literacy coach/facilitator communicates with me in a way that is easy to understand.	3.99	4.97	4.60
Building level support was positive as it related to the literacy coaching/facilitator program.	3.81	5.00	4.31
Considering everything, I am satisfied with the literacy coaching program.	3.48	4.97	4.20

Survey coaching data from teachers indicate difference between districts for levels of satisfaction particularly in regard to overall satisfaction levels. Across the districts, levels of satisfaction were in the "agree to strongly agree" range for the relationship components of the coaching model. Relationships between coaches and teachers continue to strengthen and are essential to the success of coaching. Building level was variable and may have to do with the length a coaching or coaching model has been in a building. Districts may wish to consider maintaining continuity in coach placement with buildings and to have clear expectations and roles for both coaches and administrators within the coaching framework.

Value of Coaching Components Varied by District

	Coaching and Feedback	Modeling lessons and Strategies	Small Group/Differentiated Instruction	Lesson Planning	Student and Classroom Observation	Data Analysis	Professional Development
District A	3.34	3.3	3.35	3.17	3.31	3.44	3.19
District B	4.81	4.75	4.68	4.78	4.56	4.65	4.84
District C	4.35	4.36	4.33	4.05	4.29	4.4	4.39

District A   District B   District C

Teachers' value of coaching components mirrored their levels of satisfaction with the overall coaching framework and their relationship with the instructional coach at their building/district. District B had the highest levels of satisfaction and building level support and also rated each coaching component as being valuable (No component had an average score of less than 4.5 on a 1-5 scale with 5 being the highest. District A which had mid-level of satisfaction with the overall coaching process also had mid-level ratings as to the value of the coaching components. In examining the two pieces of survey data, it becomes clear the importance of both the relationship component and the length of time a coach has been able to work with the same teachers.

COACHES INPUT

Coaches across all three districts provided input through focus groups and surveys. Coaches were asked questions about successes, strategies, who seems to be benefitting the most, lessons learned and obstacles in creating a coaching program. The following themes emerged from the coaches' input.

Instructional coaching is a benefit for all teachers but particularly for new teachers. Coaches agreed that new teachers have been the most open to working with a coach and developing an interactive relationship. Coaches discussed that new teachers see the value in working with a coach and willing to try multiple methods of feedback including the use of video observation and feedback.

Relationships are instrumental in developing and maintaining effective coaching. Coaches expressed frustration with obstacles impeding their ability to develop relationships with teachers. Some of the obstacles were discontinuity of building placement, having certain teachers being "forced" to participate in coaching and administrators wanting to use coaches in roles outside of coaching. When allowed to build relationships, coaches experienced teachers engaged in coaching and willing to develop collaborative relationships. Relationships were fostered by being a resource for teachers when learning new curriculum, working with grade level teams, co-teaching, modeling and starting small. Coaches that had worked in a building for more than one year reported more success in getting teacher buy-in and participation from more staff with the coaching process.

Coaching has led to a definite impact on students. Coaches reported higher levels of student engagement with instruction, increased levels of achievement for younger students and an increased collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers. Coaches continue to notice students working at higher levels than had been noted previously. Writing skills of kindergarten and 1st grade students was noted across districts.

Building and district administrator support and understanding of the coach role is one key to teacher buy in. Coaches discussed the importance of having a district vision for coaching that included specific roles for administrators and coaches. In buildings lacking administrative support, coaches were often asked to do extra duties (such as lunch and recess duty, assessment administrator and behavior support) that interfered with and/or reduced the amount of time the coach could work with teachers on instruction. For buildings with strong administrative support, coaches felt valued as professionals and had more time to develop relationships and work continually with teachers.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Did instructional coaching impact student outcomes?

Change in student scores and impact should be seen as a secondary effect and outcome of instructional coaching. Time may be necessary for the full impact of coaching to be seen on student learning. Also instructional coaching is embedded into current district instructional practices and curriculum choices. The impact on student scores is cumulative. Without a control group comparison, the student outcome data should be seen as a collective impact of all things that a district may be implementing. Additionally, coaches may work differently with teachers and with groups of teachers.

Data collected for student outcomes include the NeSA-Reading and NeSA-Math scores, MAP achievement scores (fall to spring) and other data the districts deemed necessary to explore. Some of the information collected through focus groups, interviews and surveys indicated that these measures may not be sufficient in capturing the entire picture of student change and growth. For example, one district has seen tremendous gains in the skill of kindergarten students' writing products. However, there is not a normed assessment given in kindergarten or first grade to quantitatively capture that growth.

One further caveat, if student scores are already high, less growth would be expected. It is important to realize that mean standard scores and proficiency rates must also be taken into account when examining student data. Also, the MAP assessment typically has yielded great effect sizes than the NeSA-Reading assessment and that was the case once again this year.

For the districts reporting MAP data, the effect sizes for math were: d=0.25 and d=1.63 while for reading the effect sizes were: d=0.79 and d=1.14. For NeSA reading, the effect size was not calcuated as the growth in scores

(M=119.10 to M=119.60) was not significant (t(270)=0.258, p=0.796, 2-tailed). While the change in scores was not significant, **82%** of the students were in the proficient and above range on the NeSA-Reading assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback from coaches, a change to the evaluation could be a focus on the impact of coaching on new teachers. Coaches discussed how coaching was often mandatory or highly suggested for new teachers and this could be a great learning opportunity to determine coaching impact.

Second as a fourth district (Ralston Public Schools) joins the instructional coaching program and ESU3 is supporting instructional coaching across multiple districts having the Learning Community coaches participate in the coaching collaborative with ESU 3 would be a benefit. ESU3 Director of Teaching and Learning was open to having all the Learning Community coaches participate even those not served by ESU 3. The 2014-15 evaluation results were shared with ESU3 staff and surrounding districts at a coaching meeting in May. Continued collaboration would increase both coaching capacity across all districts but continue to the meet the goal of knowledge transfer.

Jump Start to Kindergarten

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Jump Start to Kindergarten has been an ongoing pilot program since the summer of 2011. Programming was designed to provide low income students, with limited or no previous educational experience, the opportunity to experience a kindergarten setting prior to the first day of school. The intent was to give the students a "Jump Start" so they could start kindergarten at a more equivalent level to their peers that may have had more extensive early childhood care and/or educational experiences.

Programming focused on pre-academic skills, social-emotional-behavioral readiness and orienting students to the processes and procedures of school. Further, some programs also include a strong family engagement component such as home visits, parent days, or other family engagement activities. The programs ranged from two to four weeks, with varying hours and days per week. All programs utilized certified teachers for part or all of their staffing.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In the summer of 2016, Jump Start to Kindergarten was implemented in five districts: Elkhorn, Millard, Omaha, Ralston, and Papillion La Vista. A total of 585 Kindergarten students served of which 450 were present for both pre and post assessment using the Bracken School Readiness Assessment. Demographic information was collected to help interpret the evaluation findings including: eligibility for free and reduced lunch, race, ethnicity, and/or enrollment in special education services.

Jump Start to Kindergarten serves a diverse population of students.

Free and Reduced Lunch   71%

Special Education   23%

n=585

0%   50%   100%
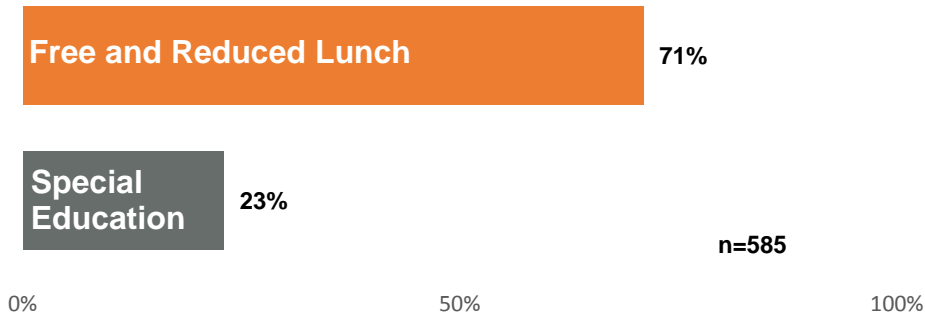
Jump Start to Kindergarten served 53 classrooms in 33 schools across the five participating districts. The program served slightly more males (54%) than females (46%). The majority of children served were five years of age.

Most of the students served represented ethnic or racial minorities.

White   33%

Non-White   34%   4%   21%   8%

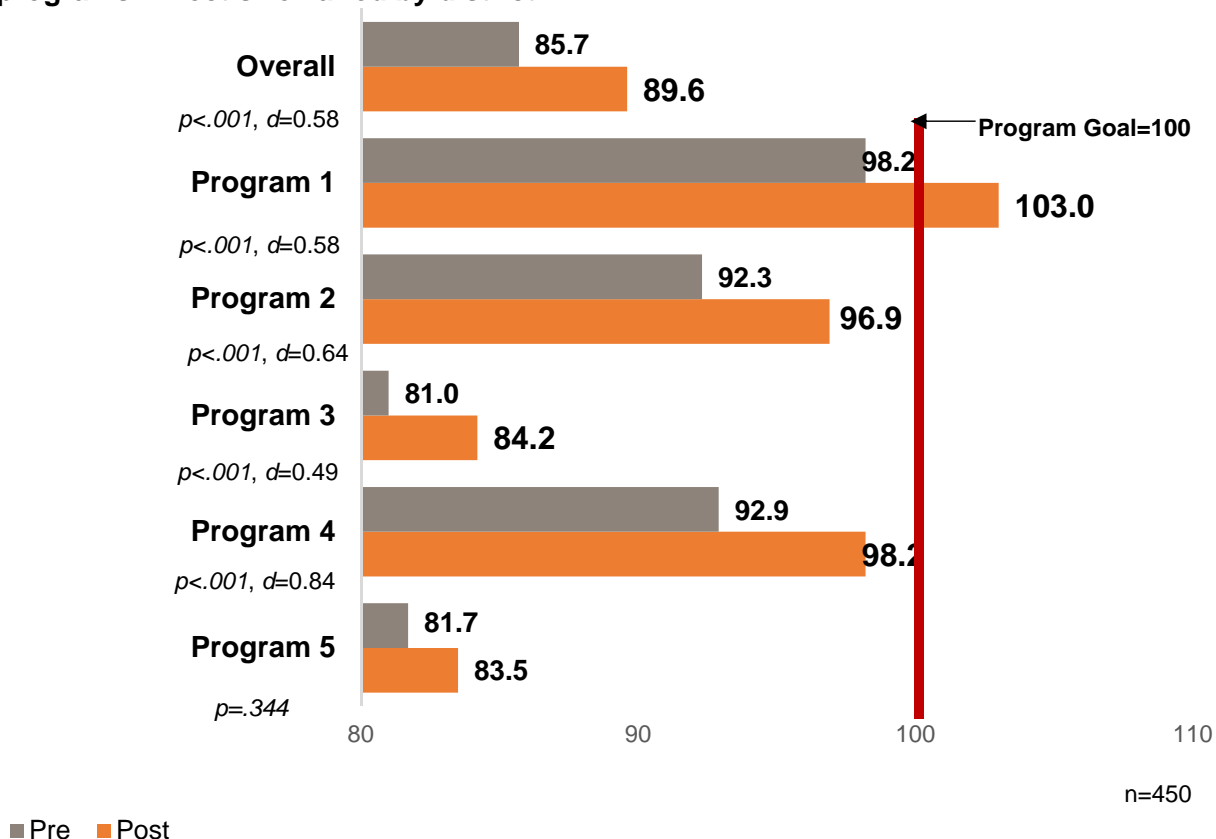Hispanic   Multi-Racial   Black   Asian

n=585
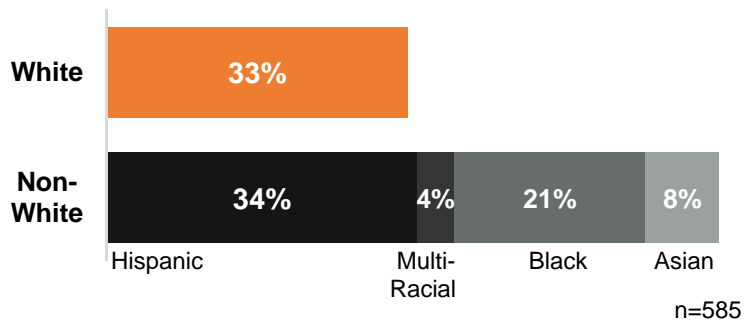
OUTCOMES

Student Academic Achievement

Method. The importance of concept development, particularly for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, has been demonstrated in numerous research articles (Neuman, 2006; Panter & 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 was 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 85 to 115 falling within the average range (one standard deviation above and below the mean).

School Readiness Assessment Results

For the summer of 2016, pre-post comparisons were made using a paired-samples t-test.   The results found that overall, the students made significant gains over the course of the program (t=-12.57, *p<.001*, *d*=0.58) suggesting substantial meaningful change within the zone of desired effects. While results varied throughout the programs, four of the five programs made significant gains. The overall effect size was higher in 2015-2016 (*d*=0.58) than the previous year *(d*=0.38), suggesting the intervention this year had a stronger effect.

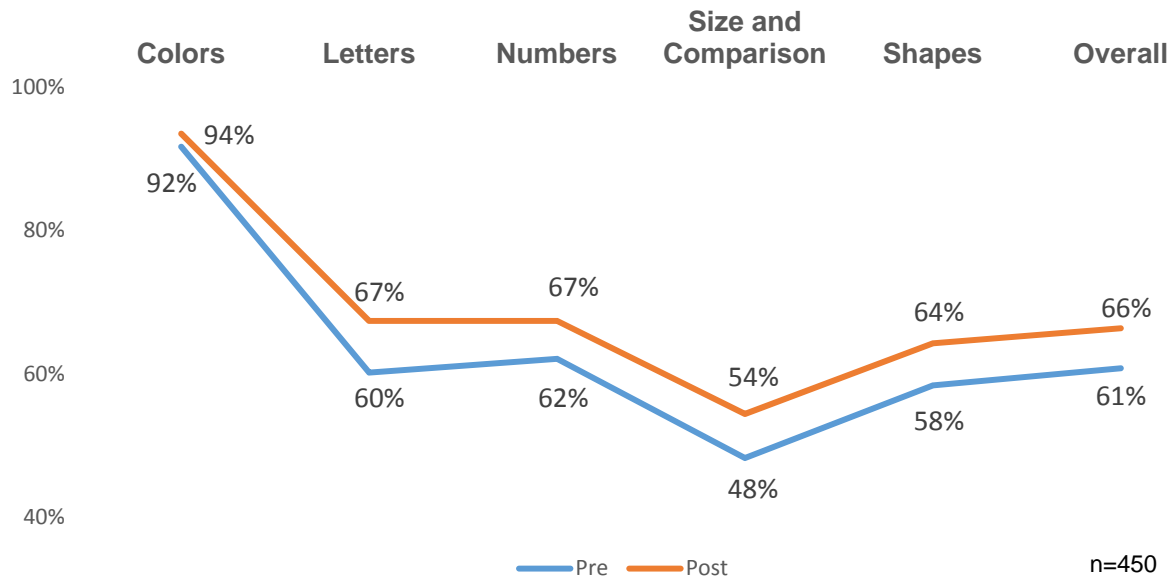**Students significantly improved overall and in four of the five Jump Start to Kindergarten programs. Effect size varied by district.**

Overall
p<.001, *d*=0.58
85.7
89.6

Program 1
p<.001, *d*=0.58
98.2
103.0
Program Goal=100

Program 2
p<.001, *d*=0.64
92.3
96.9

Program 3
p<.001, *d*=0.49
81.0
84.2

Program 4
p<.001, *d*=0.84
92.9
98.2

Program 5
p=.344
81.7
83.5

80   90   100   110

n=450

■ Pre ■ Post

The overall mean standard scores on the Bracken increased from 85.7 to 89.6, moving them slightly closer to the desired mean of 100. Generally speaking, the goal each year is to move the group as close to scores of 100 or greater.

When examining individual subtests, percentage of mastery increased in all areas, with an overall increase of 5.6 percentage points. An area of strength for these students was color naming (94% 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.
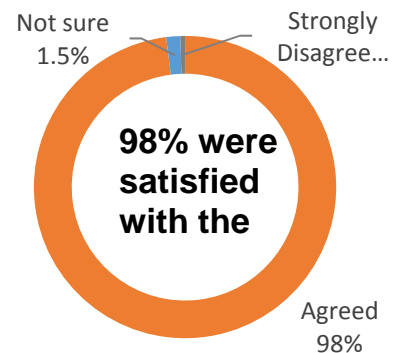
Percent of mastery increased in each subtest.

	Colors	Letters	Numbers	Size and Comparison	Shapes	Overall
Post	94%	67%	67%	54%	64%	66%
Pre	92%	60%	62%	48%	58%	61%

Pre ——— Post

n=450

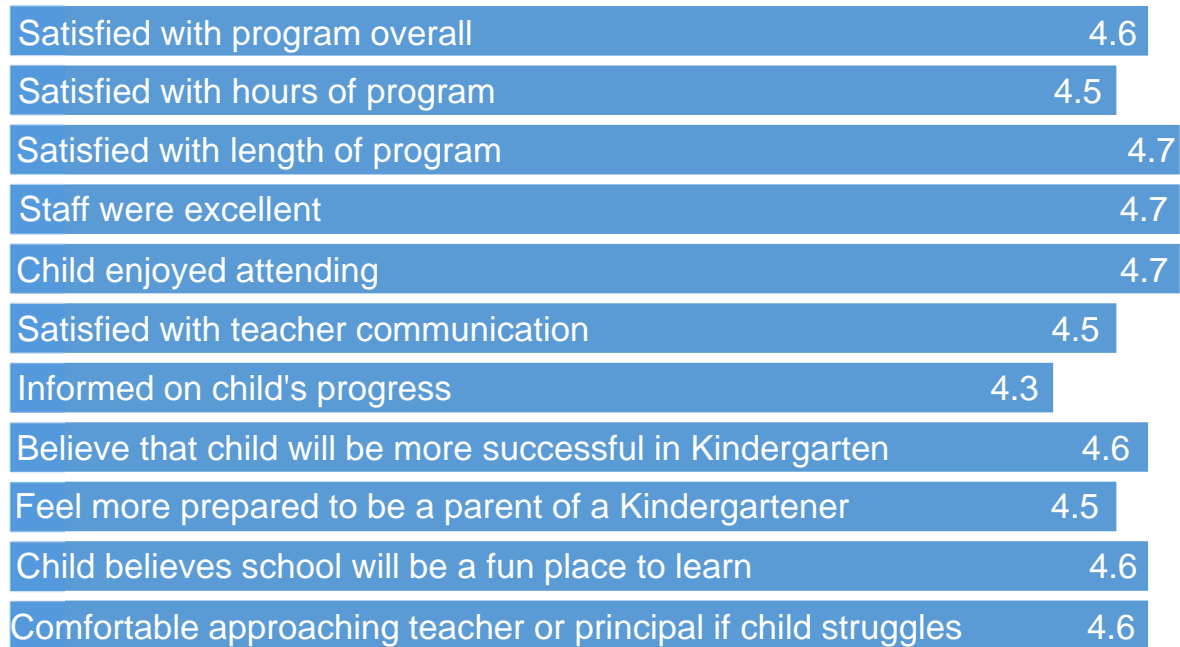## What did parents report about the Jump Start Kindergarten Programs?

Method. 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; however, rates of participation varied widely. Parent survey results are displayed in the following table (n=184).

Family Satisfaction Results

Families reported high overall satisfaction in all areas, including the structure and environment of the program. They also reported high levels of impact on such items as believing their child was more ready for kindergarten as a result of the program and feeling comfortable to talk with their child's teacher if a problem emerged. The lowest level of satisfaction was (4.3) for being informed about their child's progress.

Not sure 1.5%

Strongly Disagree…

98% were satisfied with the

Agreed 98%

Parent reported high levels of satisfaction in all areas.

Category	Rating
Satisfied with program overall	4.6
Satisfied with hours of program	4.5
Satisfied with length of program	4.7
Staff were excellent	4.7
Child enjoyed attending	4.7
Satisfied with teacher communication	4.5
Informed on child's progress	4.3
Believe that child will be more successful in Kindergarten	4.6
Feel more prepared to be a parent of a Kindergartener	4.5
Child believes school will be a fun place to learn	4.6
Comfortable approaching teacher or principal if child struggles	4.6

1   2   3   4   5

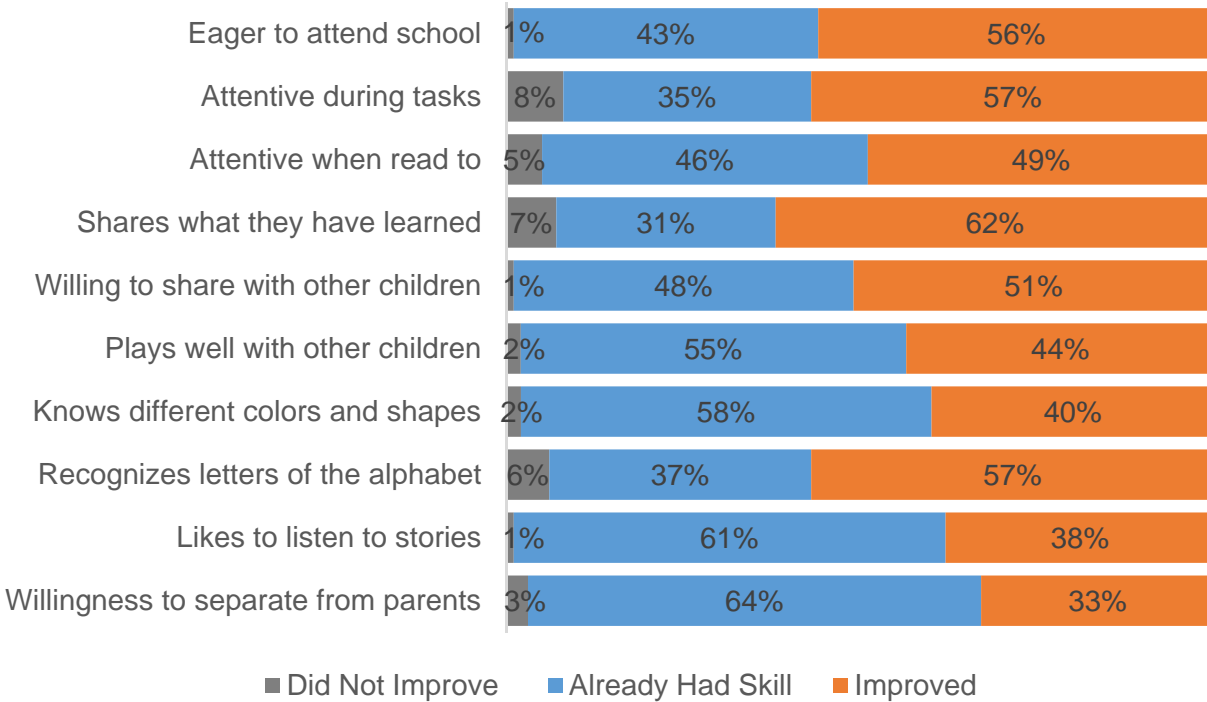■ 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

n=184

Parent Rating of Student Progress

Parents were also surveyed about their perceptions of how the program impacted their child.   More than half of respondents reported child improvement in recognizing letters of the alphabet, interest in sharing what they learned, attention span for tasks, willingness to share with other children, and eagerness to attend school. Some areas where the majority of students already possessed the skills were willingness to separate from parents, likes to listen to stories, knows different colors and shapes, and plays well with other children. Attentiveness during tasks had the highest percentage of "did not improve" (8%), but also showed the greatest improvement (57%).

The majority of parents reported that their children either improved or already had the skill going into the program.

Skill	Did Not Improve	Already Had Skill	Improved
Eager to attend school	1%	43%	56%
Attentive during tasks	8%	35%	57%
Attentive when read to	5%	46%	49%
Shares what they have learned	7%	31%	62%
Willing to share with other children	1%	48%	51%
Plays well with other children	2%	55%	44%
Knows different colors and shapes	2%	58%	40%
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	6%	37%	57%
Likes to listen to stories	1%	61%	38%
Willingness to separate from parents	3%	64%	33%

■ Did Not Improve ■ Already Had Skill ■ Improved

n=184

Extended Learning

Rationale

The Extended Learning programs are based on the premise that providing academic opportunities and instruction during out of school time (after school or during the summer) would lead to increased gains in academic skills and/or prevent summer learning loss. Summer learning loss is a challenge faced by districts as research indicates that students often experience learning loss over the course of the summer and that loss can take several weeks to months to regain. A loss of two to three months for reading and two months for math is the national average (NSLA, 2016). That learning loss tends to be exacerbated for students with lower SES status (d=-0.13) (Hattie, 2009). Summer programming in particular is designed to prevent that loss and set students up for academic success as they enter into the next school year. Extended learning programming provides more direct instruction for students, smaller teacher to student ratios, focus on specific skills identified by spring assessments and opportunities to provide engaging interactions to help motivate young learners.

<u>DC West Community Schools</u>: Students were provided instruction in reading, writing and math during this 3-week program for students in grades K-4 (n=34). Weekly newsletters and communication were sent home to parents about their child's progress along with resources and tips for parents to use as they wished. Students attended three hours per day and the goal of the program was to help students maintain their academic skills from spring to fall. Fifty-three percent of students in this program qualified for FRL status and 21% of students were verified as a student needing special education services. NWEA MAP data was used to measure student progress from spring 2016 to fall 2016.

<u>Elkhorn Public Schools</u>: Jump Start to Reading provided students at-risk for reading failure three week of intense reading intervention. Students (n=84) targeted for this supplemental direct reading instruction are those in grades 1-4 scoring below the 25th percentile on spring reading assessments. The program pulled from multiple curricula (Reading Street's My Sidewalks, Read Naturally, Guided Reading and/or Guided Writing) and was taught by district teachers. The goal of the program was to reduce summer reading loss. Eleven percent of students qualified for FRL status and 34% were verified as needing special education services. The DRA reading assessment was used to measure student progress.

<u>Millard Public Schools</u>: Summer programming in Millard was implemented across nine elementary buildings and provided 15 days of programming over three weeks. Students invited to participate in the program were those qualifying for free or reduced lunch status and those who had demonstrated being academically at-risk in math and/or reading. In addition to academic instruction, three family involvement days were held during the three weeks. The program was provided for students in grades K-3 (n=253). The goal of the program was to reduce/prevent learning loss occurring from spring to fall. Students qualifying for FRL status made up 40% of the students attending. AIMSweb reading and math assessments were used to measure student progress.

<u>Ralston Public Schools</u>:   Extended learning programming for Ralston Schools was provided to students in grades K-6. Students (n=182) had the opportunity to attend 16 days of programming and were invited to attend based on recent classroom data. Summer school and classroom teachers collaborated on the individual goals for each student. Instruction was provided in small group settings using a variety of strategies and different forms of technology. Specific programs used for intervention included Mathletics (Harcourt) and Leveled Literacy Intervention (Fountas and Pinnell, 2009) Seventy four percent of students attending qualified for FRL status.

<u>Springfield-Platteview Community Schools</u>: Students were targeted for this school year program (33 weeks) for individual/small group math instruction. Students (n=7) participated one hour per week with intervention lessons that were developed as a result of a collaborative effort between the classroom teacher and the math interventionist. The goal of the program was for at-risk students to be meeting grade level expectations in math by the end of the school year. The grade levels targeted for this limited intervention program were 1st and 4th grade. NWEA MAP data were used to measure student progress.
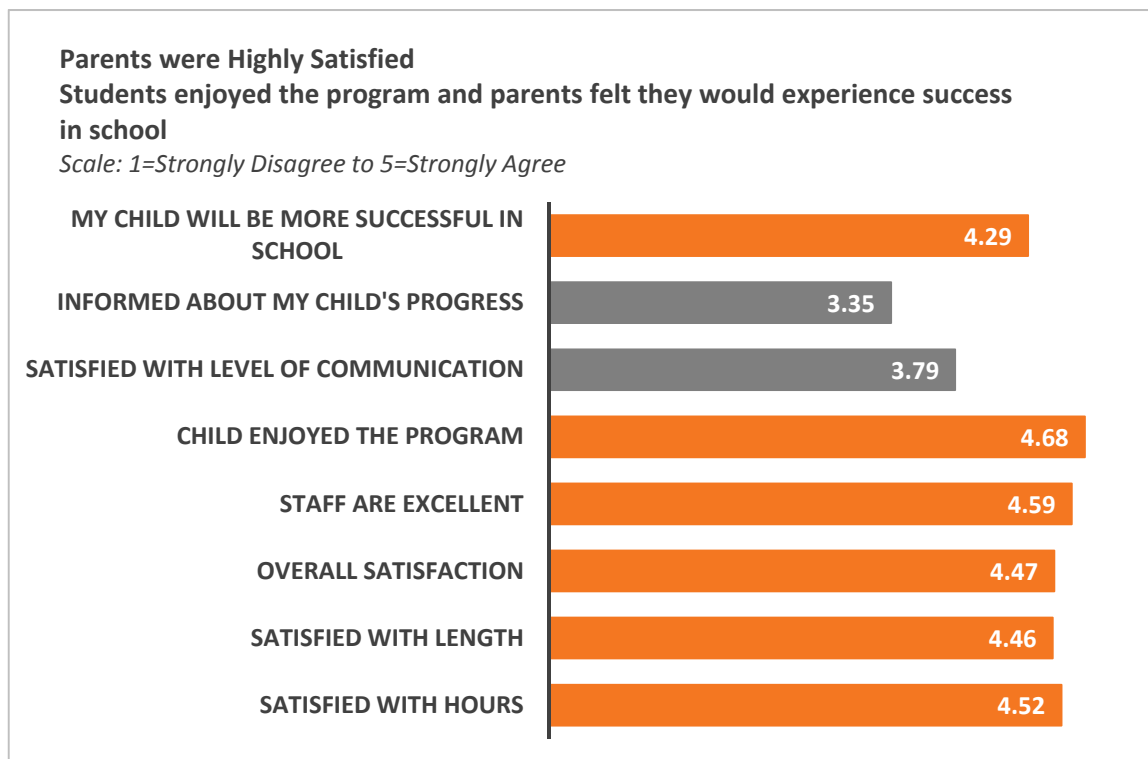
DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 560 students were served. Of the students participating in the extended learning programs, 48% qualified to receive free/reduced lunch.

OUTCOMES

Parent Outcomes

Method. A total of 170 parents completed the survey (return rate of approximately 30%) across the five participating districts. The survey was provided to districts in both Spanish and English. Parents were asked to respond to multiple satisfaction questions using a 1 to 5 scale (*1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)*. Open-ended questions were also asked in order for parents to provide specific comments on the successes and possible improvements for the program.

Parent Satisfaction Results

Parents were Highly Satisfied
Students enjoyed the program and parents felt they would experience success in school
Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

MY CHILD WILL BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL	4.29
INFORMED ABOUT MY CHILD'S PROGRESS	3.35
SATISFIED WITH LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION	3.79
CHILD ENJOYED THE PROGRAM	4.68
STAFF ARE EXCELLENT	4.59
OVERALL SATISFACTION	4.47
SATISFIED WITH LENGTH	4.46
SATISFIED WITH HOURS	4.52

Parents overall reported high levels of satisfaction with the extended learning programs. All items except those around communication were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" range. The item with highest level of satisfaction was about student enjoyment of the program (*M*=4.68). Overall satisfaction was high (*M*=4.47).

Some of the parent comments were:

"My child was excited to attend. My child enjoyed the program."

I like that he gets to focus on problem areas and work to get stronger in them."

"I love that this program offers so much and puts all schools together. In just a few weeks the confidence in my son has gone up."
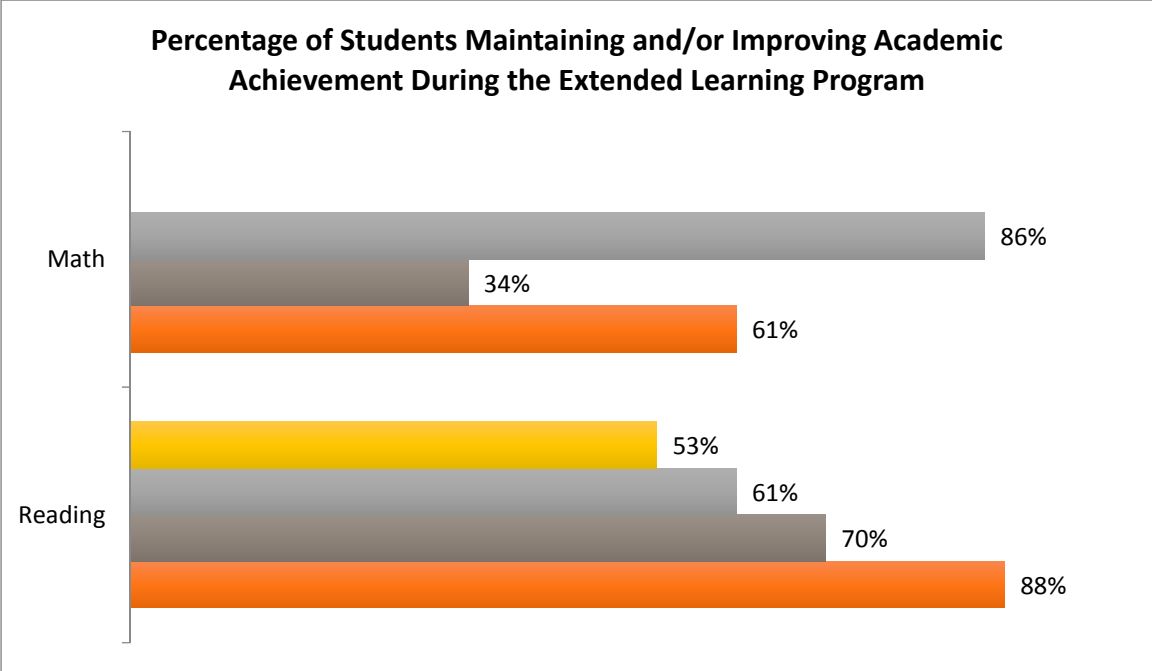
Many of the parent comments around programming reflected the quantitative findings of the survey. Parents were satisfied with the quality of the program and the staff who worked with their children. On the whole, parents valued the programs as important to both their student's growth academically and in their attitude about school and learning. Making the program interesting and engaging to students was noticed by the parents who reported that their child was motivated to attend and enjoyed the activities of the program.

Improvements that were suggested by parents included more communication about student progress and/or things that could be worked on at home. Parents felt that examples of the curriculum or homework could be incorporated into the program.

Student Outcomes

Districts involved in the extended learning programs use different measures to assess and monitor student progress. In addition, the goal for districts with summer programming is to reduce/eliminate summer learning loss while the goal for the district with a school year program is to close the gap for students scoring below expectations. For student outcomes the evaluation focused on students who maintained or gained skills during each respective extended learning program. For programs using multiple measures, student maintenance or gain was assessed based on their performance across the majority of measurement tools.

Percentage of Students Maintaining and/or Improving Academic Achievement During the Extended Learning Program

Math
- 86%
- 34%
- 61%

Reading
- 53%
- 61%
- 70%
- 88%

While the metric used for the analysis was simple, the results indicate the majority of students either maintained or gained ground by participating in the extended learning programs. Because the extended learning programs are targeted at students at-risk having the majority in the maintenance or improvement category is an indication of success for these programs. For districts, having fewer students with summer learning loss means that teachers are spending less time catching students up and more time moving on to new concepts and content. For students, less summer loss means starting the school year on par or closer to being on par with their classmates.

USE OF DATA and KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

School district representatives, evaluation team, the Learning Community management team and council members met twice during the spring of 2016. The purpose of those meetings was to review data, the evaluation plan and to discuss data utilization by and across districts. Districts discussed the mismatch of the CLASS tool and the programmatic goals. Districts reported not using the CLASS results as it was only one observation and frequently the structure of the instruction provided was incompatible with what the CLASS tool measures. For example, remedial curricula require direct explicit instruction and that does not score well on the CLASS but has an evidence-base around improving student skills. More than one district felt that the amount of time devoted to CLASS videos took away from the limited time available for providing instruction during these short 3-4 week programs. Based on the feedback and the limited utilization of the CLASS reports by districts, it was determined to no longer include the CLASS observation tool in the evaluation of the extended learning programs.

Districts reported the importance of continuing the parent survey as the results and comments from parents impacted the planning for the programming. Districts discussed strategies around communication with parents as that is routinely the lowest rated item on the survey. Strategies and ideas were discussed about how to improve the communication and also the challenge with communication for these short programs.

Finally, districts discussed how they use the data from the evaluation report beyond what is reported to the Learning Community Coordinating Council. The possibility of including some of that data into the Learning Community report was discussed and several felt the idea had merit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Jump Start to Kindergarten and Extended Learning have demonstrated a pattern of success over the past few evaluations. As districts and programs have had different rates of success, schools and districts have been willing to share success and ideas and collaborate. One recommendation is to continue to the collaboration and openness between the districts.

A second recommendation is to continue open conversation with the districts on the evaluation plan and utilization of the results. For Jump Start to Kindergarten, there is the possibility of exploring an executive functioning assessment as a measure of kindergarten readiness. This is something to be discussed with the districts.

Finally, programs using direct explicit instructional strategies have demonstrated strong effects in extended learning. A recommendation would be for those programs to share their successes and what they believe makes a difference for students.

Learning Community Annual Report Summary: 2015-2016

Learning Community Center of North Omaha: Early Childhood and family Engagement

Intensive Early Childhood Services	Parent University	Future Teacher Clinical Training
• 132 students were enrolled • Majority are low income & represent minority populations • Classroom were of very high quality. Scores were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start Programs nationally. • Students demonstrated substantial meaning gains in their vocabulary and school readiness skills • Caregivers demonstrated positive relationships with their children.	• 101 parents were enrolled with majority representing low income & minority populations • Parents participated in 277 course sessions with most focused on parenting and life skills • Parents' demonstrated substantial meaningful improvements in family resilience. • Families continue to need support to access resources to address their concrete needs • Parents demonstrated substantial meaningful gains in parenting skills.	• 207 students were enrolled in early childhood classes • Majority of the 59 graduates plan to work in the field or continue their education. • Graduates positively rated their educational experiences. • A articulation agreement between Creighton University & Metropolitan College provides mechanism for the student to continue their education

Learning Community Center of South Omaha: Family Learning

Family Learning	Crisis Services	Student Outcomes
• 313 families were enrolled • 950 children; 404 (0-8 years of age) • High levels of satisfaction were found with the English classes, Boys Town offerings and Educational Navigators • Parents demonstrated significant change on multiple parent measures	• 89 adult participants • Parent stress levels decreased significantly • 85% of goals were achieved or improving • 80% of students were meeting/exceeding expectations	• Students in the target range (K-3) had high attendance rates • MAP scores showed gains for 2nd grade students

School District Pilot Programs

Instructional Learning	Jump Start	Extended Learning
• 23 schools, 400 teachers, and 6681 students were served across 3 districts • Teachers demonstrated significant gains in instructional practices and classroom organization. • Majority of the teachers rated the coaching experience positively. • District MAP scores improved significantly over the school in math and reading • NeSA Reading and Math scores were stable across the 2 years with 82% scoring in the proficient range	• 585 kindergarten eligible students enrolled in Jump Start across 5 districts • Majority qualified for FRL and represented minority populations • Students demonstrated significant gains in school readiness skills. • The majority of the parents were highly satisfied with the programs. • After participating in Jump Start, the majority of the parents reported that their child had the core school readiness skills.	• 560 students were enrolled in Extended Learning with 48% with FRL. • 5 districts participated. • Parents were highly satisfied with the program, their children enjoyed the program and felt the experience would benefit them at school • The goal of the program is to help students maintain skills over the summer. Math: 34%-86% maintained skills Reading: 53% to 70% maintained skills

Learning Community: Lessons Learned

LESSONS LEARNED

- Early childhood programs in school settings can successfully adopt a national model, resulting in children making meaningful improvements in vocabulary and school readiness skills.

- Coaching is making a difference in changing teacher practices in preK through fifth grade classrooms.

- Learning Community Centers provide a setting for parent networking and access to educational activities that resulted in improved parenting skills, protective factors, decreased stress and positive child outcomes.

- The Learning Community in partnership with districts has created a culture where districts are learning from each other.

References

Barnett, S. (2008). Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications. *Education Policy Research Unit*.

Benson, J.E., Sabbagh, M.A., Carlson, S.M., & Zelazo, P.D. (2013). Individual differences in executive functioning predict preschoolers' improvement from theory-of-mind training. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(9), 1615-1627. doi: 10.1037/a0031056.

Bradshaw, C., Pas, E., Goldweber, A, & Rosenberg, M. (2013). Integrating school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports with tier 2 coaching to student support teams: The PBIS*plus* model. *Advance in School Mental Health Promotion*, (5) (3), 177-193.

Burchinal, M. R., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Bryant, D. M., & Clifford, R. (2000). Children's social and cognitive development and child care quality: Testing for differential associations related to poverty, gender, or ethnicity. *Applied Developmental Science*, 4, 149–165.

Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 166–176.

Burchinal, M. R. (2008). How measurement error affects the interpretation and understanding of effect sizes. *Child Development Perspectives*, *2*(3), 178-180.

Coe, R. (2002). It is the effect size, stupid: What effect size is and why it is important. University of Durham. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002182.htm

Fantuzzo, J. W., Gadsden, V. L., & McDermott, P. A. (2011). An integrated curriculum to improve mathematics, language, and literacy for Head Start children. *American Educational Research Journal*, *48*(3), 763-793. doi:10.3102/0002831210385446

Henderson, A. & Mapp, K. (2002). New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections   on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis.

Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*? Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Jeynes, W. (2005). Parental Involvement and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis, Family Involvement Research Digests, Boston: Harvard Research Review.

Kamps, D., Wills, H., Dawson-Bannister, H., Heitzman-Powell, L., Kottwitz, E., Hansen, B., & Fleming, K. (2015). Class-wide function-related intervention teams 'CW-FIT' efficacy trial outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 17(3),

Knight, J. (2011). Unmistakable Impact. A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin.

Lacour, M., & Tissington, L. D. (2011). The effects of poverty on academic achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews, 6 (7)*, 522-527.

Langford, J., & Harper-Browne, C. (in press). Strengthening families through early care and education: Engaging families in familiar places to prevent child maltreatment.

Larrabee, A. (2007). Predicting academic achievement through kindergarten screening: An evaluation of development and school readiness measures (Doctoral dissertation). *Retrieved from: Dissertation Abstracts International section A: Humanities and social sciences.* (AAI3228216).

Neuman, S. (2006). N is for nonsensical. *Educational Leadership, 64*(2), 28-31.

Panter, J. & Bracken, B. (2009). Validity of the Bracken school readiness assessment for predicting first grade readiness. *Psychology in the schools, 46*(5), 397-409.

Patton, M. Q. (2012). *Essentials of Utilization-Focused Evaluation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pianta, R. (1992). *Child Parent Relationship Scale.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, Center for Advanced Studies on Teaching and Learning.

McNeal, 1999),

Schmeeckle, W. (2015). Nebraska Healthy People 2020: *Baseline Report for Nebraska's Healthy People 2020* Objectives. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Neisser, U*., Boodoo, G., Bouchard, T. J., Jr., Boykin, A. W, Brody, N., Ceci, S. J., et al. (*1996*).* Intelligence: Knowns and unknowns*. American Psychologist, 51,* 77–101

National Summer Learning Association (2016) www.summerlearning.org

Ramey, C. T., & Ramey, S. L. (1998). Early intervention and early experience. American Psychologist, 53, 109-120.

Reddy, L.A., Fabiano, G.A., & Jimerson, S. R. (2013). Assessment of general education teachers' Tier 1 classroom practices: Contemporary science, practice and policy. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 28(4), 273-276.

Reinke, W. M., Stormont, M., Herman, K.C., & Newcomer, L. (2014) Using coaching to support teacher implementation of classroom-based interventions. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 23(1), 150-167.

Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (2000). From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development. National Academy Press.

Assessment Tools

Tool	Author	Purpose
BASC3- Behavioral & Emotional Screening System	Kamphaus, R. W. & Reynolds, C. R. (2015 PsychCorp	The BASC3-BESS assesses behavioral and emotional strengths and challenges in children and to identify any potential problems that may need addressing through intervention.
Bracken School Readiness Assessment, 3rd Ed.	Bracken, B. (2002). Harcourt Assessment Inc.	The Bracken School Readiness Assessment evaluates
Child Parent Relationship Scales (CPRS)	Pianta, R. (1992) Unpublished Tool	The CPRS measures the relationship of the parent and child. It evaluates both the closeness and the conflict in the relationship.
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	LaParo, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012.	CLASS "is a rating tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning."
Circle of Security Survey	Jackson, B. (2014) Unpublished	This survey completed by parents evaluates three areas including parenting strategies, parent-child relationships, and parenting stress. It is based on a 5 point Likert scale.
FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS)	FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (2011)	The PFS is a broad measure of family well-being that examines five factors including: family resiliency, social supports, concrete supports, child development knowledge and nurturing and attachment. It is scored on a 7 point Likert scale.
Parenting Children and Adolescents Scale (PARCA)	Hair, E., Anderson, K., Garrett, S., Kinukawa, A., Lippman, I., & Michelson, E. 2005	This is a parent completed assessment that evaluates three areas including: supporting good behavior, setting limits and being proactive in their parenting. It is based on a 7 point Likert scale.
Parenting Stress Scale (PSS)	Berry and Jones (1995) Unpublished	The PSS is completed by the parent to assess parental stress. It is based on a 5 point Likert scale with higher scores reflecting greater stress.
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV	Dunn, L. M.,& Dunn, D. M. 2007 Pearson	A measure of receptive vocabulary.

Tool	Range of Documented Effect Sizes	Supporting Documentation
Bracken School Readiness Assessment, 3rd Ed.	.38-.50	Anderson, Shin, (2003). The Effectiveness of EC Development Programs, Am J Prev Med. (ES:.38) Gorley, & Windsor, (2000). Early childhood education: A meta-analytic affirmation of the short-and long-term benefits of education opportunity, School Psychology Quarterly, Vol 16(1), Spr 2001. pp. 9-30 (ES: .50)
Child Parent Relationship Scales (CPRS)	Cohens	No research to support Effect Size benchmark.
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	Cohens	No research with grade school population examining change over time.
Circle of Security Survey	Cohens	No research to support Effect Size benchmark.
FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS)	Cohens	No research to support Effect Size benchmark
Parenting Children and Adolescents Scale (PARCA)	Cohens	No research to support Effect Size benchmark
Parenting Stress Scale (PSS)	Cohens	No research to support Effect Size benchmark
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV	.32-38 .	Weiland, C., & Yoshikawaa, H. (2013), Impacts of a Prekindergarten Program on Children's Mathematics, Language, Literacy, Executive Function, and Emotional Skills, Journal of Child Development. ES: .38 Barnett, S. (2008). Preschool Education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications, Education Public Interest Center. (ES: .32)

Directors of the Learning Community Evaluation
Barbara Jackson, Ph.D.
Professor, Munroe-Meyer Institute
bjjackso@unmc.edu

Jolene Johnson, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor, Munroe-Meyer Institute
Jolene.johnson@unmc.edu

Munroe-Meyer Institute
University of Nebraska Medical Center
985450 Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, NE 68198-5450

<u>Evaluation Team</u>

Sarah Baird	Amber Rath
Nicole Buchholz	Adriana Rey
Linda Comfort	Colleen Schmit
Colleen Gibilisco	Megan Shepherd
Becky Harris	Abbey Siebler
Jennifer Harmon	Terry Stone
Kerry Miller	Cynthia Villanueva
Amanda Mills	Jennifer Villegas
Kari Price	Becky Zessin

Special thanks to the assistance of research/evaluation staff and administration of district and agency partners, as well as to the staff of the Learning Community.

Evaluation Report prepared by
Barbara Jackson, Ph.D., Jolene Johnson, Ed.D,
Abbey Siebler, MA
Interdisciplinary Center of Program Evaluation
The University of Nebraska Medical Center's
Munroe-Meyer Institute: A University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Medical Center

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE SUPERINTENDENTS' EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing achievement gaps for young children from birth through Grade 3 in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The Plan was developed in response to legislation (LB 585) passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 2013 directing the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact a program created by the metro Omaha superintendents "to establish early childhood programs for children in poverty." The plan is financed by a half-cent levy, resulting in annual funding of approximately $2.5 million to be used for this purpose.

The superintendents from the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy counties invited the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to prepare a plan for their review and, after approval by the Learning Community Council, to facilitate the plan's implementation. The plan was adopted unanimously by the 11 superintendents in June 2014 and approved by the Learning Community Council in August 2014. In-depth planning and initial implementation within the districts occurred throughout 2014 – 2015. Implementation of all plan components was fully launched in summer 2015.

The goal of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is to eliminate or reduce social, cognitive, and achievement gaps among young children living in high concentrations of poverty. By translating research into practice, the plan provides for the comprehensive systems approach to programming that is required to increase opportunities to learn and eliminate income- and race-based achievement gaps for children most at risk for school failure by the end of third grade. In so doing, the plan elevates the capacity of the Omaha metro school districts to serve all young children well.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on implementation progress from August 2015 through August 2016 for all components of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, including the Plan's evaluation.

FOUNDATION FOR THE PLAN: SIX EVIDENCE-BASED IDEAS

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan reflects what research tells us about young children's development and learning (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Reynolds, Hayakawa, Candee & Englund, 2016; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). All work undertaken through the Plan revolves around six evidence-based ideas.

1. **Birth Through Grade 3:** Although intervention at any point during the first eight years of life is helpful for children placed at risk, research teaches us that we must go beyond a single year of Pre-K, or even birth – Grade 3 or birth – Grade 5 programs, for the benefits of intervention to endure. The foundations for building children's brain architecture, language and skill acquisition, and relationships with others are established early but take time to reach their full potential. If we can maintain continuity through the end of third grade, children are more likely to achieve lasting success in school and beyond.

2. **School as Hub:** At the core of the plan is the idea that schools can serve as the "hub" for complex learning systems, connecting children and families to resources within and beyond school walls. Schools have the potential to span conventional silos, overcome traditional barriers, and become connectors across communities and different age groupings. They can help families navigate and access early education services and community resources and become a source of long-term continuity for children and families.

3. **Developmental Change:** We are committed to helping children negotiate the ongoing biological, neurological, psychological, and social pathways of development, through which they evolve from a newborn infant to a competent and confident third grader. Sustained learning doesn't occur in isolated fragments. Only when skills and emerging capabilities are followed up, supported, and extended is it likely that new skills and new capacities will be acquired and become reliably present over time.

4. **Parent and Family Support:** Parents and families are key to children's success and our most powerful allies in supporting and enhancing their children's strengths and abilities. But families know too well the personal stress and toxicity that can accompany poverty and social inequality. Whether in-home visiting, preschool, or K – Grade 3, active family engagement and support are central to our work and to children's growth.

> *Persistence of effort yields persistence of effect.*

5. **Professional Growth and Support:** Enhancing the skills of teachers, caregivers, and those supervising and directing them is crucial. Educators equipped with research-based knowledge about children's development and early learning can maximize effectiveness of educational experiences for children with diverse learning needs. When the ability of caregivers, teachers, and administrators to translate development research into practice is enhanced, children thrive.

6. **Persistence**. Evidence assures us that the earlier we begin working with children and families placed at risk, and the more persistent, consistent, and well-designed our efforts are, the more likely it is that children will be launched on a path toward life success. It's a long-term commitment, and one that can lead to a lifetime of accomplishment and fulfillment. Persistence of effort yields persistence of effect.

THREE LEVELS OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Superintendents' Plan provides three interconnected levels of implementation through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals can strengthen early childhood efforts targeted at reducing opportunity and achievement gaps.
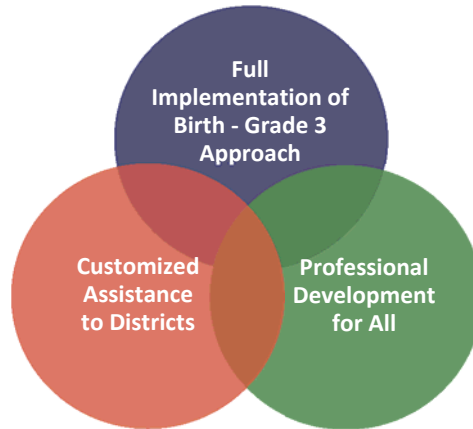
1. **Full Implementation of a Birth – Grade 3 Approach:** In this intensive level of implementation, schools serve as hubs that connect young children and their families with high-quality, comprehensive, and continuous early childhood education and services. The focus of school efforts is on providing young children and families with access to a full birth through Grade 3 continuum of services and supports. This continuum includes home visiting for children birth to age 3, transitions to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, and aligned Kindergarten through Grade 3 educational experiences. Strong family and community partnerships provide the foundation for services across all age levels, birth – Grade 3.

2. **Customized Assistance to Districts:** Through this implementation option, school districts receive focused assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs related to birth through Grade 3 policies and programming. Customized technical assistance provides districts with access to state and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts that will impact system-wide early childhood education and services. Customized professional development provides districts with support in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities for staff in order to address key dimensions of early childhood programming, birth through Grade 3.

3. **Professional Development for All:** The translation of research into high-quality early childhood practices is at the core of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan implementation. PD for All provides a connected series of professional development institutes open to all school leaders, teachers, early childhood professionals, and caregivers who work with young children from birth through Grade 3 in the Omaha metro area. PD for All introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices while promoting collaborative connections and shared commitments to strong early learning and family support systems, birth through Grade 3.

The following sections describe progress in implementing each of the three levels of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan.

FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF BIRTH - GRADE 3 APPROACH

FULL IMPLEMENTATION SITES

Ten sites, incorporating twelve schools in six Learning Community districts, are currently in the process of implementing the comprehensive Birth – Grade 3 approach. Half or more of the children served by each school live in high concentrations of poverty.

Schools Implementing a Comprehensive Birth – Grade 3 Approach
Bellevue Public Schools
- Belleaire Elementary

DC West Community Schools
- DC West Elementary

Millard Public Schools
- Cody Elementary
- Sandoz Elementary

Omaha Public Schools
- Gomez Heritage Elementary
- Liberty Elementary
- Mount View Elementary
- Pinewood Elementary

Ralston Public Schools
- Karen Western Elementary*
- Meadows Elementary*
- Mockingbird Elementary*

Westside Community Schools
- Westbrook Elementary

*Full implementation sites currently **serve approximately 3,600 children** from birth through Grade 3 and their families.*

More than 358 school staff from these sites benefit from on-going professional learning and other implementation supports.

*Three Ralston schools participate as one full implementation site.

Full Implementation Tailored to Districts and Communities
The districts and schools engaged in full implementation of the birth through Grade 3 approach represent vastly different community contexts with differing student demographics. The birth – Grade 3 components being implemented are held in common across sites, yet the face of poverty and other characteristics that place young children at risk for school failure differ across sites. The specific ways that the approach is taking shape to serve children, families, and communities within each site are therefore tailored to fit the strengths, needs, and interests of each site and the community of young children and families that is served.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
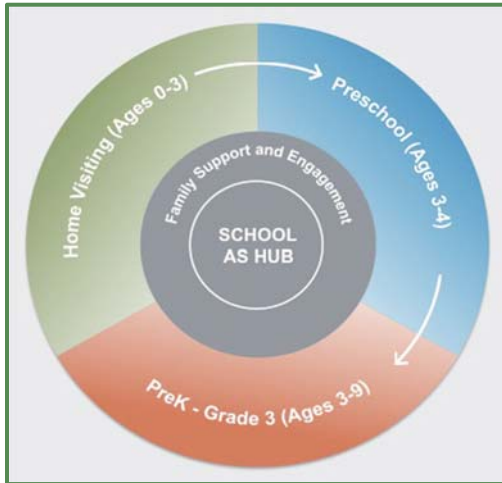
Full implementation sites emphasize the establishment of a new approach through which schools provide a comprehensive birth through Grade 3 continuum of research-based practices to fully support young children's development and learning (Reynolds, et al., 2016; Zero to Three, 2014). Schools become inclusive, welcoming hubs that provide a sense of belonging for diverse families of young children starting at birth. These hubs promote much-needed continuity for young children and their families, along with access to early education services and community resources.

The birth – Grade 3 continuum of services combines high-quality, rigorous educational experiences with continuous family support, strong family-school partnerships, and collaborative community connections.

Specific components of the full implementation approach include:

- **Home Visiting for Birth – Age 3**: A birth – age 3 home visitor is employed as a member of each full implementation site's staff. The home visitor serves a caseload of families and infants/toddlers who are placed at greatest risk. The home visitor implements a birth – age 3 home visiting program that includes family outreach, home visits to participating families using the Early Steps to School Success model, regular parent-child interaction groups at the school site, and connections to community resources. The home visiting program promotes strong parent/child relationships, early language and literacy development, parenting education and empowerment, and family access to both school and community resources. Home visitors are employed on a 12-month basis to ensure that home visiting and family support are provided continuously throughout the year, not just during the school-year calendar.
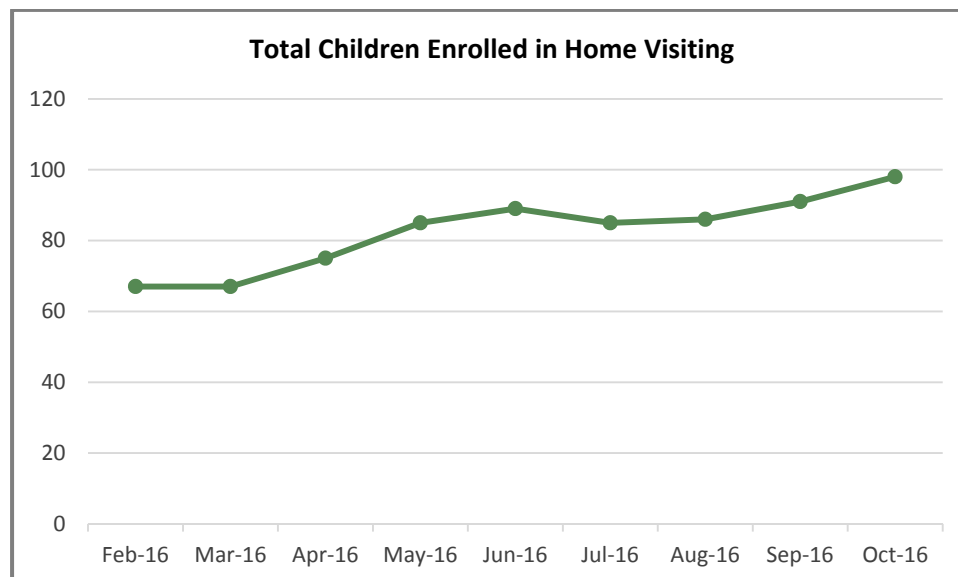
- **Facilitating Family-School Partnerships, Preschool – Grade 3 and beyond**: A preschool – Grade 3 family facilitator continues the family support and educational activities initiated through the 0 – age 3 home visiting. The family facilitator sustains on-going personalized connections with families and helps establish strong family-school partnerships in the early years of school. Key functions include support for child and family transitions into preschool and Kindergarten, drop-in connections through an on-site family resource area, on-site parent-child groups, a weekly book bag exchange, and connections to community resources. Like the home visitor, the family facilitator is employed on a 12-month basis to ensure that the school extends family support and opportunities for family engagement continuously throughout the year, not just during the school-year calendar.

  - **400 family contacts** through monthly parent-child interaction groups

  - **249 preschool children and families** participated in monthly book bag exchange that bridges the transition into preschool and Kindergarten

- **High-Quality Preschool for 3 – 4-Year-Olds**: The implementation of the birth through Grade 3 approach in full implementation sites focuses on enhancing existing preschool programs. The family facilitator supports families in transitioning their children into a school-based Pre-Kindergarten, community-based preschool or other group early education experience, including regular on-site parent-child groups. On-going professional development is provided to help ensure the quality and effectiveness of preschool learning experiences both through professional learning support for Pre-K teachers and through collaborations between the school and community-based early care and education providers.

- **Aligned Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3**: Developmentally-informed Pre-K, Kindergarten, and primary grade educational experiences build upon children's prior learning to promote academic, intellectual, language, and social-emotional competence. Pre-K – Grade 3 educational facilitators work on-site two days per week at each full implementation site. The educational facilitators collaborate with instructional leaders on the school staff to help focus and guide teachers' Pre-K – Grade 3 professional learning. Individual teacher consultation and coaching linked to professional development optimize support for applying research-based instructional practices. Educational facilitator collaboration with grade-level and cross-grade teacher teams helps enhance the alignment of Pre-K – Grade 3 curriculum and instruction.

  - **68 teacher professional development sessions** in 2015 - 2016

  - Highlighted **active engagement, social-emotional learning and strong language development**

The following snapshots spotlight the components of the birth – Grade 3 approach in action at selected full implementation sites.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LIBERTY ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 6

91%
Poverty

51%
ELL

86%
Students of Color

731
Pre-K & Elementary Students

11
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

52
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning
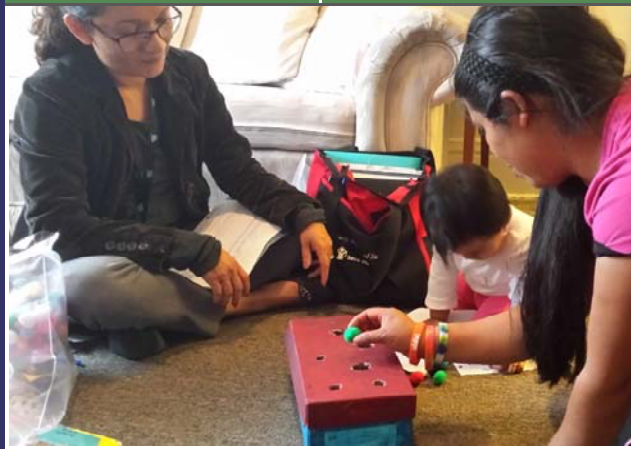
At Liberty, birth – age 3 home visiting starts a long-term relationship of support for families of young children. The family facilitator continues the personalized support as children and families transition into Pre-K, Head Start, and Kindergarten.

WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

WESTBROOK ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 6

SPOTLIGHT *on* **Pre-K – Grade 3 Family Partnerships**

52%
Poverty

4%
ELL

40%
Students of Color

509
Pre-K & Elementary Students

9
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

34
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

The Westbrook family facilitator extends family-school partnerships across Pre-K – Grade 3. Doors are opened for families to engage actively in children's learning at school, and outreach helps nurture shared home-school goals.

MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SANDOZ ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 5

SPOTLIGHT
on **High-Quality Preschool for 3- and 4-Year-Olds**

47%
Poverty

27%
ELL

49%
Students of Color

381
Pre-K & Elementary Students

9
Infants & Their Families
Participate in Home Visiting

31
Staff Engaged
in Professional Learning

Sandoz staff launched a preschool professional learning group based on a goal to increase high quality teacher/child interactions that extend preschool children's learning. The educational facilitator provides coaching support.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GOMEZ HERITAGE ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 5

SPOTLIGHT on
Family – Community Partnerships

90%
Poverty

59%
ELL

91%
Students of Color

865
Pre-K & Elementary Students

13
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

62
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

A voluntary group of 22 Gomez staff creates ways to get to know and support their school community. One month, they met neighbors through a cookie walk. This seemingly small act gave a powerful message about how much Gomez values and relies upon strong family – community partnerships.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PINEWOOD ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 6

SPOTLIGHT
on Aligned
Pre-K – Grade 3

72%
Poverty

0%
ELL

64%
Students of Color

247
Pre-K & Elementary Students

12
Infants & Their Families
Participate in Home Visiting

21
Staff Engaged
in Professional Learning

Pinewood aligns and deepens children's Pre-K – Grade 3 learning through a school-wide project-based approach. Children are becoming more personally connected to learning, and steadily building competence as researchers, problem-solvers, and communicators -- all essential to long-term school success.

CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BIRTH – GRADE 3

The birth – Grade 3 approach being implemented through the full implementation sites is one of the most comprehensive and innovative initiatives of its kind in the country. Implementation requires the translation of research from the science of child development and early learning in ways that will lead to substantial shifts in school practices. It also requires the integration of new staff with new roles and responsibilities into each site's staff as well as new forms of collaboration among administrators, staff, families, and communities.
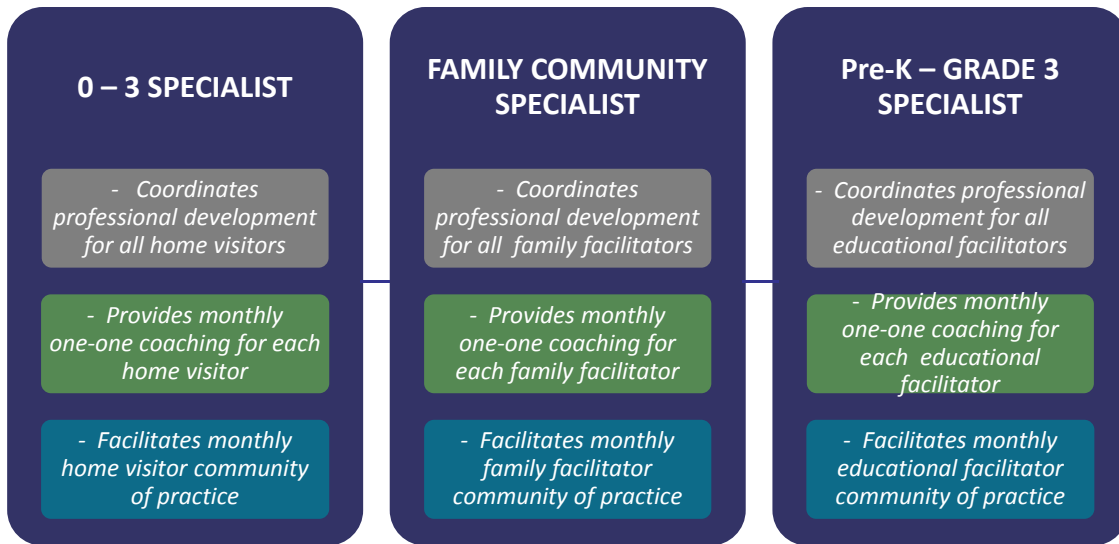
Sustained professional learning opportunities and support structures have been successfully put into place to address these capacity-building requirements. A team of collaborating staff from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute provides guidance and facilitation of these efforts in partnership with participating districts and schools. Key provisions for building sustainable capacity include:

School-Wide Birth – Grade 3 Summer Institutes: Annual summer institutes for each full implementation site's staff, administrators, and Buffett Institute team members are designed to deepen shared understandings about the research-based principles, practices, and change strategies that provide the foundation for the birth – Grade 3 approach to closing achievement gaps. These institutes tailor the content to each of the ten full implementation sites in order to promote more meaningful shared learning and implementation planning. Three hundred and twenty-two full implementation site administrators and school staff participated in the summer 2016 institutes.

On-Going Professional Learning, Coaching, and Technical Assistance for Full Implementation Site Staff: A Buffett Institute team of specialists provide on-going support to advance the professional learning and practices of home visitors, family facilitators, and Pre-K – Grade 3 educational facilitators across all full implementation sites. The support provided by this team combines the best of what research reveals about effective professional learning to advance practice and ultimately impact child and family outcomes. This form of professional learning links focused professional development relevant to the staff members' current work with individual coaching, collaborative learning with peers through communities of practice, and technical assistance (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007).

Support Provided by Buffett Institute Specialist Team to Site-Based Staff

0 – 3 SPECIALIST	FAMILY COMMUNITY SPECIALIST	Pre-K – GRADE 3 SPECIALIST
- *Coordinates professional development for all home visitors*	- *Coordinates professional development for all family facilitators*	- *Coordinates professional development for all educational facilitators*
- *Provides monthly one-one coaching for each home visitor*	- *Provides monthly one-one coaching for each family facilitator*	- *Provides monthly one-one coaching for each educational facilitator*
- *Facilitates monthly home visitor community of practice*	- *Facilitates monthly family facilitator community of practice*	- *Facilitates monthly educational facilitator community of practice*

Beyond individual community of practice convenings specific to their positions, all full implementation site home visitors, family facilitators, and Pre-K – Grade 3 educational facilitators come together quarterly for a joint community of practice, facilitated by the Buffett Institute team of specialists. These joint community of practice meetings support shared learning across staff roles and sites as a strategy for increasing sustainable capacity through collaboration. A key guiding goal for this collaboration is the integration of practices across the child- and family-serving components of the birth – Grade 3 continuum.

LEADERSHIP FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF BIRTH – GRADE 3

Principals and other school leaders are pivotal in cultivating the school culture, organization, practices, and family-community partnerships that form the core of a comprehensive birth through Grade 3 approach (Goffin, 2013; Loewenberg, 2016). An essential element of full implementation has been the presence of strong collaborative leadership coupled with continuous learning.

Full Implementation Site Leaders: Full implementation site administrators, including principals, assistant principals, and selected district-level staff, convene as a leadership group every six weeks. The site leaders learn from and with each other as they engage in shared inquiry and problem-solving, recognizing that they are constructing a research-based birth – Grade 3 approach to public education that has never before been implemented in a comprehensive manner. As the site leaders join together, they explore such topics as re-thinking family engagement, continuity for children from birth through Grade 3, and promoting cross-grade professional learning for teachers.

By learning with each other about this new birth – Grade 3 approach and applying what we learn, we have already shifted from "I wish we could impact children earlier" to actually doing it.

- *Kristie Reinsch*
 *Principal*
  Pinewood Elementary

The power of their shared leadership and learning is magnified through the cross-site and cross-district collaborative relationships they have formed.

School Birth – Grade 3 Collaborative Leadership Teams: As noted, the components of the birth – Grade 3 approach must work together in an integrated manner to impact practices in ways that yield full benefits for children and families. Each full implementation site has instituted a birth – Grade 3 leadership team to provide the time and structure to focus planning and problem-solving as the birth – Grade 3 approach moves forward in shifting the culture and practices of their schools. This team includes the principal, home visitor, family facilitator, Pre-K – Grade 3 educational facilitator, other key school staff, and the Buffett Institute specialist team, who come together at least monthly, but in many cases on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Regional and National Presentations: Leadership for the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, and particularly the full implementation of a birth – Grade 3 approach, has been visibly reflected in the range of state and national presentations that have been made collaboratively by district superintendents, principals, and Buffett Institute team members. Together, 15 district and school staff have presented at over 20 conferences and symposiums including the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Alliance for Early Success Partner Summit, and the National Conference of State Legislators Early Learning Fellows Conference.

These presentations have facilitated local leaders' opportunities to learn with leaders of other national early childhood initiatives designed to address the achievement gap by starting early. Feedback from the presentations has likewise documented widespread national interest in following our work and in learning from metro Omaha as full implementation progresses. One specific outcome has been the designation of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan full implementation of birth – Grade 3 on the National P-3 MAP produced by the National P-3 Center at the University of Washington. The National P-3 Map identifies states, school districts, communities, and organizations across the United States that are working to create a well-aligned, coherent, high-quality continuum of learning from birth through third grade.

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Recognized on National P-3 Map

http://depts.washington.edu/pthru3/approaches/map
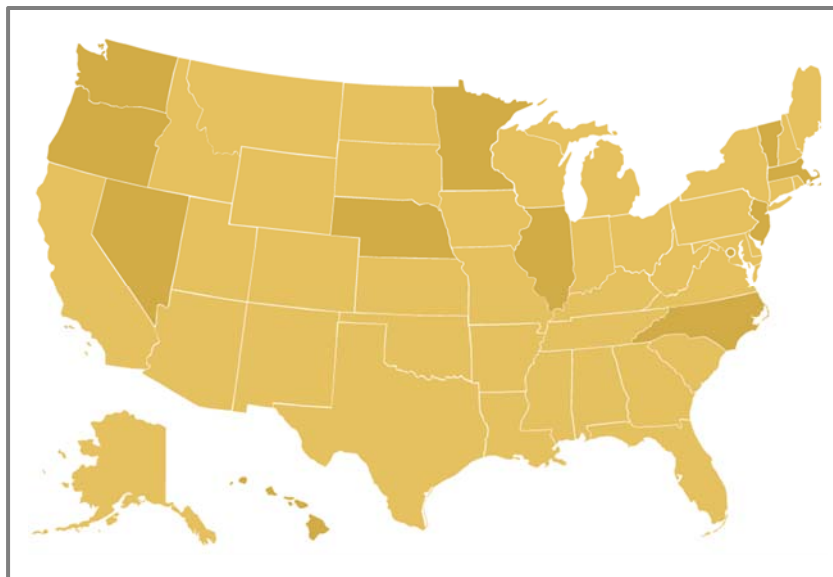
The following snapshots spotlight specific examples of capacity-building and leadership for full implementation of the birth – Grade 3 approach at selected sites.

MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CODY ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 5

SPOTLIGHT on
Birth – Grade 3 Summer Institutes

46%
Poverty

0%
ELL

31%
Students of Color

348
Pre-K & Elementary Students

7
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

28
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

Cody staff used child development knowledge from the summer institute to focus their year-long professional growth on fostering children's social-emotional learning. Professional learning is tailored to teachers' priorities for children.

BELLEVUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BELLEAIRE ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 6

SPOTLIGHT
on **Pre-K – Grade 3 Professional Learning and Coaching**

72%
Poverty

10%
ELL

38%
Students of Color

292
Pre-K & Elementary Students

8
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

25
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

Pre-K – Grade 3 teachers set individual instructional goals using feedback from CLASS observations. The educational facilitator coaches teachers one-on-one as they try out new active learning strategies.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MOUNT VIEW ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 6

SPOTLIGHT
on **Pre-K – Grade 3 Professional Learning and Coaching**

91%
Poverty

5%
ELL

91%
Students of Color

414
Pre-K & Elementary Students

11
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

25
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

Peer observations highlight teachers' collective work to use higher level questioning and interactive classroom conversations to boost young children's learning. The educational facilitator supports with observation "look-fors" and coaching.

RALSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

KAREN WESTERN, MEADOWS & MOCKINGBIRD ELEMENTARY*
Pre-K – Grade 6
3 schools as 1 site

SPOTLIGHT on
Pre-K – Grade 3 Professional Learning

66%
Poverty

15%
ELL

53%
Students of Color

809
Pre-K & Elementary Students

10
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

58
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

A focus on each child's active engagement in learning has united Ralston teachers around shared instructional approaches, strengthening quality and continuity across Pre-K – Grade 3. The educational facilitator helps guide teachers through professional development and coaching.

DC WEST COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

DC WEST ELEMENTARY
Pre-K – Grade 4

SPOTLIGHT on School Birth – Grade 3 Leadership Team

39%
Poverty

0%
ELL

12%
Students of Color

336
Pre-K & Elementary Students

8
Infants & Their Families Participate in Home Visiting

23
Staff Engaged in Professional Learning

The DC West Birth – Grade 3 Leadership Team is active in developing the School as Hub approach. Leadership results highlight a new Family Resource Center to respond to diverse families' interests and needs.

EVALUATION OF FULL IMPLEMENTATION

A multidisciplinary evaluation team from the University of Nebraska is evaluating how well a comprehensive birth – Grade 3 approach is executed in participating full implementation sites by studying its implementation and subsequent impact on children, families, teachers/classrooms, and schools.

Evaluation Overview
The evaluation has two purposes. First, it will provide information about the Superintendents' Plan's usefulness and feasibility to those participating in and with responsibility for full implementation sites. The second purpose of the evaluation is to give teachers, principals, directors, superintendents, the Learning Community Coordinating Council, and policymakers data about the impact of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan on children, families, teachers/classrooms, and schools.

Evaluation Team
The research and evaluation unit of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute manages the evaluation in collaboration with the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and the Interdisciplinary Center for Program Evaluation of the Munroe Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). UNL lead the birth – age 3 component and contributes to the overall design of the evaluation and the development of the database. UNMC leads the Pre-K – Grade 3 component of the evaluation. Dr. Iheoma Iruka, Director of Research and Evaluation at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, provides overall guidance for the evaluation.

Evaluation Questions
The evaluation is designed to answer a series of questions that focus on implementation of the Superintendents' Plan and impact on child, family, teacher/classroom, and schools:

Implementation
- To what extent are core components of the Superintendents' Plan being implemented as intended and at the expected level of quality?
- How useful are the core components of the plan to achieving the goals of school and program leadership, their staff, and other participants?
- What are the enabling factors and the obstacles to implementing the Superintendents' Plan at the system, school, and family levels?

Evidence of Impact
- Child: What is the effect on children's outcomes in cognitive, language, academic, socio-emotional, and executive function domains?
- Family: What is the effect on families' positive parenting, school engagement, and social support outcomes?
- Teacher/Classroom: What is the effect on teachers' practices?
- School: What is the effect on schools' culture and practices?

Design

A large number of promising interventions have been dismissed over the years as ineffective because their impact evaluations produced effects that were small or not statistically significant. Among the various reasons for this, the most common are that the intervention was not implemented well, was tested too early, or was not sufficiently well understood to produce a valid test of effectiveness.

As a new program, the Superintendents' Plan requires an evaluation design that first focuses on how well it is being implemented. Putting in place a comprehensive, birth – Grade 3 initiative that will impact approximately 500 teachers and 4,000 students in 12 different schools representing six school districts is a very challenging undertaking. Because the schools vary in their environments, organizational structures, and communities served, the evaluation for the Superintendents' Plan is designed to first develop a strong understanding of how the core features of the Plan are being carried out within the context of each of the schools. Following this, a rigorous impact evaluation will be conducted, with a focus on child outcomes.

Specifically, a three-phase evaluation design will be utilized, beginning with the collection of baseline data from children, families, classrooms, and schools. The evaluation includes approximately 350 children and their families, as well as approximately 200 teachers/classrooms in 12 schools in six districts over a six-year period. We will use a developmental, or formative, evaluation approach that utilizes observations, interviews, and focus groups to explore impacts, influences, facilitators, and barriers occurring at the various levels of the Plan. Each phase will be two years in length and will build on the preceding phase, ensuring a process that will enable the evaluation findings to be used to refine the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan over time while also conducting an evaluation of its impact.

Phase I (2015 – 2016 and 2016 – 2017)

Table 1 shows that the first two years of implementation, or Phase I (2015 – 16 and 2016 – 17), is devoted to gathering information about the Plan's usefulness and feasibility, including assessing implementation barriers and enabling factors. This phase will allow the Superintendents' Plan to be revised based on input from its users and sponsors.

Phase II (2017 – 2018 and 2018 – 2019)

During the next two-year phase, Phase II (2017 – 18 and 2018 – 19), data about the extent to which the Superintendents' Plan is being implemented as proposed and expected will be examined. This will include the collection of preliminary impact data to explore whether schools, teachers/classrooms, families, and children in the full implementation sites are showing change in key areas noted in the evaluation questions. This information can potentially lead to further modifications in the program.

Phase III (2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021)

The third two-year phase, Phase III (2019 – 20 and 2020 – 21), will focus on whether and how well the Superintendents' Plan has been executed at the full implementation sites. Data will be collected in this phase to determine whether and how well implementation sites are showing change in key areas highlighted in the evaluation questions, using normative and administrative trend data to assess change in child, family, teachers/classrooms, and schools. Based on availability of funds, all of the children will be followed through the end of their third grade year. If possible, we will also examine the use of a matched-comparison group to further provide evidence of impact of the Superintendents' Plan.

Table 1: Overview of Evaluation Phases of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

PHASE	SCHOOL YEAR	ACTIVITY	GOAL
I	2015 – 2016 2016 – 2017	Implementation Study	Usability and Feasibility
II	2017 – 2018 2018 – 2019	Fidelity of Implementation Exploratory Impact Study	Fidelity of Implementation Exploratory Evidence of Impact
III	2019 – 2020 2020 – 2021	Confirmatory Impact Study	Confirmatory Evidence of Effectiveness

Sample

Twelve schools at 10 sites within six Metro Omaha school districts will participate in the evaluation. The sample includes 350 children and their families, as well as 200 Pre-K – Grade 3 teachers, who are participating in the full implementation sites.

Table 2 illustrates how the sample will be constructed. All children, ages 0 – 3, and families who are participating in the home visiting program in 2015 – 2016 (~150 children and families) are being recruited for the study. These children and families will be identified as "Cohort A." Additionally, 200 children from Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms who are in the full implementation sites during that year will be randomly selected for study. These children and their families will be identified as "Cohort B."

Observational data will be collected from Pre-K – Grade 3 classrooms (~200 classrooms) and surveys and interviews/focus groups will take place with teachers and school leadership in the full implementation sites. All children will be followed through third grade once they enter the evaluation study using direct assessment and available administrative data. Principals and other school leaders will also be interviewed and included in the study.

Table 2: Study Participants

CHILDREN (Ages/Grades):	N
Cohort A (0 – 3)	~150
Cohort B (Pre-K – K)	~200
FAMILY:	
Cohort A (0 – 3)	~150
Cohort B (Pre-K – K)	~200
CLASSROOMS/TEACHERS:	
Pre-K – Grade 3	~200
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/PRINCIPALS	12

Data Collection Approach

A data gathering approach that relies on multiple methods and multiple informants will be used. With the exception of Cohort A children, data will be collected only once per year. Data will be collected by experienced and trained data collectors. The following summarizes the type of measurement that will be used for each group or level of participants in the program:

OUTCOMES BEING ASSESSED	BIRTH – AGE 3 COHORT *All children and families in 0 – 3 home visiting program*	PRE-K – GRADE 3 COHORT *3-4 children per classroom & their families All classroom teachers for observations*
	Measure	**Measure**
CHILD **Cognitive/Language/Academic** Age-appropriate cognitive development; reading, math, and written/oral language for Pre-K – Grade 3	**Language** Receptive Language **Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition** (ASQ-3 required for ESSS) **Preschool Language Scale, Fifth Edition (PLS-5)** Administered annually, beginning at time of enrollment *(ESSS completes PLS-S for Spanish-Speaking families in lieu of PPVT at age 3 and 5)*	**Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement-3 Brief (KTEA-3)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)

Social – Emotional Self-regulation/ executive function emotions/affect relations with people	**Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (ITSEA)** (Starting at 12 months—Evaluation) **Ages & Stages Questionnaire-Social-Emotional** (ASQ-SE starts at 9 months—ESSS)	**Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool (BRIEF-P)** (Pre-K only) **Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory (CEFI)** (K – Grade 3 only; K in year 1) **Behavior Assessment System for Children – Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-BESS)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)
Language Receptive language	**Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (PPVT)** **(Preschool Language Scale-S for Spanish-Speaking)** (ESSS; starts at age 3 – evaluation team will administer PLS-S annually for children who are Spanish-speaking)	**Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)
PARENT **Parent-Child Interactions** Parent responsivity, support & stimulation – language and literacy	**Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)** (Evaluation) **Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS)** (Evaluation) **Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME)** (Required for ESSS)	**Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)
Social Support Networks Access, stability, aid from parent social network	**Parenting Stress Index/Emotional Functioning** (Evaluation) **The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, Revised (CESD-R)** (Evaluation)	**Protective Factors Survey (PFS)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)
Home-School Partnership Sense of belonging, trust at school; two-way communication; support for engagement	**Home-School Partnership Scale/Roadmap—Family Engagement Survey: adapted for 0 – 3 (FES)** (Evaluation)	**Home-School Partnership Scale/Roadmap—Family Engagement Survey (FES)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)

CLASSROOM/ TEACHER **Teacher-Child Classroom Interactions** Classroom Organization Emotional Support Instructional Support	NOT APPLICABLE	**Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)**
Teacher-Child Relationships Teacher perception of relationship with target students (closeness; conflict)		**Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)** (Pre-K & K in year 1)
SCHOOL Perceived changes in system, school, teachers, children and families related to "school as hub"; birth – Grade 3 services; family-school partnerships	NOT APPLICABLE	**Teacher and Administrator Focus Groups** These will be conducted on a random sample of teachers and administrators participating in the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan
HOME VISITOR **Parent-Home Visitor & Child-Home Visitor Interaction** Home visitor's effectiveness in engaging parent and child during home visiting	**Home Visit Rating Scales (HOVRS)** (Evaluation)	NOT APPLICABLE
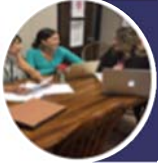
CUSTOMIZED DISTRICT ASSISTANCE

Customized technical assistance provides Learning Community school districts with access to state and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts that will impact system-wide early childhood education and services. Customized professional development provides districts with support in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities for staff in order to address key dimensions of early childhood programming, birth through Grade 3.

Eight Learning Community school districts are receiving intensive assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs related to early childhood policies and programming, birth through Grade 3.

PARTICIPATING DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

DISTRICT	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	FREE/ REDUCED	SPECIAL EDUCATION	MOBILITY	ELL
Bellevue	10,076	37.81%	16.99%	12.64%	1.98%
Bennington	1,922	8.43%	10.05%	5.02%	NA
Elkhorn	7,553	6.91%	8.4%	8.47%	0.46%
Gretna	3,953	9.16%	11.48%	4.9%	NA
Papillion LaVista	11,401	19.95%	11.51%	8.77%	1.61%
Ralston	3,179	54.04%	16.81%	9.26%	7.45%
Springfield Platteview	1,137	16.53%	14.39%	6.04%	NA
Westside	6,106	31.9%	15.55%	7.18%	2.35%

FOCUS AREAS AND IMPLEMENTATION

DISTRICT	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
Bellevue	Review and development of a district plan to advance early learning system focused on aligning programs, transitions, and capacity-building.	Use needs assessment and strategic plan to develop action plans to improve enrollment data collection, transitions, instructional leadership, and curriculum alignment.
Bennington	Assess needs and service options for preschool children, develop strategies to improve access to high-quality early childhood education, and enhance home visits / family partnerships.	Continue work to enhance home visits, conduct family surveys to gather data about demographics, feeder patterns, and transitions.
Elkhorn	Review and development of a district plan to advance early learning system focused on school preparedness and transition to Kindergarten.	Use needs assessment and strategic plan to develop action plans to enhance curriculum alignment and connections with community providers.
Gretna	Implement a sequence of training, coaching, and professional learning communities to promote children's social, emotional, and behavioral development in all Pre-K – Grade 3 classrooms.	Contintue PD plan and classroom implementation. Implement a program evaluation plan to assess impact on classroom practices and student outcomes.
Papillion LaVista	Enhance home visiting conducted by early intervention specialists and Pre-K – Grade 3 teachers. Complete summer professional learning and develop tool kit of home visiting guidelines and resources.	Participate in 2016 National P-3 Institute which provides an intensive professional education to deepen P-3 approaches. The team will develop a district action plan and share their learning with other districts.
Ralston	Assess preschool education programs using research-based indicators for self-assessment and classroom observations. Use results for district-wide program development and professional learning.	Implement plans for ongoing professional development combined with classroom observations and feedback to implement quality instructional practices.
Springfield Platteview	Participate in advisory group to plan PD for All.	Complete site visits to full implementation schools. Continue participation in PD for All advisory group.
Westside	Strengthen collaboration and plan for professional learning among principals and directors of on-site childhood programs.	Implement plan for elementary principals, early childhood program directors, and Kindergarten and preschool teachers to align learning expectations from preschool to Kindergarten.

EVALUATION OF CUSTOMIZED DISTRICT ASSISTANCE

A plan for program evaluation has been, or will be, developed for each customized assistance plan. Measures are aligned with the goals and expected outcomes for the plan and with the overall goals of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. These may include child, family, classroom, school and/or district level measures and implementation artifacts.

> The Superintendents' Plan customized support for Gretna Public Schools has been vital, leading to important advances in the strategies our early childhood teachers use to build children's social and emotional skills. Our Buffett Institute partners are now supporting us in extending these strategies into the primary grades.
>
> - *Deb Siemers*
> *Special Education Director and*
> *Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Work Group Member*
> *Gretna Public Schools*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

Professional Development for All is a connected series of professional development institutes open to all school leaders, teachers, early childhood professionals, and caregivers who work with young children from birth through Grade 3 in the Learning Community. PD for All introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices to those who work with young children and families and gives early childhood professionals the chance to come together and learn from one another. The series explores strategies to advance teaching, learning, and family-school-community connections in ways that reduce opportunity gaps and achievement gaps for low-income children, children of color, and English language learners.

PARTICIPANTS

During 2015 – 2016, four one-day institutes convened with 880 participants, including 420 staff from across the 11 districts with the remainder of the participants coming from community childcare and other agencies. Over 70 different agencies were represented at PD for All Institutes, including Early Head Start, home visiting programs, Educare, the Learning Community Centers of North and South Omaha, and an array of center-based and family child care providers.

Four one-day institutes will also be conducted during the 2016 – 2017 school year. Based on participant feedback and input from the PD for All advisory committee, the institutes will be enhanced through the offering of Spanish bilingual sessions and evening or weekend institutes. These changes are intended to encourage greater participation by community-based and family providers. In addition, the keynote presenters will facilitate a half-day leadership development session in conjunction with each of the four institutes. These sessions are designed to prepare principals, directors, instructional coaches, and Buffett Institute staff to provide ongoing support for extended learning and classroom implementation following the PD for All sessions.

COMMUNITY PROVIDER FORUM

One of the Buffett Institute's goals this year is to connect more closely with family and community-based child care and preschool programs. Evening and weekend Professional Development for All sessions are being offered to provide more convenient options for those working in or operating programs.

A new event for community preschool and child care providers was held on the evening on October 20, 2016. This Community Provider Forum expanded outreach, networking, and collaboration with community-based early childhood providers. Information about the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan and the Professional Development for All series was provided. Input was solicited about the most useful topics and formats for professional learning opportunities. This information will help guide planning for the institutes and has sparked ideas for other types of collaboration. Over 135 early childhood professionals engaged actively in the kick-off Community Provider Forum. The participants included directors and teachers from child care centers, family child care providers, preschool teachers, professional development, and Nebraska Department of Education staff members.

2015 – 2016 PD for All Institute Series
The goals of this connected professional development series are to highlight the importance of quality and continuity in the learning experiences of young children from birth through Grade 3 and to introduce leading-edge research that can spark new, more effective practices in our work with young children and their families.

2015 - 2016 Theme

What Matters Most for Young Children, Families and Communities

Social & Emotional Foundations for Whole Child Development & Learning

Cultural & Linguistic Responsiveness for Whole Child Development & Learning

Family Partnerships for Whole Child Development & Learning

2016 – 2017 PD for All Institute Series
Developmentally appropriate practice and rigor are typically seen as conflicting ideas. The 2016 – 2017 Engaging & Nurturing Young Children as Active Thinkers professional learning series moves beyond this debate to highlight how we can join together to rigorously promote each young child's intellectual capacity while nurturing the development of the whole child.

2016 - 2017 Theme

Engaging & Nurturing Young Children as Thinkers

It's More Than Words: Oral Language as a Foundation for Children's Thinking & Learning

Integrated Learning Experiences to Deepen Children's Learning & Thinking

Building Content-Rich Learning Environments to Engage Children's Active Minds
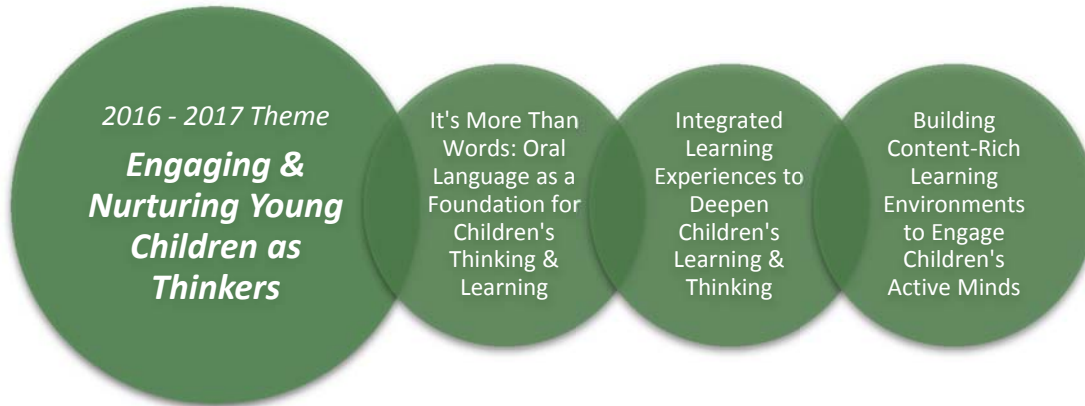
EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

Participant surveys are administered following each Professional Development for All Institute. The survey asks participants to rate whether the sessions provided the appropriate balance between research and practice, provided useful information, and sparked ideas for working with others. Across all 2015 – 2016 sessions, average scores for each item ranged from 3.73 to 4.82 on a five-point scale. Feedback was shared with institute presenters and used by the PD for All Advisory Committee to inform ongoing planning and follow-up supports.

Participant attendance records, surveys, and advisory team feedback indicated the need to explore strategies to increase participation by community early childhood providers as well as Spanish-speaking providers. The need for follow-up and support for classroom implementation also emerged as a need. A more comprehensive program evaluation will be explored to provide additional information to guide the planning and effective implementation of PD for All.

Comments from **PD for All** participant evaluations:

- Really great session – so inspiring!
- Very knowledgeable presenter. Appreciate the opportunity to reflect on our practices and how we can make effective changes for improvement.
- Loved having community members present! Very relevant!!
- Very informative, helped me to understand the connection between caregivers, teachers, and parents. I will work harder to build a relationship with my parents.

LONG-TERM RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

The long term goal of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is to reduce or eliminate achievement gaps for at-risk children living in the 11 school districts of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

The collaborative work of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan will achieve the following positive long-term results for our children, families, schools, and communities:

1. Students are able to learn at high levels.
2. Families are supported and know that their children are learning.
3. Teaching is more effective.
4. Schools are better able to serve all children.
5. Communities become stronger.

Open
Enrollment

Section III and IV prepared by David Moon, Learning Community Finance Director.

Section III – Student Demographics

This section of the report provides general enrollment information, as well as data associated with student eligibility for free or reduced price lunch (FRL) and ELL (English Language Learner) services for the 2015-2016 school year. Comparative data from previous years are also presented. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) provided the data included in this section.

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 four school years (2011-2012 through 2015-2016) since Subcouncils were composed of different schools in previous years.

Table III.1 (p.2) presents demographic data for each Subcouncil for the 2015-2016 school year, including the total number of enrolled students, percent eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL), and percent of English Language Learners (ELL).

Table III.1: 2015-2016 Total Enrollment, Free and Reduced Lunch, and ELL by Subcouncil

	SC	Total Enrollment	Number FRL	Percent FRL	Number ELL	Percent ELL
K-6	1	8,334	3,537	42.4%	403	4.8%
7-12	1	7,122	3,759	52.8%	204	2.9%
Subcouncil Total	**1**	**15,456**	**7,296**	**47.2%**	**607**	**3.9%**
K-6	2	8,802	7,654	87.0%	1,566	17.8%
7-12	2	7,125	4,906	68.9%	441	6.2%
Subcouncil Total	**2**	**15,927**	**12,560**	**78.9%**	**2,007**	**12.6%**
K-6	3	9,586	5,442	56.8%	1,340	14.0%
7-12	3	6,199	3,062	49.4%	244	3.9%
Subcouncil Total	**3**	**15,785**	**8,504**	**53.9%**	**1,584**	**10.0%**
K-6	4	12,326	2,429	19.7%	300	2.4%
7-12	4	10,896	1,824	16.7%	56	0.5%
Subcouncil Total	**4**	**23,222**	**4,253**	**18.3%**	**356**	**1.5%**
K-6	5	12,519	8,568	68.4%	3,212	25.7%
7-12	5	10,559	6,680	63.3%	561	5.3%
Subcouncil Total	**5**	**23,078**	**15,248**	**66.1%**	**3,773**	**16.3%**
K-6	6	13,908	2,284	16.4%	157	1.1%
7-12	6	11,084	1,732	15.6%	37	0.3%
Subcouncil Total	**6**	**24,992**	**4,016**	**16.1%**	**194**	**0.8%**
K-6	All LC	65,475	29,914	45.7%	6,978	10.7%
7-12	All LC	52,985	21,963	41.5%	1,543	2.9%
Learning Comm. Total	**All LC**	**118,460**	**51,877**	**43.8%**	**8,521**	**7.2%**

- Student enrollment in the six Subcouncils ranges from 15,456 in Subcouncil 1 to 24,992 in Subcouncil 6.

- The percentage of students who qualify for FRL varies greatly among the Subcouncils, from approximately 16% and 18% in Subcouncils 6 and 4, respectively, to 79% in Subcouncil 2. Subcouncils 1, 3, and 5 also have higher percentages of FRL than the Learning Community total of 43.8%.

- At 16.3%, Subcouncil 5 has the highest percentage of English Language Learners. Subcouncils 2 and 3, with 12.6% and 10.0%, also have a higher percentage than that of the in Learning Community as a whole, which is 7.2%.

Demographic Comparisons Across Years

Table III.2 compares enrollments for the past three years, and Figures III.1 and III.2 (p. 4) compare FRL and ELL numbers in 2015-2016 with 2014-2015.

Table III.2: 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 Enrollment by Subcouncil

	2013-2014 Enrollment	2014-2015 Enrollment	2015-2016 Enrollment	1 Year Percent Change	2 Year Percent Change
Subcouncil 1	15,186	15,489	15,456	-0.21%	1.78%
Subcouncil 2	15,774	15,867	15,927	0.38%	0.97%
Subcouncil 3	15,450	15,588	15,785	1.26%	2.17%
Subcouncil 4	22,853	23,013	23,222	0.91%	1.61%
Subcouncil 5	22,589	22,900	23,078	0.78%	2.16%
Subcouncil 6	22,847	24,029	24,992	4.01%	9.39%
Total	**114,699**	**116,886**	**118,460**	**1.35%**	**3.28%**

- Enrollment in the Learning Community increased by 1.35% over the previous year (approximately 2,200 students). Between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 the increase was 3.28%

- The enrollment in all Subcouncils has increased from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016. Subcouncil 1, which covers the northern-most part of Omaha Public Schools and the whole of Bennington Public Schools, has declined by 0.21% last year.

- The 2-year increase in Subcouncil 6 (9.39%) is considerably greater than any other Subcouncil. Subcouncil 6 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 III.1: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 Free and Reduced Lunch by Subcouncil
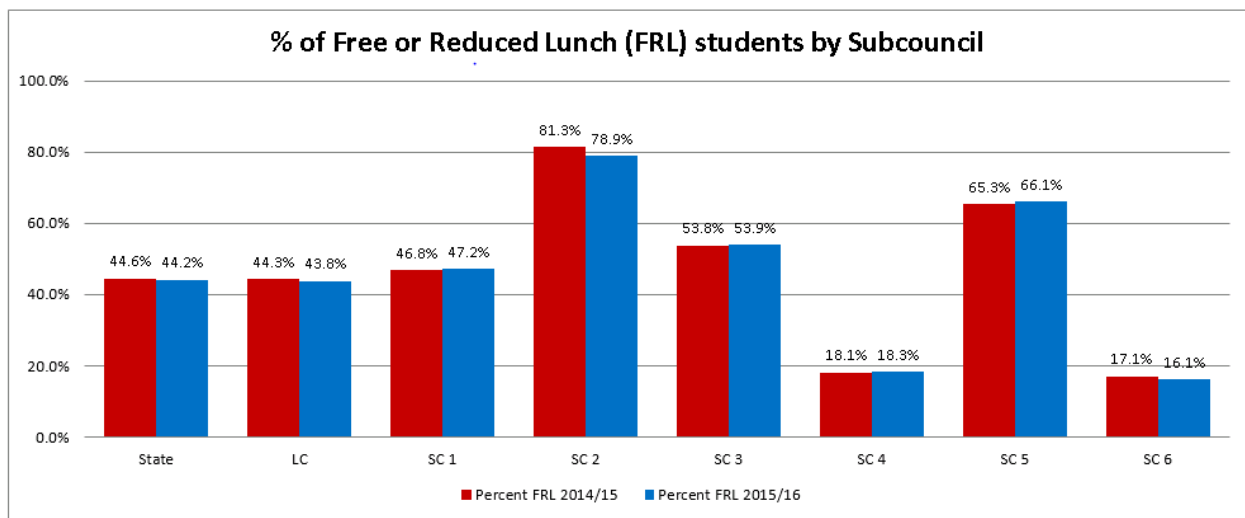
- The percentage of Learning Community students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch decreased by half of a percent (.5%).
- Economic diversity does not show any indication of movement toward geographic equalization, rather it seems to have stabilized.
  - Subcouncils 2 experienced the first reduction in students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch percentage of the population since school year 2010-2011, the reduction was 2.5% year over year.
  - The increase in Subcouncils 1, 3, 5 was less than one percent, while Subcouncil 6 decreased by a percent (1.0%).
  - Subcouncil 5, which has the second highest percentage of FRL-qualifying students (66.1%), had the greatest percentage increase, 0.7%.

Figure III.2: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 ELL by Subcouncil
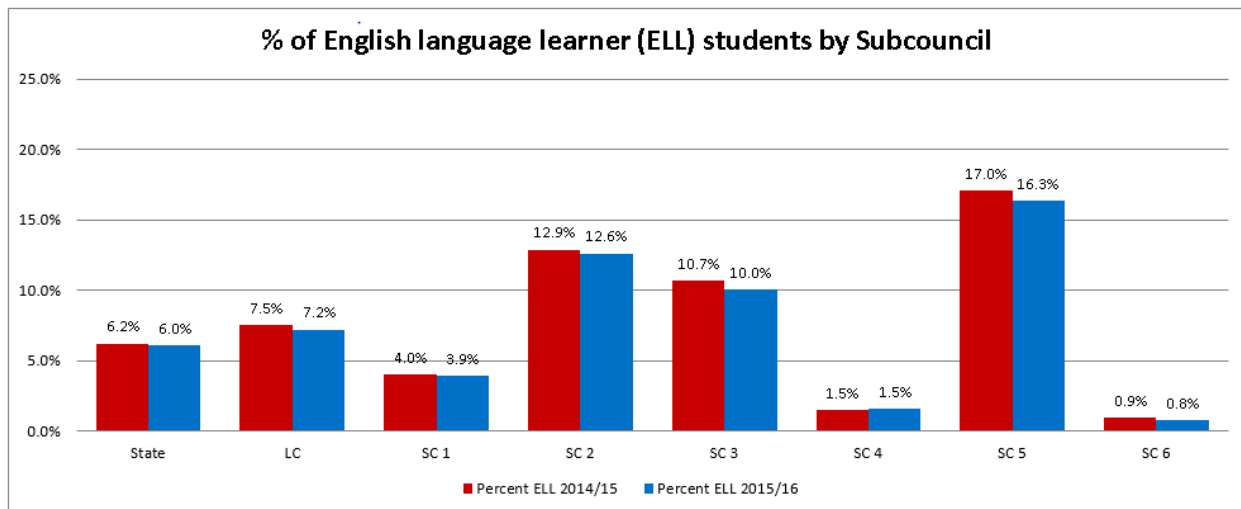
- The percentage of ELL decreased slightly in the Learning Community for the 2015-2016 school year, but is largely unchanged.

Free and Reduced Lunch Concentration

Figure III.3 (p. 5) 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%. The first bar in each set represents the average number of schools in each interval in the previous five years and the second bar shows the number in the 2015-2016 school year.[1]

---

[1] Over the five -year period, the number of schools increased. A total of 200 schools are included in the five-year average. In 2015-2016 the Learning Community included 210 schools.

Figure III.3: Number of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10% Comparing 2015-2016 with the Previous Five-Year Average

Learning Community FRL distribution (in 10 percent increments) w/ 5 year prior average
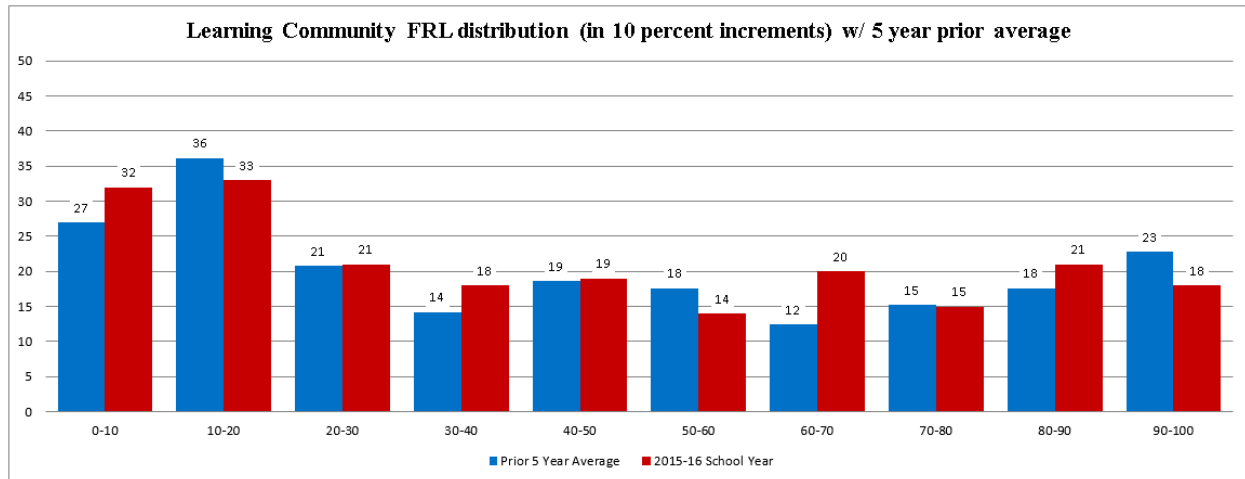
A primary goal of Open Enrollment is to improve the economic diversity of Learning Community schools. Progress toward this goal would be illustrated by an increase in the number of schools in the middle ranges of the graph and a decline in the number on each end; however, that trend is not occurring. Generally, 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. The exception is the number of schools in the 10% to 20% range. In that range the number has decreased, reversing last year's trend wherein schools previously in the closest two ranges (0 to 10% & 20 to 30%) had likely moved into the 10% to 20% range along with general growth in the community at large.

- In 2015-2016, less than half (49.3%) of the schools in the Learning Community could be described as economically segregated. Sixty-Five (65) schools have FRL percentages of 20% or less and 39 have 80% or more. The five -year average in these high and low ranges is 51.2% (104 of the 202 schools).

- There are fewer high and low poverty schools now than last year. Comparing the five-year average with 2015-2016, two more schools had FRL percentages of 20% or less, and two fewer schools fell in the 80% and above range.

- The proportion of schools in the middle ranges (30 to 70 percent) is higher in 2015-2016 than the five-year average (33.7% vs. 31.0%). The previous five -year average number of schools within that range is 63 (31.0% of the 202 schools). In 2015-2016, 71 schools (33.7% of 211 schools) fell in the 30% to 70% range. The greatest increases are in the 0% to 10% (5 schools) and the 60% to 70% ranges (8 schools).

Figures III.4 and III.5 (p. 7) provide a comparison of Learning Community schools with other Nebraska schools. Figure III.4 shows the percentage of schools in Nebraska (excluding Learning Community schools) in each of the 10% ranges of FRL and Figure III.5 shows the percentages in the Learning Community.

Figure III.4: 2015-2016 Percentage of Nebraska Schools in FRL Intervals of 10% (Excluding Learning Community)
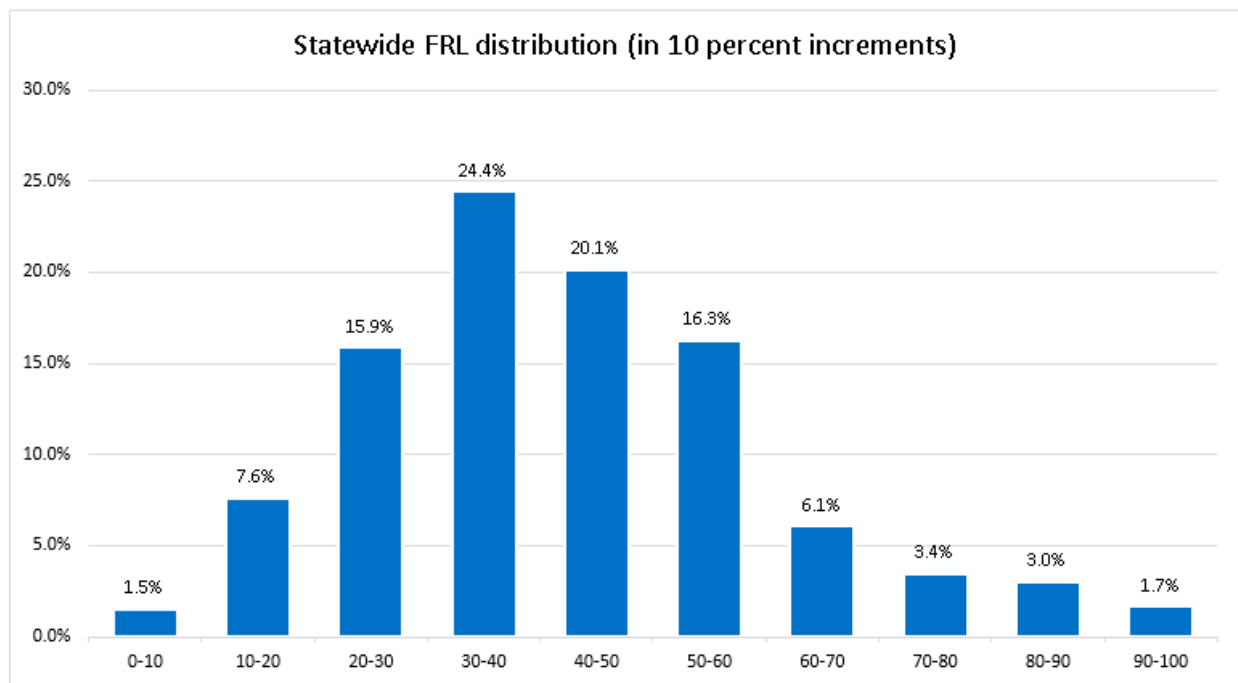
Figure III.4 illustrates that most Nebraska schools fall in the middle ranges of free and reduced lunch concentrations, and few schools fall in the very low and very high ranges.

- More than a 44% of all Nebraska schools outside the Learning Community fall in the 30% to 50% FRL ranges, and more than three-fourths of the schools (76.7%) have FRL percentages between 20% and 60%. These percentages are similar to the previous year.

- Only 4.7% of the Nebraska schools outside the Learning Community have FRL percentages of more than 80%, and only 9.1% of the schools have FRL percentages of 20% or less, again similar to the previous year.

Figure III.5 (page 7) shows the distribution of schools within the Learning Community. The contrast in the two graphs is dramatic. In the Learning Community, a far greater proportion of schools fall in the very high and very low ranges, while fewer schools are in the middle ranges.

Figure III.5: 2015-2016 Percentage of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10%
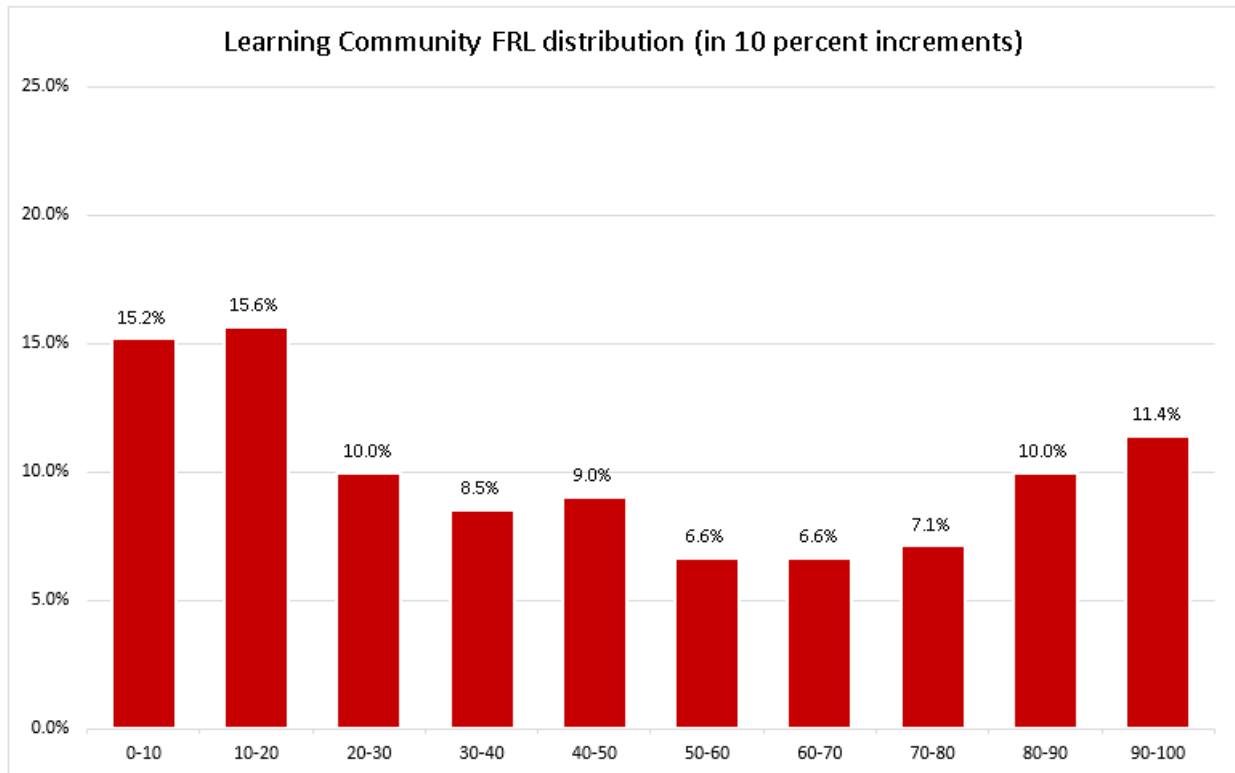
- Only 17.5% of the Learning Community schools fall in the 30% to 50% FRL range, approximately 27% less than in the rest of the State.

- Expanding the range results in similar discrepancies between the Learning Community and the State. In the Learning Community less than half (47.9%) of Learning Community students fall between the 20% to 80% FRL range. while in the rest of the State 86.2% are within the same FRL range.

- In the Learning Community 30.8% of the schools have 20% or fewer students who qualify for FRL, while in the rest of the State only 9.1% fall in this range.

- Similarly, in 21.3% of the Learning Community schools, more than 80% of the students qualify for FRL, while in the rest of the state only 4.7% of the schools fall within that high poverty range.

These data demonstrate the dramatic difference in the economic diversity of Learning Community schools in comparison to all 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. These comparisons were almost

identical to those made in the 2013, 2014 & 2015 Evaluation Reports. It does not appear that there is much progress toward greater economic diversity in Learning Community schools. 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.

Section IV – 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. Applications may be submitted 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 available capacity and following the priority sequence outlined in the Learning Community Diversity Plan:[2]

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 43.8% in 2015-2016), 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.

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

---

[2] Available 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.

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 districts were not required to give priority 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 students who request transfers to another school within their resident district, while others do not.

The Status of Open Enrollment
Table IV.1 (p. 10) shows the number of new Open Enrollment students and the percent qualifying for FRL in each of the last six years of Open Enrollment. The total represents the number of students who have accessed Open Enrollment and who, at one point in time, were enrolled as Open Enrollment students. It does not represent the *total* number enrolled each year.

Table IV.1 Number of Students Open Enrolled for the First Time in 2010-2011 through 2015-2016 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%
2013-2014	2,168	43.91%	44.47%
2014-2015	1,859	47.71%	44.29%
2015-2016	2,029	44.65%	44.20%
Total	13,397		

- The number of new students who open enroll has remained fairly constant, declining slightly in previous years but increasing this year.

- Each year, the percentage of new Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL has been similar to that of the Learning Community as a whole. In 2015-2016 Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL once again exceeded the Learning Community average as a whole.

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

Table IV.2 Total Number of Open-Enrolled Students and FRL Percentages for 2011-2012 through 2015-2016

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	PERCENT OF TOTAL OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS WHO QUALIFY FOR FRL	LEARNING COMMUNITY PERCENT FRL
2011-2012	4,334	42.52%	43.48%
2012-2013	5,769	40.65%	43.96%
2013-2014	6,535	41.68%	44.47%
2014-2015	7,244	41.01%	44.29%
2015-2016	7,826	40.28%	44.20%

The total number of current Open Enrollment students (7,826) is 5,571 less than the total number of new Open Enrollment students across the six years of the program (13,397). These 5,571 students were, at one time, open-enrolled and in 2015-2016 are no longer classified as Open Enrollment students. In 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, a total of 1,972 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 IV.1 (p. 10), the percentage of newly enrolled FRL Open Enrollment students has been similar to that of the Learning Community. However, in the past four years, the total percentage of currently enrolled Open Enrollment students is somewhat less than that of the Learning Community total: 2.04% less on average for the previous five years and 3.93% in 2015-2016. This means 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. Many of the explanations for a student's change in classification from Open Enrollment to resident (described above) involve moving to a new residence.

Tables IV.3a (p. 12)and Table IV.3b (p. 13) shows the number of Open Enrollment students in each grade, in last five years of the program and the degree of change (increases or decreases) from year to year. The numbers in the 2015-2016 column are cumulative. They include students who enrolled for the first time in the 2015-2016 school year, as well as those who enrolled in the five previous school years and continued to be open enrolled in the 2015-2016 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 2014-2015. For example, the 2015-2016 third grade enrollment of 615 includes 2012-2013 kindergartners, 2013-2014 first graders, and 2014-2015 second graders who continued as third grade Open Enrollment students in 2015-2016 and any third grade students who were newly enrolled in 2015-2016.

Table IV.3a: Number of Open Enrollment Students by Grade

GRADE LEVEL	2011-12 OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2012-13 OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2013-14 OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2014-15 OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2015-16 OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP
KG	605	583	572	480	462
1	576	645	587	598	511
2	260	639	661	619	602
3	283	313	614	694	615
4	250	374	353	615	663
5	234	324	368	427	616
6	258	311	379	402	444
7	273	371	410	464	464
8	286	349	420	461	490
9	385	482	562	566	575
10	386	485	530	647	600
11	287	480	538	636	662
12	251	413	541	635	670
Total	4,334	5,769	6,535	7,244	7,374

- In general the number of Open Enrollment students in a cohort increases as it moves through the grades. For example, the 2011-2012 the fifth grade cohort increased by 189 students (from 427 to 616) year over year. This increase has occurred in each cohort of students within the school building (i.e. elementary school, middle school and high school) as open enrollment was deployed. As this is the sixth year of open enrollment, we have seen this increase matriculate through each school building and have reached an equilibrium.

- In 2014 there were 566 9th grade Open Enrollment students. In 2015 this cohort (10th grade) increased by 34 students (600 total). Therefore, at least 24 students enrolled as Open Enrollment students, for the first time, in their sophomore year of high. It is important to understand, however, that some of these students had undoubtedly attended the same school previously as residents and became Open Enrollment students as a means of staying in the same school after moving to a residency located within another school district.

Table IV.3b: Percent Change by Year of Open Enrollment Students by Grade

GRADE LEVEL	PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2011-12 TO 2012-13	PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2012-13 TO 2013-14	PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2013-14 TO 2014-15	PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2014-15 TO 2015-16
KG	-3.64%	-1.89%	-16.08%	-3.75%
1	11.98%	-8.99%	1.87%	-14.55%
2	145.77%	3.44%	-6.35%	-2.75%
3	10.60%	96.17%	13.03%	-11.38%
4	49.60%	-5.61%	74.22%	7.80%
5	38.46%	13.58%	16.03%	44.26%
6	20.54%	21.86%	6.07%	10.45%
7	35.90%	10.51%	13.17%	0.00%
8	22.03%	20.34%	9.76%	6.29%
9	25.19%	16.60%	0.71%	1.59%
10	25.65%	9.28%	22.08%	-7.26%
11	67.25%	12.08%	18.22%	4.09%
12	64.54%	30.99%	17.38%	5.51%
Total	33.11%	13.28%	10.85%	1.79%

- These four columns of the table show the percentage of change at each grade level from year to year. The percentage of increase at each grade level continued to grow into 2012-2013 (approximately 33%). By 2013-2014 growth had more or less stabilized (approximately 13%). As increasingly larger numbers of Open Enrollment students progress through the grades, the number has become consistent year over year, mirroring the enrollment growth of the Learning Community at large (1.79% growth in open enrollment vs 1.35% Learning Community enrollment growth). That is Open Enrollment appears to have reached its equilibrium and should remain stable year over year.

Open Enrollment and Diversity

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 IV.4 (page14) shows the number of FRL-eligible Open Enrollment students who are enrolled in schools that are below the percentage of the total Learning Community (43.8%) 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. It is important to understand, that we cannot say 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 relatively 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 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 IV.4 FRL Open Enrollment Students in Schools with Lower Concentrations of FRL than the Learning Community Total and Non-FRL Open Enrollment Students Enrolled in Higher FRL Schools

YEAR	Total Open Enrollment	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%
2013-2014	6,535	1,659	25.39%	630	9.64%
2014-2015	7,244	1,789	24.70%	729	10.06%
2015-2016	7,826	1,865	23.83%	928	11.86%

Approximately 35% of the Open Enrollment students are enrolled in schools that follow the intention of the Learning Community Diversity Plan. Nearly a quarter (23.83%) of the Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL are enrolled in schools with relatively lower percentages of FRL, and 11.86% 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 in 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 IV.5 shows the number of Open Enrollment applications received and approved and the number enrolled in the 2015-2016 school year. It is important to be aware of differences in the reporting dates for the application-related information to the Learning Community and enrollment information to NDE for Fall Membership. 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 the third Friday in August, approximately one week after the start of the school year. Districts report fall enrollment data to NDE, as of the last Friday in September, approximately six weeks after the September 1st report to the Learning Community. This six-week time lapse may account for differences between the number of applications approved and the number enrolled.

Some districts, in certain situations, use the Open Enrollment process for transfers from one school to another within the district, while other districts do not.[3] This distinction is made in the tables that follow.

Table IV.5 New Applications Received and Approved and Number Enrolled for the 2015-2016 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AND APPROVED FOR 2015-16					2015-16 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	253	252	505	419	83.0%	184	3	187
Elkhorn	72	13	85	11	12.9%	2	0	2
DC West	61	0	61	61	100.0%	50	6	56
Millard	894	44	938	673	71.7%	521	162	683
Ralston	317	0	317	257	81.1%	229	1	230
Bennington	44	0	44	8	18.2%	0	0	0
Westside	700	0	700	252	36.0%	208	2	210
Bellevue	331	0	331	299	90.3%	314	42	356
Pap-LV	522	13	535	329	61.5%	225	1	226
Gretna	15	0	15	7	46.7%	6	0	6
Springfield	73	0	73	67	91.8%	69	4	73
Total	3,282	322	3,604	2,383	66.1%	1,808	221	2,029

The differences in the percentage of accepted applications across districts are caused by 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.

- Overall, 66.1% of the applications were approved. This percentage is approximately 2.4% less than previous years.

- One of the two smallest school districts, DC West, approved all applications. The Springfield Platteview and the Bellevue school districts, approved more than 90% of received applications.

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

- The number of approved applications (2,383) is 354 more than the number enrolled. This is, in part, due to the fact that families can apply to multiple school districts; 2,383 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.

---

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

Table IV.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 also from the NDE Fall Membership.

Table IV.6: Percent of Non-Resident Open Enrollment Students in School Districts' Total Enrollment in the 2015-2016 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	2013-2014 NON-RESIDENT OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2014-2015 NON-RESIDENT OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2015-2016 NON-RESIDENT OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2013-2014 PERCENT OF NON-RESIDENT OPEN ENROLLED STUDENTS IN TOTAL ENROLLMENT	2014-2015 PERCENT OF NON-RESIDENT OPEN ENROLLED STUDENTS IN TOTAL ENROLLMENT	2015-2016 PERCENT OF NON-RESIDENT OPEN ENROLLED STUDENTS IN TOTAL ENROLLMENT
OPS	585	652	567	1.21%	1.32%	1.15%
Elkhorn	45	48	43	0.66%	0.65%	0.55%
DC West	105	137	143	14.56%	17.56%	17.42%
Millard	1,844	2,026	2,293	8.07%	8.80%	9.87%
Ralston	580	650	794	19.69%	21.72%	25.18%
Bennington	7	8	6	0.40%	0.42%	0.29%
Westside	1,177	1,214	1,305	19.31%	20.23%	21.69%
Bellevue	1,020	1,103	1,144	10.52%	11.43%	11.87%
Pap-LV	814	834	860	7.57%	7.57%	7.71%
Gretna	29	38	46	0.82%	1.00%	1.12%
Springfield	113	125	173	11.11%	11.61%	15.87%
Total	**6,319**	**6,835**	**7,374**	**5.51%**	**5.85%**	**6.22%**

- After four years of the Open Enrollment program, 7,374 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 (6.22%) is relatively small.

- Millard has the largest number of non-resident, open-enrolled students, representing 9.87% of its total enrollment.

- Ralston and Westside have the largest *proportion* of non-resident Open Enrollment students, with 25.18% and 21.69%, respectively.

Open Enrollment – Option Enrollment Comparisons

As described at the beginning of Section III, Open Enrollment has been in existence in the Learning Community since 2010-2011. Prior to 2010, the State Option Enrollment system was used by all Nebraska school districts, including Learning Community districts, for the transfer of students across district boundaries. This Learning Community annual report provides data comparing the two programs. The Nebraska Department of Education provided Option Enrollment information for Learning Community districts for the three school years prior to the implementation of Open Enrollment (2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10).

Table IV.7 shows the number and percentage of Option Enrollment and Open Enrollment students by year for kindergarten, first, second and third grade. Only these grades are reported

because the 2013-14 third grade cohort entered kindergarten in the fall of 2010, the first year of Open Enrollment. In 2010-2011, and in the next four years, all students who transferred from one Learning Community district to another did so under the Open Enrollment program, rather than Option Enrollment. In grades four through twelve, the new transfers are classified as Open Enrollment, but those grades also contain students who transferred among Learning Community districts prior to 2010, under Option Enrollment, and most of those students continue to be classified as such.

Table IV.7 Number and Percent of Option Enrollment and Open Enrollment Students by Year

GRADE LEVEL	2007-08 OPTION ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2008-09 OPTION ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2009-10 OPTION ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2010-11 OPTION AND OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2011-12 OPTION AND OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2012-13 OPTION AND OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2013-14 OPTION AND OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2014-15 OPTION AND OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	2015-16 OPTION AND OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP
KG	445	441	494	528	622	605	595	480	483
1	416	476	490	611	595	661	609	598	555
2	471	468	523	590	636	663	676	619	638
3	451	494	542	607	649	625	635	694	649
Total	1,783	1,879	2,049	2,336	2,502	2,554	2,515	2,391	2,325
Percent of Total Enrollment at Included Grades	5.35%	5.50%	5.82%	6.50%	6.83%	7.00%	6.79%	6.36%	6.18%

In the column headed "2010-11 Option and Open Enrollment Students in Fall Membership" the only kindergarten students who are classified as Option Enrollment are those who transferred from a District that is not part of the Learning Community. The same is true of kindergarten and first grade in 2011-12; kindergarten, first and second grade in 2012-13 and kindergarten through grade three in 2013-14. The bottom row in the table shows the percentage of the total enrollment in these four grades that are classified as Option or Open Enrollment. For example 1,783 kindergarten through third grade 2007-08 Option Enrollment students represent 5.35% of the total Learning Community enrollment in those four grades that year. In the first year of Open Enrollment (2010-11), the 2,336 Option *and* Open Enrollment students represent 6.5% of the total Learning Community enrollment in those grades.

It is also important to know that all students in the Option Enrollment columns (the first three columns in Table IV.7) are students who transferred to a school that is not in their resident district. As explained earlier, because some districts have used Open Enrollment for transfers among schools within their districts, the numbers in the last four columns (Option *and Open* Enrollment) include some students who are attending a school within their resident district's boundaries. This is not the case in the Option Enrollment columns.

Not shown in the table, but important to understand, is the fact that only 16 of the 528 kindergarten students in the 2010-11 column are Option Enrollment students, meaning that 16 students transferred to a Learning Community school district from a district that was not within the Learning Community. In each of the other grades in the 2010-11 column, approximately 70% to 75% of the students are Option enrollment, students who transferred prior to the implementation of Open Enrollment. In the 2013-14 column, when all students in kindergarten through third grade who transferred among Learning Community districts are classified as Open Enrolled, and only those who transferred from districts outside the Learning Community are classified as Option, approximately 97% of the 2,515 transfer students are Open Enrollment students.

The implementation of Open Enrollment in 2010-11 does not appear to have increased the incidence of student transfer across district boundaries. The proportion of the total enrollment represented by Option and Open Enrollment students ranges from 5.35% in 2007-08, when all were Option Enrollment, to 7.00% in 2012-2013 when most were Open Enrollment.

- Each year until 2013-14, the proportion Option Enrollment, and the combined proportion of Option and Open enrollment, increased slightly (less than 1%). Since 2013-14, when almost all the students were classified as Open Enrollment, the percentage of total enrollment has decreased.

- Although the table shows a slightly larger proportion of student transfers after the implementation of Open Enrollment, the increase between 2009-10 and 2010-11 is only slightly larger than the increase in previous year. This difference could be attributed to the fact that Open Enrollment numbers include some students attending a school within their resident district.

Table IV.8 compares the percentage of FRL-eligible Option and Open Enrollment students over the past eight years. In the first three years, there were only Option Enrollment students, while from 2010-2011 through 2015-2016 the Learning Community districts had both Option and Open Enrollment students.

Table IV.8 Number and Percent of FRL-Eligible Option and Open Enrollment Students Compared to the Total Learning Community Percentage of FRL

YEAR	Total Number of Option Enrollment	Number of Option Enrollment Qualifying for FRL	Percent of Option Enrollment Qualifying for FRL	Total Number of Open Enrollment	Number of Open Enrollment Qualifying for FRL	Percent of Open Enrollment Qualifying for FRL	Learning Community FRL Percentage
2007-2008	6,788	1,434	21.13%	N/A	N/A	N/A	36.46%
2008-2009	7,051	1,562	22.15%	N/A	N/A	N/A	36.76%
2009-2010	7,552	1,899	25.15%	N/A	N/A	N/A	40.08%
2010-2011	6,007	1,500	24.97%	2,563	1,076	41.98%	41.86%
2011-2012	4,755	1,152	24.23%	4,334	1,843	42.52%	43.48%
2012-2013	3,717	799	21.50%	5,769	2,345	40.65%	43.96%
2013-2014	3,001	643	21.43%	6,535	2,724	41.68%	44.47%
2014-2015	2,452	506	20.64%	7,244	2,971	41.01%	44.29%
2015-2016	2,013	368	18.28%	7,826	3,152	40.28%	44.20%

The data in the Table IV.8 illustrate a rather dramatic difference in the percentages of Option Enrollment and Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL.

- In 2007-08 through 2009-10, when only the Option Enrollment program existed, the percentage of FRL-eligible Option Enrollment students ranged from 21.13% to 25.15%, approximately 15% lower than the total percentage in the Learning Community in those years.

- As described earlier in this section, the percentage of FRL-eligible Open Enrollment students is similar to the Learning Community as a whole with differences each year ranging from less than 1% to approximately 3%.

- Open Enrollment has contributed to a nearly 20% increase in a higher percentage of FRL enrolled students than Option Enrollment over the 5 year period of Open Enrollment. Option enrollment FRL student percentage is 22.16% since 2007-2008, while Open Enrollment has a percentage of 41.35% over 6 years.

- Since the implementation of Open Enrollment, Option Enrollment students who qualify for FRL has remained relatively low. The lower percentage among Option Enrollment students in more recent years could be somewhat affected by the fact that, proportionately, more high school students are included in those numbers and a lower percentage of high school students, than elementary and middle school, apply for FRL. However, this fact alone would likely account for only a small proportion of the difference.

In summary, it appears that the proportion of students who open-enroll is similar to the proportion that option-enrolled in the past, but there is a greater proportion of students who qualify for FRL among the Open Enrollment students than among Option Enrollment students. Further, the percentage of Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL is similar to the percentage of the Learning Community districts as a whole, while the percentage of Option Enrollment students who qualify for FRL is considerably less than the Learning Community total, both in the past and currently.

Student Performance and Open Enrollment

In prior years, this report to the Education Committee included a section in which we provided an analysis of the impact of the implementation of the Open Enrollment policy on student performance on the Nebraska State Assessments. Beginning with the 2014 Annual Report, we have discontinued the report section on student performance because it is clear that no valid conclusions can be reached from the analysis, and it may be misleading to continue to report data thereby leaving the impression that some findings or conclusions will be possible.

Even though it is our observation that Learning Community school districts have faithfully implemented the Open Enrollment policy, valid conclusions are not possible. Neither a causal, nor even a correlational, relationship between the implementation of the Open Enrollment policy and student performance on Nebraska Assessments can be shown for the following reasons:

- An inherent assumption of the Open Enrollment policy might be that students in high poverty schools would benefit from moving to lower poverty schools, perhaps benefitting from the higher expectations or other supposed advantages of a low poverty school. There is no evidence of any significant movement of students from high poverty schools to low poverty schools or the reverse. Therefore it is impossible to conclude that such movement resulted in significant impact to overall student performance.

- There are too many intervening variable that cannot be controlled to offer any conclusions as to the academic benefits of Open Enrollment. The largest of these variables is the fact that those parents who seek open enrollment constitute a "voluntary sample" of parents who make the choice to undertake the Open Enrollment process. Perhaps if there were waiting lists with significant numbers of similarly, highly motivated parents, we could

compare the results of the two groups to determine if the performance of the open enrolled students was better than that of the students who remained on a waiting list, but this is not the case.

Therefore, we conclude that further analyses of these data would be meaningless and misleading. The existent data provided in the State of the Schools Reports on the NDE website provide sufficient information and analyses about the performance of Learning Community students.