learning community
OF DOUGLAS AND SARPY COUNTIES

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

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Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

I'm happy to share this Annual Evaluation report of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Please know your questions are always welcome. Let me share some 2016-2017 highlights of the opportunities and outcomes for children and families across the metropolitan area.

We moved forward with a two-generation approach.
A 2-Gen approach is endorsed by the National Governors Association (NGA) and recommended by the Intergenerational Poverty Task Force of the Nebraska Legislature. It's a powerful way to make a difference in the lives of children and their families. We expect our 2-Gen outcomes to improve steadily and make our communities stronger too.

- Our new membership in Ascend at the Aspen Institute, a national network of two-generation organizations, supported more strategic program development highlighted in this report.

We demonstrated that children of families involved in Learning Community Center of North Omaha programs made greater gains than their peers.

- In just two years, preschool children with parents enrolled in Parent University classes made greater progress in critical concepts for success in school. Why? Because parents are building on skills that connect directly to a child's early learning.

Our 2-Gen program based in the Learning Community Center of South Omaha demonstrated impact within a public school for the first time.

- In partnership with OneWorld Community Health Centers, parent classes hit capacity within a welcoming school community. Generous foundation support for integrated child care made family participation possible.

- Our child-family College Preparation series in partnership with the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Service Learning Academy gained strength. We see anecdotal but strong indicators that the program opens doors to higher education and better employment. Our goal is to expand our evaluation model to capture the 2-Gen connection that fosters parent and child success.

We launched a childcare training program that aligns with Step Up to Quality, the statewide initiative in Nebraska for the quality child care that children need to be ready to learn.

- Our coaching program successfully reached out to community childcare directors who lack affordable training resources.

- EVERY director is now pursuing state requirements connected to workforce development and quality care standards.

Public school educators and community organizations received tremendous professional development training in as a result of our investment in the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan.

- Our school districts gained staff-wide access to top quality early childhood expertise. Leadership from Buffett Early Childhood Institute is key as our communities respond to the needs of very young children and their families.

- Recent school-as-hub site visits by our Coordinating Council revealed school teams building unique strengths within common benchmarks. These quality measures are important for a comprehensive and system-wide approach to early childhood education.

Our team and partners accepted many opportunities to present key outcomes and a growing body of best practices at national and statewide conferences including the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) annual gathering. Just as Learning Community school districts and community partners now share knowledge across borders, we willingly share our expertise with school districts outside the Learning Community and will continue to do so.

In the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, our shared understanding of what young children and their families need bodes well for the future of our communities. I look forward to keeping you informed for the benefit all Nebraska children and families.

Sincerely,

David Patton
Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties
Chief Executive Officer

Note: Due to the late release of student identifiable academic information, the Learning Community plans a report addendum, with that data as soon as possible.

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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 Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties works to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for children and families. The implementation of quality programs and teaching practices are proving their value in the lives of children and families. Learning Community impact improves yearly as a collaborative network of metropolitan area school districts and community organizations expands. These partnerships increase access to critical support services and a more comprehensive approach to the long-term solutions that children and families need.

This 2016-2017 report describes Learning Community programs and summarizes evaluation findings:

> Intensive Early Childhood and Family Engagement
> Learning Community Center of North Omaha
>
> Family Learning
> Learning Community Center of South Omaha/Family
>
> School District Pilots

RATIONALE

The Learning Community 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 school 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 teacher 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 are effective for both new and veteran teachers alike (Reddy et al., 2013).

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION 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 that may negatively affect 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).

TWO-GENERATION APPROACH

Both Centers employ a two-generational approach. This theory of change suggests providing and aligning services for parents and children will yield stronger and longer lasting effects (Ascend, 2016). While each Center has a different focus, both provide services for families and children, use data for continuous improvement and track outcomes.
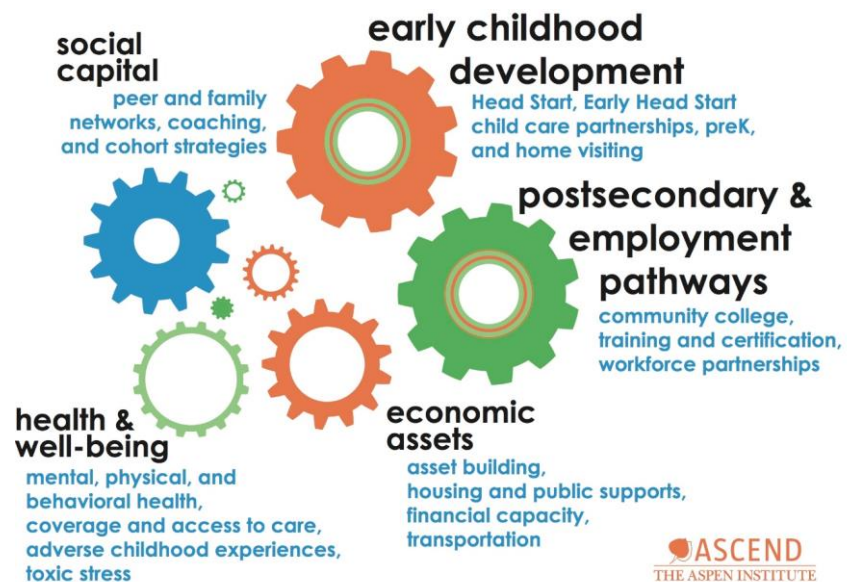
EVALUATION

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 used as a teaching tool 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 to that variation?

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 were 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 results). 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 as 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 the 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).

THE DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN ASSESSED INFLUENCES 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 INFLUENCE 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 four factors described above that influence measurement error will inform the establishment of the benchmarks for this report. Appendix B will provide the evidence that supports the established benchmarks 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 about the magnitude of the effect will be adopted (minimal =.20, moderate =.50, and substantial =.80).

SPECIAL NOTE

Due to a new state assessment, Nebraska Department of Education has not released the assessment data for 2016 to 2017. Once this data is released to the school districts, the information will be summarized and amended to this report. Placeholders for the data will be denoted in this report.

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA

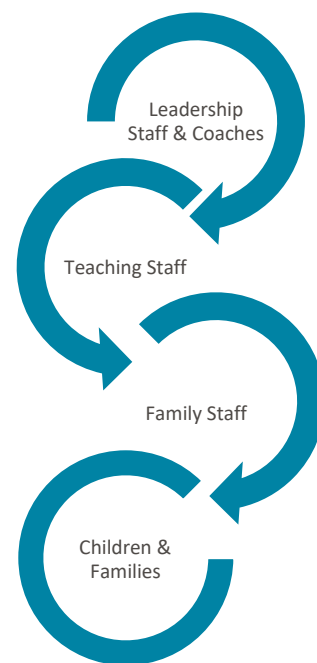# Early Childhood and Family Engagement

The Learning Community Center of North Omaha provides innovative, demonstrative programming to improve educational outcomes for 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, Kellom, Franklin and Lothrop Elementary schools. The center encompasses four primary programs: intensive early childhood programs in public school settings, Parent University, childcare director training, and future teacher clinical training. Descriptions of each program and evaluation findings are summarized in this section.

Intensive Early Childhood Education

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 11 days of additional professional development for the entire team. The early childhood programs were also enhanced through instructional coaching, and all of the families are eligible to participate in Parent University.

This year the coaching and Parent University components of the program were expanded to Lothrop and Franklin elementary schools. Over time, all of the same interventions will be initiated. Evaluation of the Lothrop and Franklin programs will be initiated in the 2017-2018 school year.

Leadership
Staff & Coaches

Teaching Staff

Family Staff

Children &
Families

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTIONS. Intensive early childhood teams are integrated as a school building system of teachers, leadership and family support staff that implement a service and supports. The leadership team included the principal, an early childhood specialist and two

coaches. Each classroom had a lead early childhood teacher, special education teacher and paraprofessional staff.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. Family liaisons and family support staff worked with families to help them access needed services and to promote 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 programming. 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 provided reflective consultation to the teaching staff both inside and outside of the classroom. They used the unique coaching approach adopted by Omaha Public Schools (i.e., Coaching with Powerful Interactions). A national consultant 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 Child Specialist provided support to the coaches and principals at each school and is 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 2016-2017, the Intensive Early Childhood courses served 132 early childhood students and their families from their attendance area. Demographic information was collected for 128 children. Most of the students served were at risk for school failure due to low income. Demographic information was collected to help

INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD COURSES SERVED CHILDREN WITH A VARIETY OF RISK FACTORS.

Low-Income Households	**87%**
Special Education	**34%**
ELL	**17%**

n=128

interpret the evaluation findings, including eligibility for free and reduced lunch (a proxy for low-income households), English Language Learners (ELL), and/or enrollment in special education services.
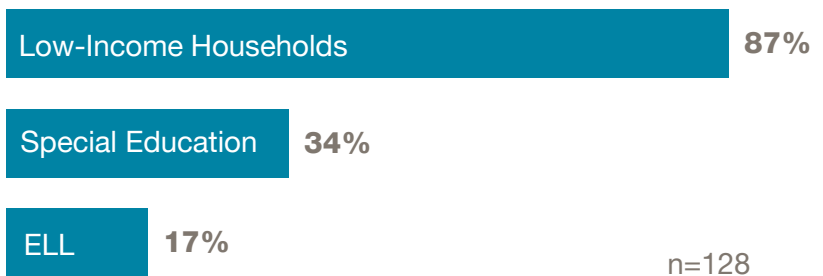
MOST OF THE STUDENTS SERVED REPRESENTED MINORITY GROUPS

White	**10%**		
Non-White	**54%**	**24%**	**6% 6%**
	Black	Hispanic	Asian Multi-Racial

n=128

The Intensive Early Children program served more females (60%) than males (40%). The majority of the students (67%) served we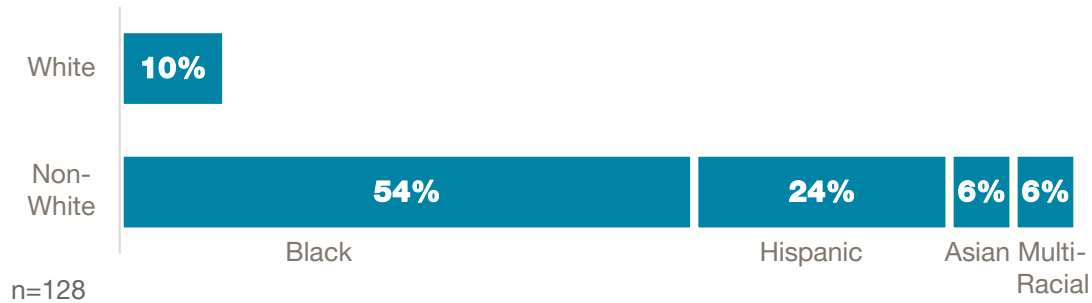re four years of age. On average, students participated 8.9 months during this school year. Only one left the program during the course of the year. The average days of attendance were 154 days with a range from 15 to 169. The results suggest students were consistently participating in the educational program. This is the second year of collecting attendance data. Students, on average, attended 13 more days this year than in the previous year.

OUTCOMES

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

METHOD. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was used to evaluate the quality of the eight intensive early childhood classrooms.

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. Research on the CLASS indicates ratings

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

Classroom Organization
- Behavior Management
- Productivity
- Instructional Learning Formats

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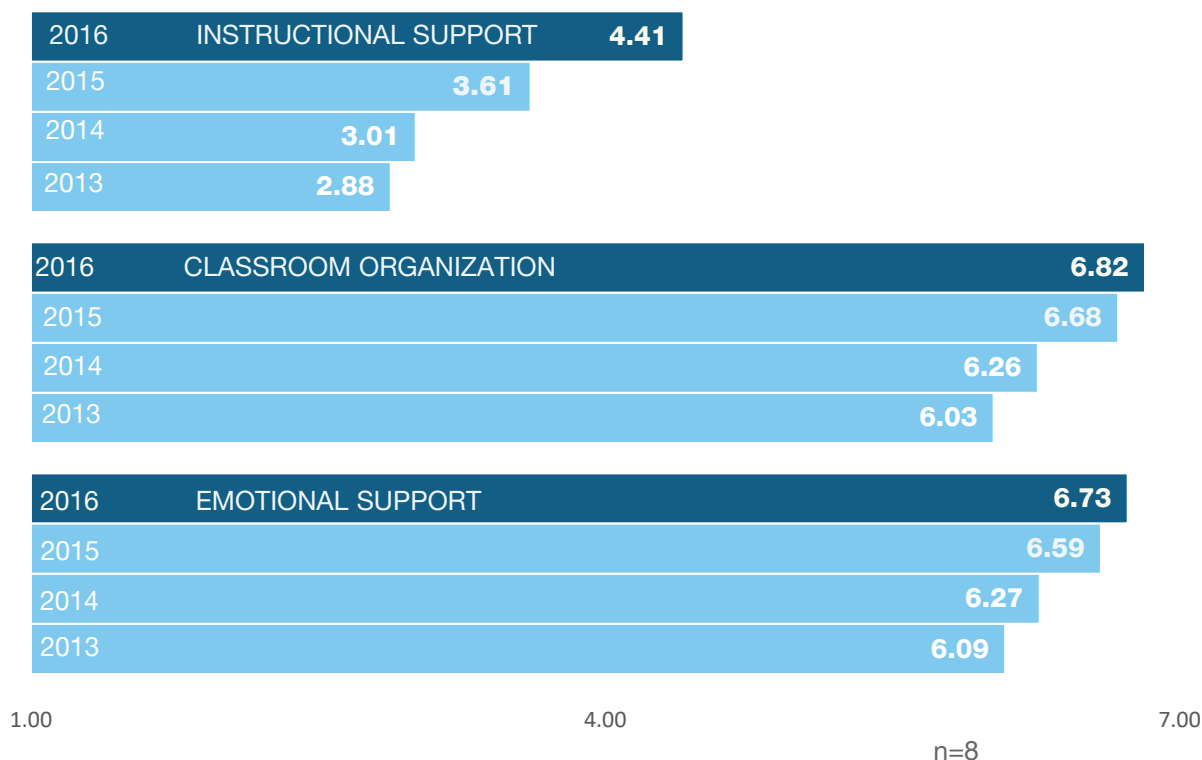- Quality of Feedback
- Language Modeling

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 the minimum threshold necessary to have impacts on student achievement (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010).

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS) RESULTS

KELLOM AND CONESTOGA MET THE RECOMMENDED SCORES TO HAVE AN IMPACT ON CHILD OUTCOMES.
The greatest gains were in the Instructional Support Domain.

	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	
2016		4.41
2015		3.61
2014		3.01
2013		2.88

	CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	
2016		6.82
2015		6.68
2014		6.26
2013		6.03

	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	
2016		6.73
2015		6.59
2014		6.27
2013		6.09

1.00   4.00   7.00

n=8

Instructional practices across all domains improved over the four years of the program. The scores on the CLASS exceeded research reported thresholds necessary to have an effect on student achievement. Emotional Support and Classroom Organization were within the high-quality range, and Instructional Support was within the mid-range of quality. Teachers' instructional support practices showed the most gains. Coaching efforts focused on improving the CLASS teaching strategies.

During the 2015-2016 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.

Teachers demonstrated a 22% increase in their use of "instructional support strategies" over the previous year.

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 Early 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 (3.5), Classroom Organization (6.2) and Emotional Support (6.4).

For two consecutive years, Intensive Early Childhood Program teachers demonstrated scores that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start programs nationally.
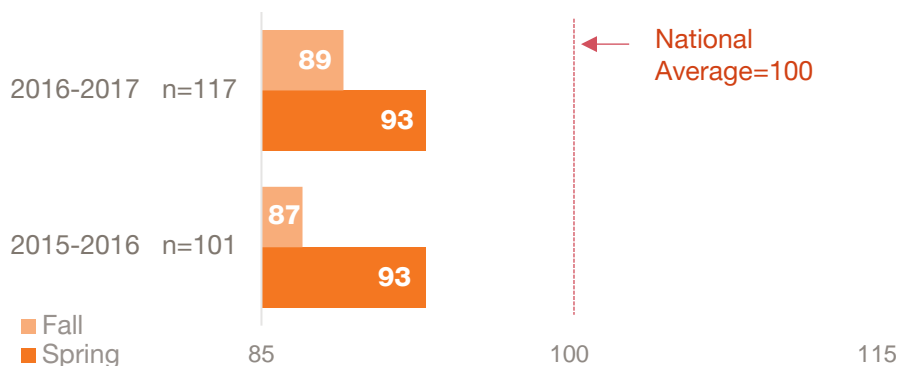
STUDENT LANGUAGE OUTCOMES

METHOD. Vocabulary is an important factor in how students' progress through school. Students who have limited vocabularies at a very young age are likely to fall behind their peers. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–IV (PPVT-IV), a direct child assessment measuring vocabulary, was administered in the fall and spring.

RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Fall-spring comparisons were made using a paired-samples t-test. The results found that students' scores improved significantly by spring (t=-6.076, p<.001, d=0.562). These suggest substantial meaningful change. The spring vocabulary average standard score of students in Intensive Early Childhood programs was compared across years. Comparisons over the past two years of the program found that each year children made significant gains.

EACH YEAR, STUDENTS' RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY SKILLS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY.
Average scores approached the national average by spring.

2016-2017 n=117
- Fall: 89
- Spring: 93

2015-2016 n=101
- Fall: 87
- Spring: 93

National Average=100

■ Fall
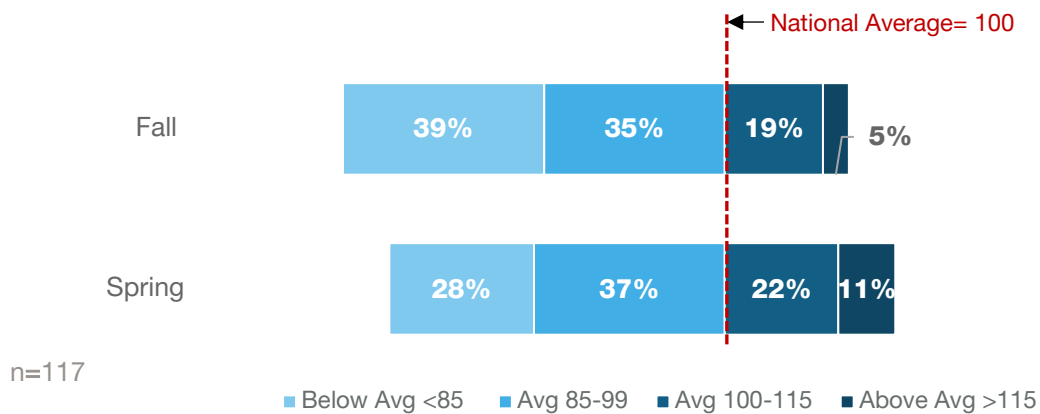■ Spring

85   100   115

In 2016-2017, small percentages (24%) of the children were scoring at the national average, which is a standard score of 100. By the spring, this increased to 33%. By spring, 72% of the children were within the average range (85 to 115). There were 11% more children scoring in the average range or above than in the fall. It is important to interpret these results taking into account that 34% 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, 72% of the children scored within the average range or above.

BY SPRING, MORE CHILDREN HAD VOCBULARY SKILLS WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE OR ABOVE.
A third of the children scored at or above the national average.

← National Average= 100

	Below Avg <85	Avg 85-99	Avg 100-115	Above Avg >115
Fall	39%	35%	19%	5%
Spring	28%	37%	22%	11%

n=117

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

METHOD. The BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3 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. The student's teacher completed the BASC-3 BESS in both the fall and the spring for 118 students.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL RESULTS

By Spring, the majority (81%) of the students were in the typical range suggesting they were not at risk for developing behavioral, social, or emotional problems. A total of 19% of the children had elevated or extremely elevated risk factors on this scale. The percentage of children within the typical range was relatively stable over time. By spring, small progress was noted as 6% fewer children scored in the extremely elevated risk range. These students should be monitored closely and may need additional support in the classroom and at home.

THE MAJORITY OF THE STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED TYPCIAL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS.

← Typical Development

	Extremely Elevated Risk	Elevated Risk	Typical
Fall	12%	9%	79%
Spring	6%	13%	81%

n=118
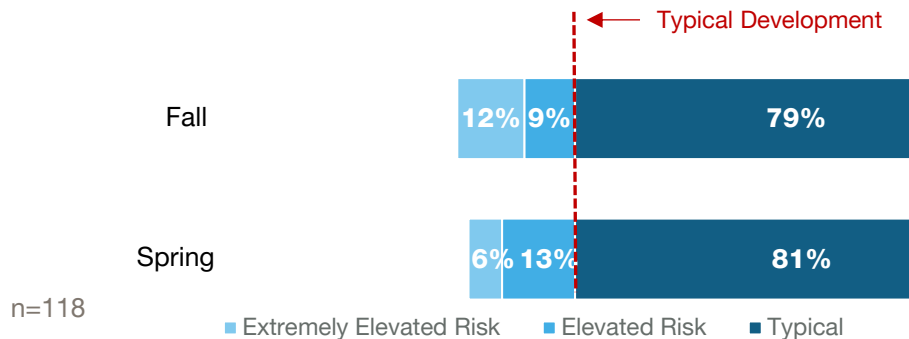
SCHOOL READINESS OUTCOMES

METHOD. School readiness is determined by a combination of factors that contribute to school success in grade school. 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 these school readiness 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 pre-kindergarten student's academic school readiness was the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). The BSRA measures 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 the year (t=-4.811, *p<.001*, *d*=0..457) suggesting substantial meaningful change. The school readiness average standard score of students in the Intensive Early Childhood program was compared across two years of the program. Results found that each year there were significant and substantial meaningful changes.

STUDENTS IN THE INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM MADE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.
Average scores approached the national average by spring.

2016-2017 n=111
90
94

◄── National Average=100

2015-2016 n=101
89
93

■ Fall ■ Spring

85   100   115
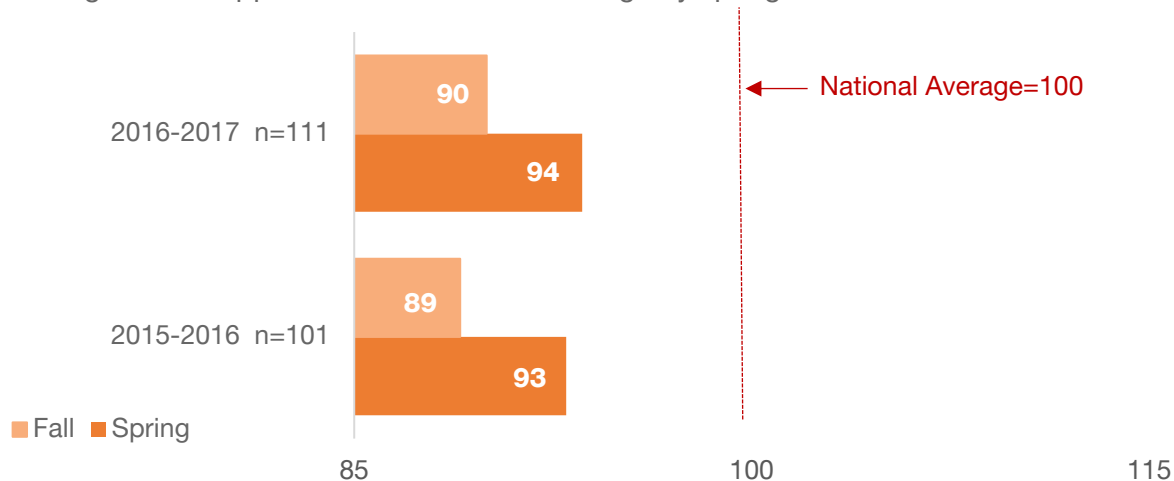
The majority scored below the mid-point of the national average. By the spring, 74% of the children were within the average range. There were 10% more children within the average range than in the fall.   It is important to interpret these results taking into account that 34% of the children in these classrooms had an Individual Educational Program (IEP) through special education.

10% more students scored within the average range by spring.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING OUTCOMES

METHOD. In recent years the important contributions of executive functioning to school readiness have been highlighted (Blair & Razza, 2007). Executive functioning is defined as student's ability to control impulses that then enable them to plan, initiate, and complete activities needed for learning. Researchers correlate a relationship between executive functioning and a preschooler's ability to learn in the classroom (Benson, et. al., 2013). The

Minnesota Executive Functioning System, an online assessment for children two and older, was used in the fall and the spring. This is the first year of this assessment.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING RESULTS

A paired-samples t-test was completed to determine if students' skills improved over time. The results found there was no significant change over time. However, when the descriptive data was reviewed, it showed by spring 11% more children were scoring within the average range or higher than scored in that range in the fall.

BY SPRING, MORE CHILDREN HAD EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE OR ABOVE.
A third of the children scored at or above the national average.

National Average= 100

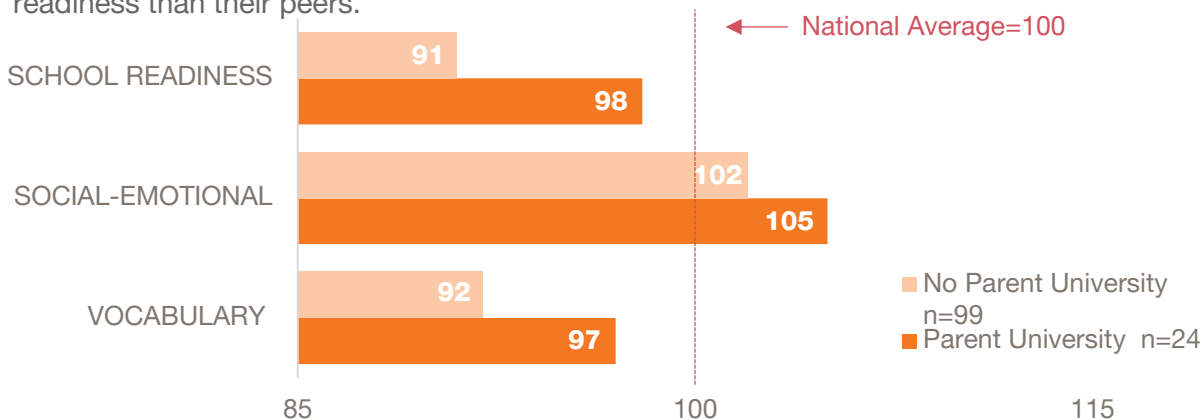|	Below Avg <85	Avg 85-99	Avg 100-115	Above Avg >115
Fall	25%	49%	26%	
Spring	12%	55%	31%	
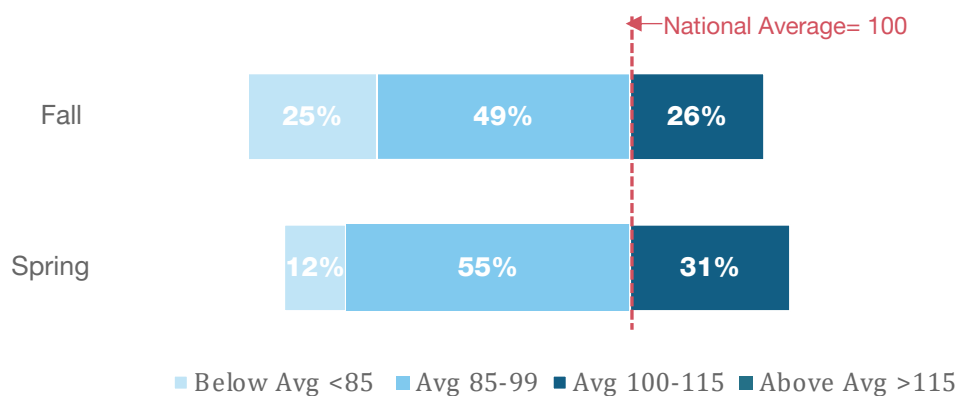
Did parent participation in Parent University influence child outcomes?

At Kellom and Conestoga, parents had the opportunity to participate in Parent University. Twenty percent of the parents (n=24) engaged in Parent University courses and activities. A one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the language, social-emotional, and school readiness outcomes of children whose parents participated in Parent University to those who did not. Children whose parents participated in Parent University scored significantly higher on the school readiness assessment [$F(1, 118)=4.181$, $p=.043$] than children whose parents did not participate. The effect size was small to medium ($\eta^2=0.034$). Parent participation in Parent University did not result in significant differences in the areas of vocabulary or social-emotional development; however, mean scores were higher in this group of children. Chi Square analyses comparing the percent of children verified for special education services in each group found that there were no significant differences between the two parent participation groups. This suggests the differences that were found in student outcomes were not attributed to the percent of verified children in each group. These results should be interpreted with caution given the small numbers used in the analyses. Parent participation in Parent University activities is recommended.

PARTICIPATION IN PARENT UNIVERSITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE ON CHILD OUTCOMES.

Students whose parents were in Parent University made more significant gains in school readiness than their peers.

← National Average=100

SCHOOL READINESS
91
98

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
102
105

VOCABULARY
92
97

■ No Parent University n=99
■ Parent University n=24

85   100   115

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

METHOD. Parents of students who attended an Intensive Early Childhood program were asked to complete the Child-Parent Relationship Scale, a measure of parent and child closeness and parent and child conflict (Pianta, 1992). These constructs are scored on a 5-point scale with 5 being "definitely applies" and 1 being "definitely does not apply." Scores that approach 5 indicate strong parent-child closeness. Low scores indicate higher levels of parent-child conflict.

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT RESULTS

PARENTS DEMONSTRATE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND LOW LEVELS OF CONFLICT.

Although there were decreases in ratings, there was not concern given the high initial ratings.

4.03
LOW CONFLICT 3.96

4.69
CLOSENESS 4.35

■ Fall   ■ Spring

n=27
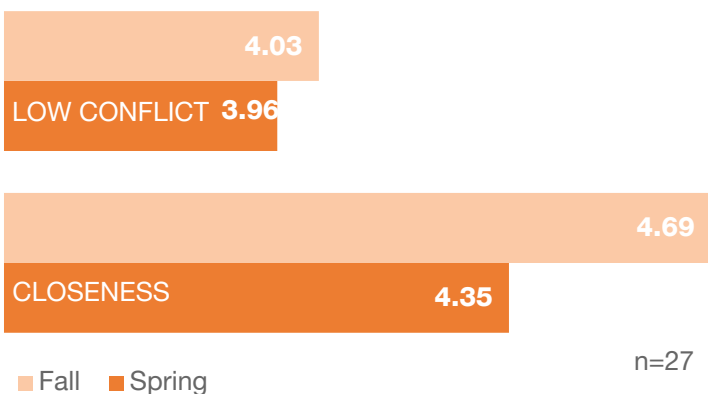
Only 20% of the families completed the CPRS, limiting the generalization of this data. Overall, parents demonstrated high closeness and high low conflict ratings suggesting positive relationships with their children. Based on the paired-samples t-test, parents closeness scores decreased over time ($t=3.131$, $p=.004$, $d=0.603$). Although there was a decrease this was not a concern as spring ratings were still in the positive range. There was no significant change in their ratings of conflict.

How do the parents view the before and after school program?

Six parents whose children participated in the before or after school program at Kellom and Conestoga were interviewed to gather their feedback on the program. The following key findings were identified.

KEY FINDINGS

AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILDCARE IS A HELPFUL BENEFIT. Having affordable childcare onsite was a great benefit for the families. Several indicated that if this was not available to them they would rely on relative care, which would not benefit their child as much. The flexibility of the center to accommodate parent schedules was been helpful.   The children were very comfortable with the providers since they were with them in the day.   Parents trusted their providers and that was important to them. Having their children with their same-aged peers was also a benefit. One parent was worried about his care once her son goes to kindergarten. She was concerned about having to develop new relationships and having him be with older children.

THE CONTINUITY OF CARE WAS BENEFICIAL TO MY CHILD. My child benefited from having providers implement the same curriculum throughout the day. "I love that they can have fun in a learning environment." Another parent commented, "I like it because they already had their friends from class." Overall, the parents acknowledged the benefit having a curriculum based before and after care.

PROVIDERS COMMUNICATED EFFECTIVELY WITH PARENTS. "One great thing was that they communicated with us a lot." For example, they would update the parents on the type of day their child had. They would often communicate information back and forth between the parents and teachers at the beginning or end of the day. The providers would also let parents know what the classrooms were working on with their children.

PROVIDERS WERE ENGAGED WITH CHILDREN, PROVIDING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. When parents arrive to leave or pick up their child, they described the providers as actively engaged with the children, sitting on the floor, playing with groups of children. They appreciated that they actively greet each child as they join the group. One parent indicated, "The providers make us feel they are excited to see our children. The parents described that their children loved their teachers. This made it much easier for them to leave their children in their care all day.

> **"My expectations of the program were low (when I started) and I was blown away with the quality of the program."**
>
> **-a parent from After-School Program**

INFORMATION ABOUT THE TEACHERS AND PROVIDERS WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR PARENTS. Parents suggested that having biographical information about their teachers and providers would be very helpful. It would also be helpful to know when changes occur during the school year so they and their children are better prepared for the transition.

USE OF DATA

Upon completion of the classroom observations and child assessments, evaluation staff met with teachers and leadership staff at each school. 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 to improve classroom practices.   Information from the data also informed coaching sessions. Also, team meetings were held to review cross-classroom data to address system-level improvements. Teams used data to: 1) discuss how to improve practices in the classroom; 2) inform how coaching and professional development could be improved to support teachers; and 3) discuss implications for program planning for specific children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

High quality classrooms were the result of many contributing factors including increased 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. 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.   Plans are in place for this next evaluation cycle to begin to gather data for long-term child outcomes. Parents play an important role in their children's education. Preliminary results suggest that participation in Parent University positively influences their child's educational outcomes. Encouraging parents to participate in the program is recommended.

Parent University

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Parent University is a comprehensive family engagement program based on research and best practices that began in February 2015. Parent University strands were based on family needs. 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 the parents of children birth through five that live in the school attendance areas of Kellom, Conestoga, Franklin, and Lothrop.

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

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

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

LIFE SKILLS AND WELLNESS: Understanding families need stability in order to support their students' education, Parent University partners with organizations to strengthen family self-sufficiency such as adult basic literacy, ESL courses, and employment skills.

SCHOOL SUCCESS: In order to become full partners in their child's education, parents have access to courses and workshops that emphasize the importance of their roles, responsibilities, and engagement opportunities.

LEADERSHIP: Courses are available to empower parents to take on more active roles in their child's school and their community

Program staff tracked parents' participation in the 130 courses that were offered this past year. These 130 courses represented 27 different topics, each of which was aligned with at least one of the four primary components of Parent University. Some of the 27 topics were offered multiple times (range from 1 to 10). The topics that were offered the most frequently were English and Prime Time Reading courses.

DEMOGRAPHICS

MOST PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN COURSES RELATED TO LIFE SKILLS.
Few participated in courses related to Leadership.

Lifeskills	58%
School Success	20%
Parenting	19%
Leadership	3%

n=130
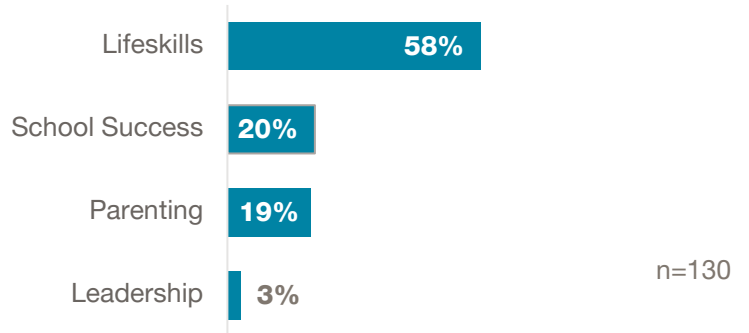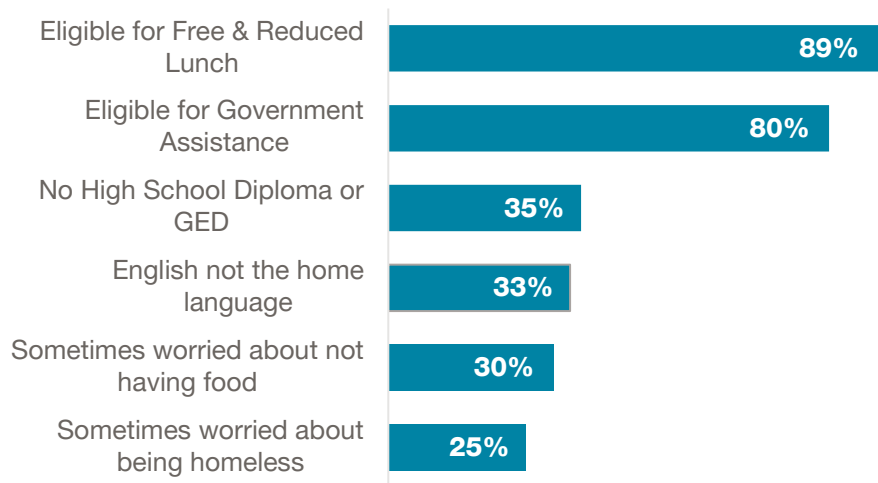
A total of 161 parents were enrolled in Parent University. There were more females (72%) than males (28%). The majority (92%) of the parents represent ethnic minorities. Most of the parents were African American. Parents enrolled in Parent University had 310 children. Most of the parents (70%) were employed either part or full time.

Many parents in the program reported facing a number of challenges. Thirty-five percent of the parents did not have a high school diploma or equivalent. Many parents (80%) accessed 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 homelessness were concerns for approximately a quarter of the families. Several (33%) of the parents' home language was not English. The challenges that many families face point to the complexity of the lives of the parents in Parent University and provide a context for interpreting the results of this report.

PARENTS FACE MANY CHALLENGES.

Eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch	89%
Eligible for Government Assistance	80%
No High School Diploma or GED	35%
English not the home language	33%
Sometimes worried about not having food	30%
Sometimes worried about being homeless	25%

n=61

OUTCOMES

FAMILY

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

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

PROTECTIVE FACTORS RESULTS

The results found that parents' attachment skills were the highest rated area. Other areas that were in strengths range were social supports, family resilience (e.g., ability to openly share experience to solve and manage problems) and knowledge of child development. The area that was rated lowest and decreased over time was family access to concrete supports (e.g., housing and food). Paired t-test analyses were completed to determine if there were significant changes over time. No significant differences were found.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED STRONG PROTECTIVE FACTORS ACROSS THE MAJORITY OF THE AREAS.
There were no significant changes across time.
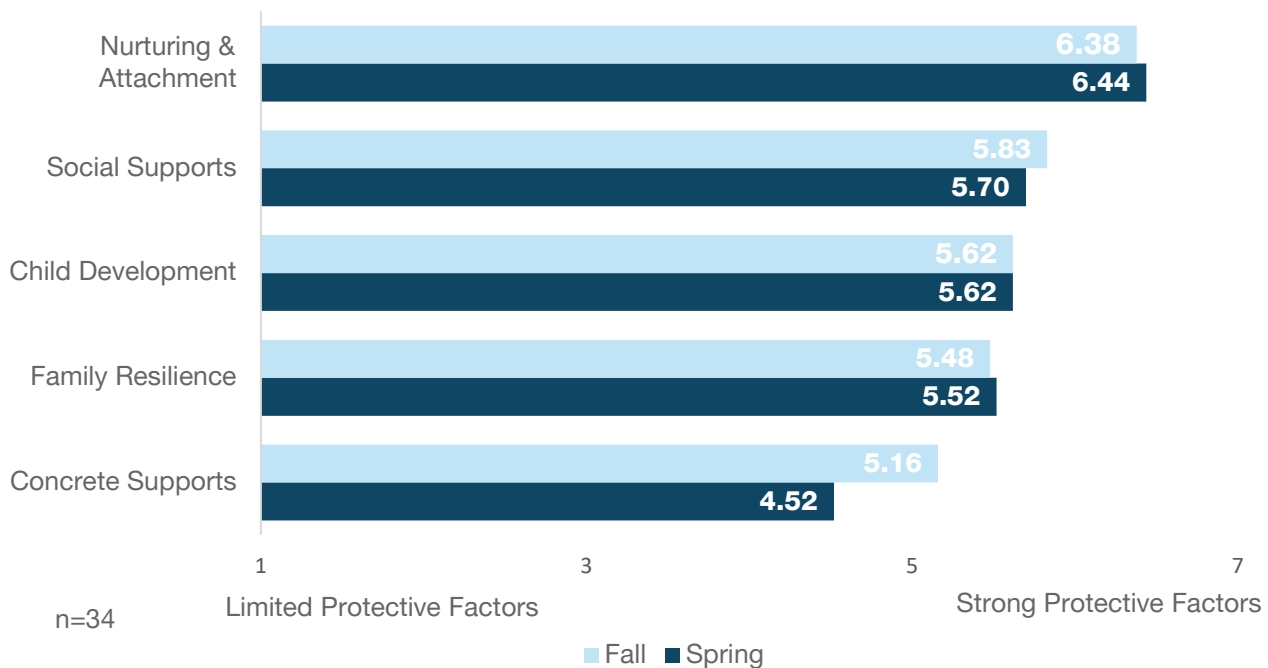
COMMON SENSE PARENTING (CSP)

Four Common Sense Parenting (CSP) sessions were conducted during the past year. A total of 26 parents participated and 88% completed the course.

METHOD. *Parenting Children and Adolescents Scale (PARCA)* was completed by parents as a pre-test and post-test. This 19-item assessment 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 regarding 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.

Common Sense Parenting is a parent-training course 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, modeled examples of skills, discussion of videotaped scenes depicting correct and incorrect application of skills, and guided skills practice/role play. Homework activities encourage parents to practice the skills at home. It is important to note this class is personalized specifically toward the participating families.

PARENTING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Eleven parents completed the PARCA. The results found that parents improved their parenting skills over time. The pre-test average score was 4.76 and the post-test scores were 6.15. Due to the small numbers, no statistical analyses were completed.

PARENTING STRESS RESULTS

Eleven parents completed the PSS. The results found that parents' stress was slightly lower at the conclusion of the course. The pre-test average score was 41.27 and the post-test scores were 40.55. No statistical analyses were completed due to the small numbers.
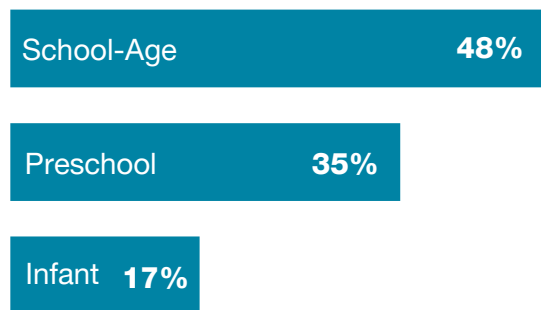
CIRCLE OF SECURITY™-PARENTING (COS-P)

COS-P was another core parenting course provided at Parent University. Three courses were offered. A total of 26 participants enrolled across the three COS-P courses. These parents had 76 children.

THE MAJORITY OF THE PARENTS' CHILDREN WERE PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL AGE.

School-Age	48%
Preschool	35%
Infant	17%

n=26

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. Twenty-six individuals completed the survey.


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 child needs in a way that enhances the attachment between parent and child. It is important to note this course is personalized to meet the needs of participating families.

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 [$t(23)$)=-7.863, $p<.001$, d=1.603] and positive relationships with their children [$t(24)$=-7.001, p=.001, d=0.807]. These results suggest a substantial, meaningful change in program outcomes. The strengths on this scale were related to parenting and parent-child interaction. There was no significant change in parent stress level.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR
PARENTING STRATEGIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN.
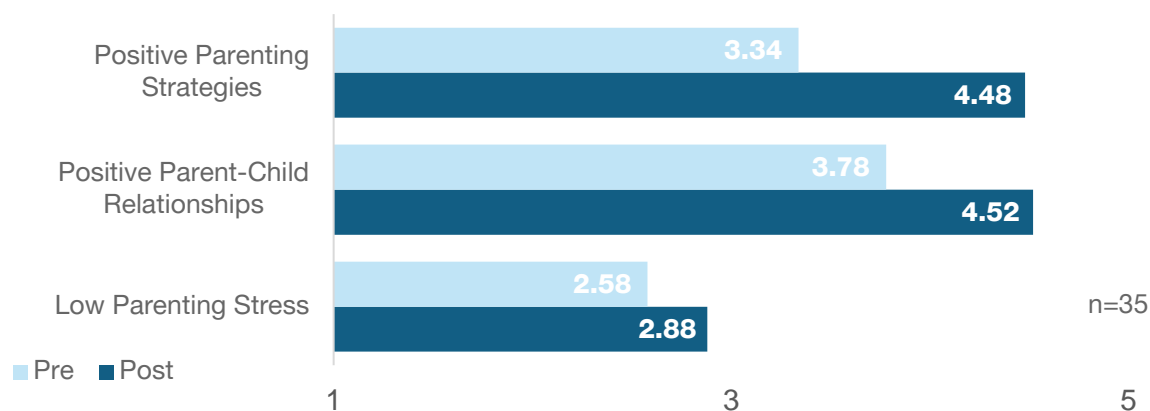
PARENT SATISFACTION RESULTS

Participants were very positive about their COS-P experience, using descriptors such as "enjoyable" and "good experience." Many commented on the benefits of participating in the sessions, specifically how the sessions helped them to gain skills. "Taking this class is helping my relationships with my kids." and "It is starting to become easier to talk with my children."

NEARLY ALL OF THE PARTICIPANTS
AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED
THAT THE GROUP FORMAT WAS
HELPFUL.

| Parents Satisfied with COS–P | 96% |

n=26

PARENTING OUTCOMES

Does Parent University improve parent-child relationships?

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Thirty-two parents completed the Child Parent Relationship Scale. Based on the paired-samples t-test, there were no significant changes in their ratings of closeness or conflict over time.   Parents' had high ratings of closeness and low ratings of conflict, suggesting positive relationships with their children.

PARENTS DEMOSTRATED POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND LOW CONFLICT WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

	Pre	Post
Low Conflict	3.77	3.76
Closeness	4.60	4.63

n=32
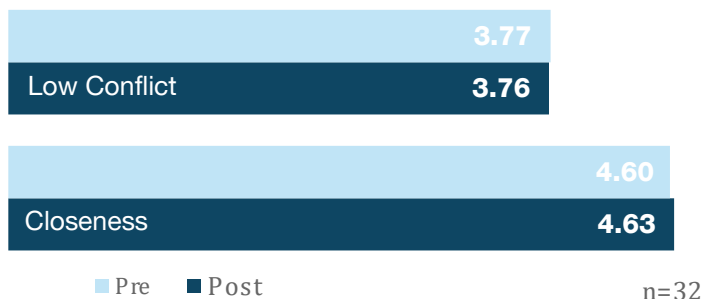
Does Parent University improve parent-child interactions?

METHOD. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) measures parenting behaviors across three areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, and Supporting Confidence, based on a videotape of a parent playing with his or her child. Scores are reported on a 5-point scale with 5 being high quality. A total of 22 families had fall-spring KIPS.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION RESULTS

PARENT UNIVERSITY FAMILIES DEMONSTRATED IMPROVED PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS ACROSS TIME IN THE MAJORITY OF THE AREAS.
Their greatest strength was in building relationships with their children through play.
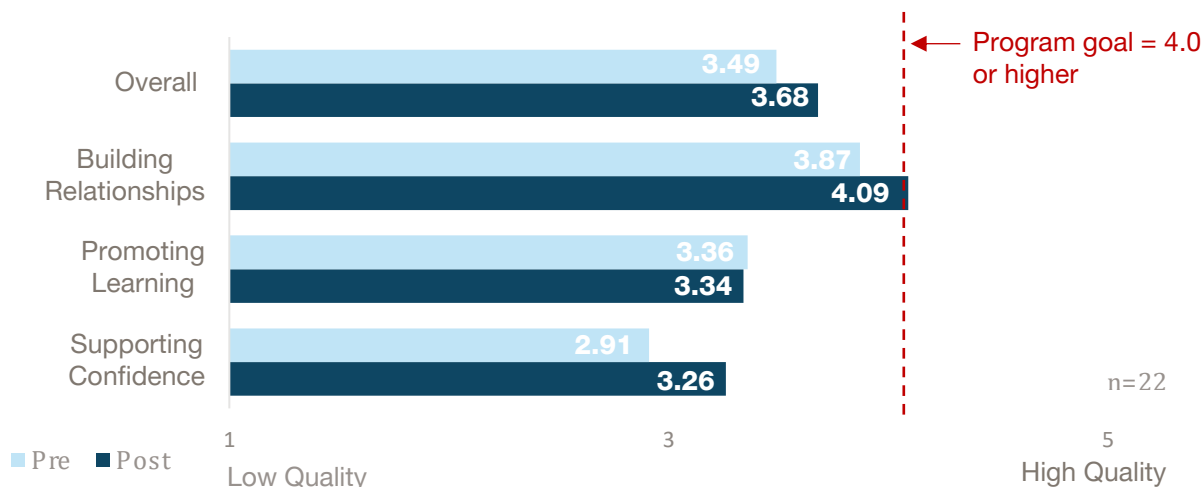
Program goal = 4.0 or higher

	Pre	Post
Overall	3.49	3.68
Building Relationships	3.87	4.09
Promoting Learning	3.36	3.34
Supporting Confidence	2.91	3.26

n=22

1 — Low Quality   3   5 — High Quality

Parent University families demonstrated strong skills in building relationships with their children. There was a positive substantial meaningful change in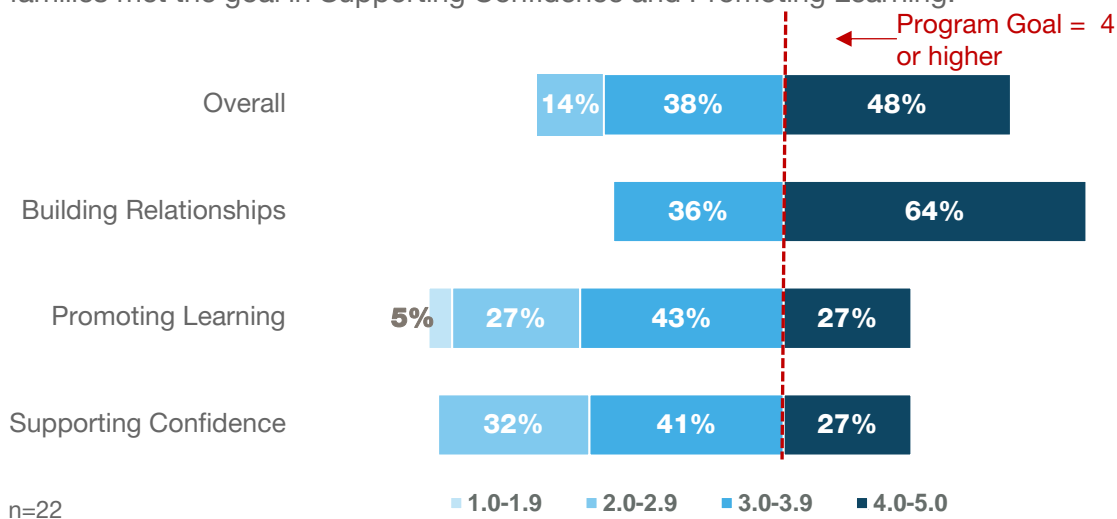 this area (t=-2.217. p=.04, d=0.472). Average scores exceeded the program goal in this area. This goal was set by state home visitation program as it represents skills in the high quality range. Parents demonstrated more moderate skills in the other subscales. There were improved scores in Supporting Confidence and Overall score, although these differences were not statistically significant. Scores in Promoting Learning were stable across time.

By spring, nearly half (48%) of the parents met the program goal for overall high-quality parent-child interactions. A strong majority (64%) met the goal in Building Relationships. Fewer parents met the goal in Promoting Learning (27%) and Supporting Confidence (27%). The chart below presents the parent-child interaction results at follow-up for 22 families. The program goal is a score of four.

THE MAJORITY OF FAMILIES MET THE PROGRAM GOAL IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.
Fewer families met the goal in Supporting Confidence and Promoting Learning.

Program Goal = 4 or higher

	1.0-1.9	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.9	4.0-5.0
Overall		14%	38%	48%
Building Relationships			36%	64%
Promoting Learning	5%	27%	43%	27%
Supporting Confidence		32%	41%	27%

n=22

Parent University families demonstrated strong skills in building relationships with their children. The majority (64%) met the program goal at follow-up. Areas for improvement include Promoting Learning and Supporting Confidence where 27% of the families met the goal respectively. When compared to their scores at baseline, 25% more parents met the goal at follow-up.

By spring, 64% of parents were highly skilled in building relationships with their children.

How did parents support their child's learning at home?

Parents reported many positive ways that they interacted with their child to support learning. Data was analyzed for book reading by comparing how often parents read to their children when they first began Parent University and after they had been in the program for six months or longer. The results found that higher percentages of parents read to their children at least three times a week if they had been at Parent University for six months or longer.

HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS READ TO THEIR CHILDREN (3 OR MORE TIMES A WEEK) AFTER PARTICIPATION IN PARENT UNIVERSITY.

64%

Pre

→

74%

Post
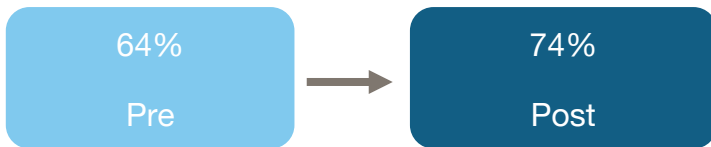
How did Parent University benefit parents' own education?

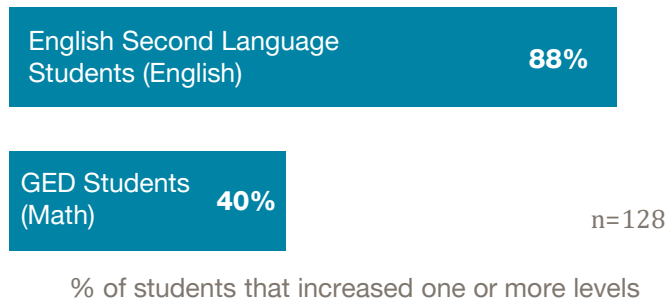Parents were provided with opportunities to enroll in either English as a Second Language courses (ESL) or GED courses. Eighteen parents participated in one of these two options, ELL (11) and GED (7). Pre-post assessments were obtained from 13 of the 18 parents, eight from ESL and five in GED courses. The BEST assessment was used to assess their English proficiency. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the ESL students increase one or more levels on the BEST assessment, suggesting improvement of English skills. Forty-nine percent (49%) of the parents at post-testing were in the Advance or High level of the BEST. The Test of Adult Basic Education was used to assess student's math skills. Forty percent (40%) of the parents increased a level on the math skills from pre to post-testing.

STUDENTS IN GED OR ESL CLASSES ARE GAINING SKILLS.

English Second Language Students (English)	**88%**

GED Students (Math)	**40%**

n=128

% of students that increased one or more levels

How did families benefit from receiving services from a family liaison?

METHOD. Families who received family problem solving 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 were set and measured throughout the time the family was enrolled in the program. Teachers rated 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 family liaisons.

STRESS INDEX FINDINGS

The results of a paired samples t-test found that parental stress was significantly decreased after participation in Parent University (p>.001; d=1.23). These findings suggest substantial meaningful change.

MOST PARENTS GOALS WERE ACHIEVED.

1%

13%

86%

n= 64

■ Achieved ■ Improving ■ Not Achieved

PARENTAL STRESS SIGNFICANTLY DECREASED OVER TIME.

7.5

4.1

Low Stress   High Stress

■ Post   ■ Pre
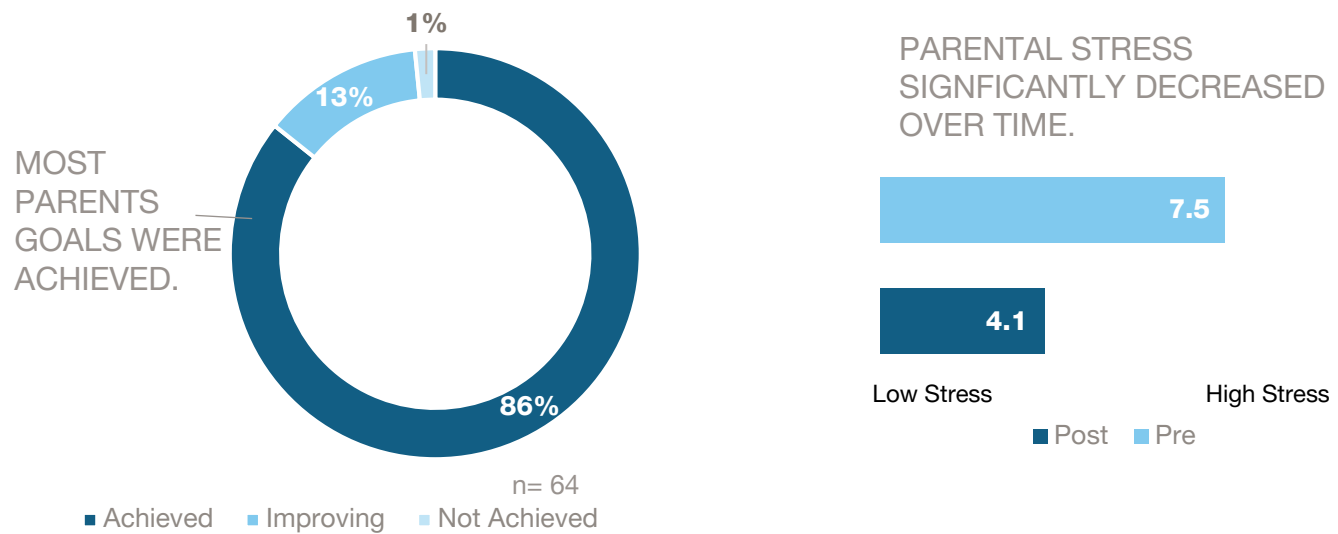
GOAL COMPLETION FINDINGS

Families needing additional support were provided the support of a family liaison. They work with families to set and achieve goals identified by the family. Most goals were related to: Educational/Vocational (49%), Living Situation (12%) and Mental Health (10%). Other goals (less than 10% families identified) were related to a wide range of areas including: Family, Legal, Medical, and Social/Recreational. High percentages of parents were successful in accomplishing their set goals by the time that crisis services were completed.

What were the outcomes for the students whose parents received additional family problem solving?

Student outcome data will be reported as an addendum when released from school districts.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE USE OF DATA

Data were used from multiple sources to support the review of the course 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 were established and reviewed bi-annually with program staff as part of a continuous improvement process. Parent focus group data was used to get their input on all components of Parent University.

What were parents' experiences in Parent University?

A total of 16 parents participated in one of two focus groups to gather their input on how Parent University was working for them and to identify their recommendations for improvement. Representatives of the Parent Advisory Council participated in one focus group. The second group included parents who were enrolled in English courses and whose primary home language was Spanish.

KEY FINDINGS

PARENT UNIVERSITY PROVIDES KEY SUPPORTS THAT LIMIT TYPICAL BARRIERS TO CLASS PARTICIPATION. Parents reported that Parent University created a culture of family, learning, and support. Parents indicated that they participated in the courses because the necessary supports (e.g., childcare, meals) were in place that helped to break down typical barriers to their involvement. Parent University created a culture of family by providing family-style dinners that allowed parents to have dinner with their children before the courses began.

Parents reported that not only do "I look forward it," so do their children. Parents described Parent University as a safe, non-judgmental setting. Most importantly, it provided a culture where they were recognized for their engagement in the course and their accomplishments. This supportive environment helped to engage parents, and once they took the first class, they wanted more.

> "I like that they are open to suggestions. How can we improve it? If you give suggestions, they try to change things. They are open to making it our program."
>
> -a member of Parent Advisory

PARENTS REPORTED AN INCREASE IN THEIR PARENTING AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS. Participation in courses resulted in improved confidence and a wide range of new parenting skills. Parents reported a better understanding about reading more and their children are reading more. Parents described how the courses helped them engage with their child, which resulted in better parent-child relationships. Anger management courses helped them learn to think before they react. The behavior management strategies were different from how many were raised, so they are learning a "different way". They would recommend more courses that would help support their older children.

LIFE SKILLS COURSES BENEFITED PARENTS. The financial courses got high reviews. It helped parents learn better ways to save money and address their finances in a way that benefited them. It was not only about making ends meet but how to invest so you could get ahead. Financial counselors provided individualized coaching. This helped them with

accountability. Several stressed the need for more courses related to career planning or Job Fairs. They are not just interested in entry jobs, but rather ways to improve their careers. They felt it was important to have a "career path," not just an entry job. Goals are set with the family and the Family Navigator. Parents talked about how they appreciated the support they receive towards reaching the goals and the on-going check-in to see how things were going.

PARENT UNIVERSITY COURSES CREATED A COMMUNITY AMONG PARENTS.
The benefits of Parent University, parents argued, were not limited to the courses. They established relationships with other parents in their community. Parents said, "We became family here. We help each other." It was clear from the parents, that Parent University helped increase their social connections and networks. These social connections extended to their children. As one parent said, "Our children are friends as well." The promotion of community events was another example of creating opportunities, (e.g., zoo passes, special library events, firefighter events) for families that they may not typically initiate on their own.

> "Before I didn't know anybody, now I have many friends here."
>
> -Parent University participant

SCHOOL-PARENT PARTNERSHIPS ARE BEING DEVELOPED AND STRENGTHENED.
Curriculum night, where teachers come and share what the students are learning at school, was viewed as a very valuable activity that promotes parent-school engagement.   The educational navigators were a great support. As one parent said, "I like the fact they (educational navigators) ask randomly how is your son and daughter doing in school. Is there anything we can help you with? They [educational navigators] really do care about your family as a whole."   For one Spanish speaking parent, she indicated, "I can understand better when I have a conversation with my children's teacher at school."

PARENTS IDENTIFIED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.
Although the responses regarding Parent University were overwhelming positive, parents did identify a few areas for improvement. The childcare was greatly appreciated, but has encountered much turnover. Parents would like to have more consistent providers who also could engage their children in a learning experiences. For the families who are Spanish speaking having interpreters available at events would be helpful. They understand some English, but often miss parts of the content. Having transportation available is very helpful and they appreciate having this resource. The problem for them is that it is often not on time. They indicated that Parent University is trying to address these concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parent University has successfully implemented a series of courses that have resulted in improved parenting and life skills.   Parents reported Parent University has made a difference in their lives and has created a community of support.   Parents are now requesting more support in career development and in parenting older children.

Child Care Director Training Program

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

CHILDCARE TRAINING/COACHING

- Director & coach attend training session
- Director receives 1-1 coaching
- Director will train/coach staff

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 improve their skills to help children learn, but training is not always affordable. What was learned in in earlier childcare programs is that staff turnover was at nearly 70% so in order to effect change, it was important to work with the childcare director of the center. In partnership with Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, the Child Care Director Training program was initiated in the spring of 2016. Childcare directors were recruited to participate in this high quality training. The core training focused on improving childcare quality and increasing professional development in their centers, and assisting programs to be more prepared to enter Step Up to Quality.

The training/coaching model started each month with a training session that included the director of each center and the assigned coach. Following the training sessions, coaching sessions occurred onsite to reinforce the content of the training.   Each director was to identify a targeted teacher that the director would be responsible for coaching.   This cycle of training and coaching was repeated each month.

DEMOGRAPHICS

WHO WERE THE DIRECTORS AND CHILDCARE CENTERS?

The childcare director training program began with 10 center-based, and one home-based childcare center surrounding the Learning Community of North Omaha. Each center is licensed to care for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years. At the end of the year, one childcare director dropped out of the program due to demands which limited the director's time to participate.

On average the childcare directors have 18 years of experience in childcare with a range from four to 38 years. The centers vary in size. On average centers employ 20 staff with a range from two to 60 staff. These childcare centers served over 500 children. The majority were preschool (34%) or grade school (45%) aged students.

OUTCOMES

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

METHOD: Each center director identified one classroom that received training and coaching as part of this model and served as an evaluation source for the program. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was used to measure the quality of the classroom instruction at two points in time. Only a subset of the centers were able to videotape the classrooms at both times.   A total of six had pre-post assessments, evaluated by trained raters.

TEACHER STRENGTHS WERE IN EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION.
The largest gains were in Instructional Support and Classroom Organization.

Emotional Support **5.25**
5.17

Classroom Organziation **5.15**
4.53

Fall   Spring

Instructional Support **2.78**
2.11

1   4   7
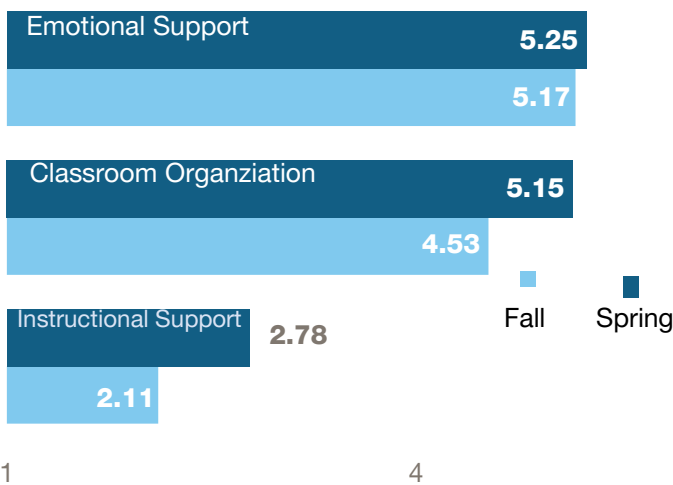
The results of the CLASS observations found that classroom teachers' strengths were in the area of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. These were in the moderate range of quality by spring. There was improvement across all areas of the CLASS. The most improvements were seen in Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. Continued coaching in all areas is recommended.
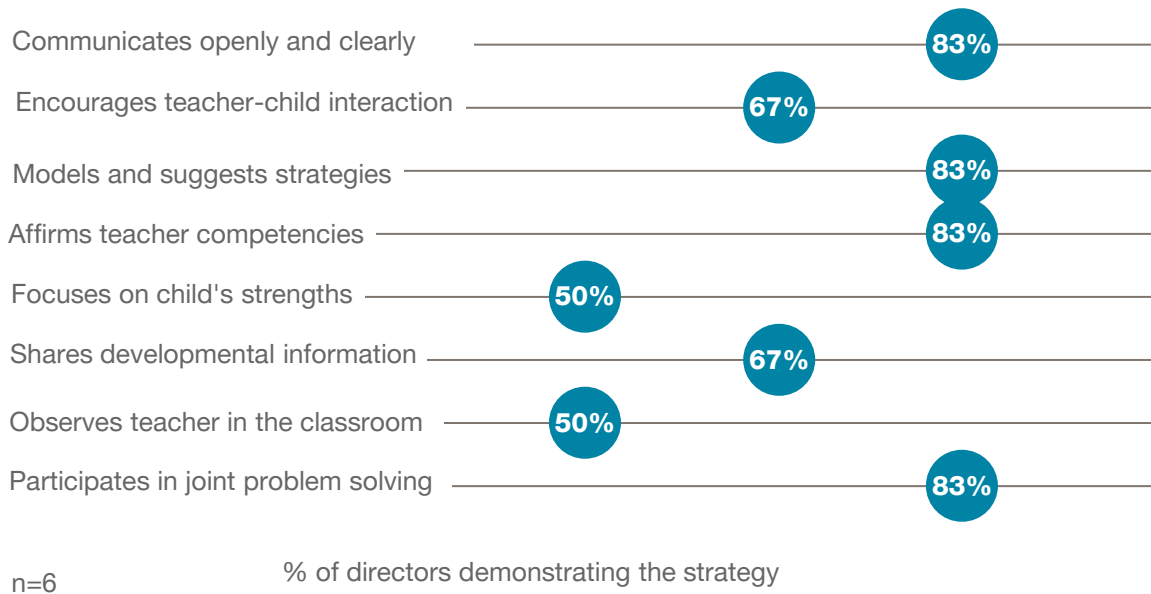
What coaching strategies were used by the childcare directors?

METHOD. Directors were asked to submit a video clip of one coaching session with their targeted teacher. Videos were viewed and scored using an adaptation of *Getting Ready Strategies* (University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Sheridan, et al., 2010). Videos were rated on a 5- point Likert scale from 1-Not at all to 5-Consistently demonstrated. This rating scale provided information on the content of the directors coaching strategies.

Childcare teachers gained skills in all areas of instructional practices.

This year the primary emphasis of the training and coaching strategies with the directors focused on quality classroom practices and teacher training strategies.   Less time was spent on how to coach their staff.   In the spring, baseline data was collected to provide information for the evaluation. The results of the baseline data found that the directors' strengths were in the areas of Communicating Clearly and Encouraging Interactions with the Children. Other coaching strategies fell in the moderate range. Post data will be collected in Year 2 to monitor progress in this area.

DIRECTOR COACHING STRENGTHS INCLUDED CLEAR, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION, ENCOURAGING INTERACTIONS WITH THE CHILDREN, AND PARTICIPATING IN JOINT PROBLEM SOLVING.

Strategy	%
Communicates openly and clearly	83%
Encourages teacher-child interaction	67%
Models and suggests strategies	83%
Affirms teacher competencies	83%
Focuses on child's strengths	50%
Shares developmental information	67%
Observes teacher in the classroom	50%
Participates in joint problem solving	83%

n=6   % of directors demonstrating the strategy

What did childcare directors and coaches think about the Child Care Director Training program?

All of the program stakeholders were asked to participate in focus groups to capture their experience with the training and coaching process.   The following represents the key findings from the feedback from all three groups of stakeholders, teachers, coaches, and directors.

THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND COACHES WERE OF HIGH QUALITY. Directors commented on the high quality of both the training and the coaching services they received. "There is no one like the program director. …She is phenomenal." They described the training session as fun, yet a learning experience for them. They admired the knowledge and wisdom of the trainer and the coaches. The coaches were always there when they needed them.

"They (coaches) helped validate my struggle and then offered suggestions."

…a childcare director

COACHING IS A PROCESS THAT BEGINS WITH BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. Coaches described that the first step to the coaching process was to build relationships and trust with the directors. This was key to their success and took time to develop, as initially it was a challenge. For some directors there was initial resistance due to previous history with training and coaching programs. Trust was an important element during the training that allowed directors to share ideas among the group.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE CURRICULUM MATERIALS THAT ARE EASY TO USE, SIMPLE AND MEANINGFUL FOR SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION AT THE CENTERS. Directors felt the training materials were simple, accessible, meaningful and easy to use. The training was intentional and for many suggested new ways of approaching their work.   A director commented, "It opened my mind a little more." Anything that was hands on, but in particular information on behaviors and classroom management were topics of great interest. At times, directors were overwhelmed with the volume of information provided. A director said, "We need to slow down the content as it is moving too fast for us to implement." They recommended staying on one topic for longer periods. Several directors indicated they would like to bring a teacher along with them to the training, as it would benefit both of them. Coaches indicated there was variability across directors and their ability to support their staff to adopt the practice.

TEACHERS AND DIRECTORS GAINED COMPETENCIES THEY APPLIED IN THEIR CENTERS AND CLASSROOMS. Directors reported an increase of confidence in supporting their staff around instructional practices. Many directors described how they gained interpersonal skills, specifically on how to handle staff conflict. One director used videotaping as a means to support staff as they reflected together on what they saw in the video clip.

Videotapes illustrated directors ability (with the coaches' support) to translate their learning into practice.

Teachers reported feeling more confident and empowered in their classrooms. Overall, the climate within the centers was reported as calmer and allowed for more teaching within the preschool classrooms. They became were more mindful of what they were doing. Teachers reported using language that was more positive with children. Teachers added more center activities. Teachers adopted daily schedules and began to complete lesson plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As one director said, "You can't create a miracle in 5-6 months; we need continuity and more time." This suggests that although changes were noted in practices this first year, much work is still needed to improve classroom practices.

Programmatically, it was recommended that the last thirty minutes of the training section include a reflective discussion about "what would this look like?" in each center. This additional practice would further enhance the intentionality of the work. In addition to this coaching program, it would be helpful to expand the multi-center resource at Parent University. This would be a work place for creating materials, a library of educational resources and family resources.

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 2017, MCC had a total of 508 students that were enrolled in early childhood courses. The majority of the students were females (95%).   Slightly over half (51%) were white. The next two largest groups represented were Hispanic (19%) and African American (15%).

OUTCOMES

MCC STUDENT OUTCOMES

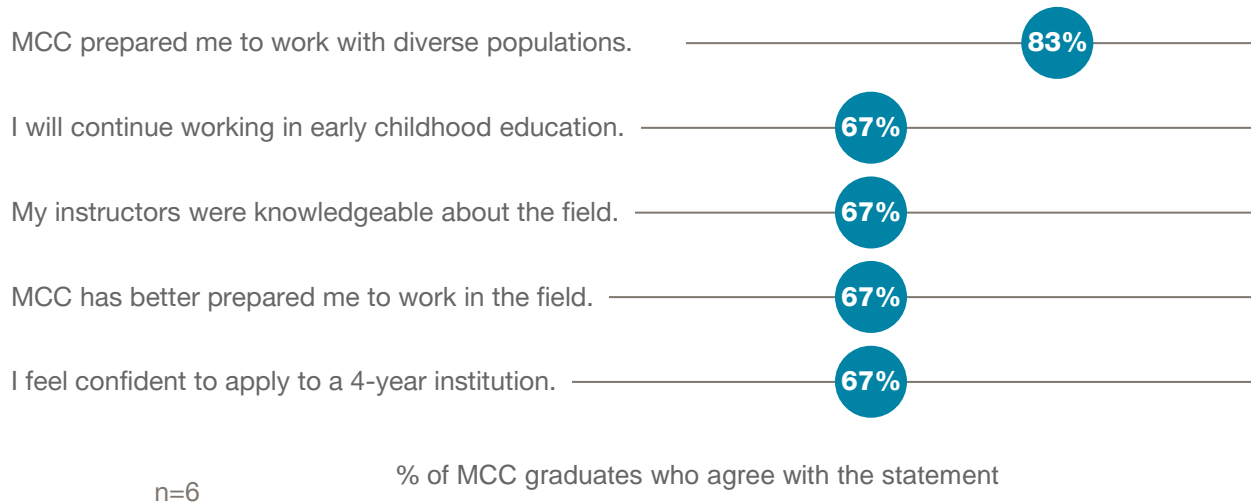### What were the experiences of the graduating MCC Early Childhood students?

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 24 students with early childhood Associate's degrees in the spring of 2017.

METHOD. A survey was sent to the 17 students who participated in courses at the center location following graduation to evaluate their satisfaction with the program and determine their plans.   Six students responded for a return rate of 35%.

The students provided helpful feedback regarding the program. The hands-on opportunities to practice their skills during field experiences and their instructors' knowledge of current practices in early childhood education contributed to their learning. The most valuable instructional strategies were the hands-on opportunities, observing teacher practices, and receiving live coaching from the instructor in field experiences (75%). Less helpful was reviewing video recordings of practices (40%). The majority of the students (67%) hope to work full-time in the field. Half of the students have worked in childcare programs or Head Start programs east of 72nd Street.

83% of the students felt confident to be a classroom teacher after finishing their degree.

MOST MCC GRADUATES POSITIVELY RATED THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES.
The majority plan to continue working in the field.

MCC prepared me to work with diverse populations. ————— **83%** —————

I will continue working in early childhood education. ——— **67%** ———

My instructors were knowledgeable about the field. ——— **67%** ———

MCC has better prepared me to work in the field. ——— **67%** ———

I feel confident to apply to a 4-year institution. ——— **67%** ———

n=6

% of MCC graduates who agree with the statement

WHAT WAS THE MCC CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE LIKE?

A focus group was held with first year students to identify the strengths of the program and suggestions for improvement. The students were overwhelmingly positive about both their classroom and field experiences. Faculty were described as knowledgeable, open, flexible, and supportive.   As one student expressed, "Faculty are amazing!" The field experiences were "eye-opening" as they had the opportunity to observe a wide range of childcare quality. The experiential nature of the classrooms was highly rated.   They felt that they learned so much in the centers. Not only did they learn from these opportunities, they described how they were also able to contribute to the centers. The students described how by modeling activities and sharing resources with the teachers, they helped the teachers at the centers see how much infants and toddlers learned in their centers (improved curriculum), improved their health practices (washing hands), and helped with room arrangement.

CREIGHTON STUDENT OUTCOMES

What was the experience of students who enrolled at Creighton University?

This is the first year MCC students had the opportunity to enroll at Creighton as part of the established articulation agreement between MCC and Creighton University (CU). This is a two-step process. Based on this agreement, MCC Early Childhood graduates will be accepted to CU. The next step is for students to be accepted into the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. Acceptance to this teacher preparation program is based on students' passing the Praxis (math competency assessment) which is a state requirement. Passing this assessment can be difficult for some students; it proved to be a barrier for many who had hoped to obtain their teaching degree.

> **"The program is the key to unlocking my potential and future placement as a teacher."**
>
> **-previous MMC graduate now at Creighton University**

MCC graduates accepted into the Creighton ECE program will enroll as juniors in CU to receive an Elementary Education Degree with an Early Childhood Education endorsement. This year one student enrolled at Creighton University and was accepted into the Early Childhood Program.

Three primary potential barriers to applying to Creighton were of concern for current MCC ECE graduates: the cost, the length of time to complete the degree, and conflicts with work. Based on the experience of first student enrolled, these were not barriers to her.   She reported that grants were helping to pay for tuition and she was on track to graduate in two years. These concerns need to be addressed with new MCC graduates to support their willingness to apply and pursue a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA

Family Learning

The Family Learning program provides parenting education, educational navigator services, English and Adult Learning, and social service resources to assist parents in supporting 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 at Indian Hill, and Gateway Elementary.

The Family Learning Program formed in 2012 as a collaborative effort of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and OneWorld 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 staff 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 family problem solving.

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, 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

Parent Classes and Workshops

Facilitated by Partners

- Money Management (First National Bank)
- Common Sense Parenting (Boys Town)
- Cooking Matters (Visiting Nurse Association)
- Ways to protect children (Project Harmony)

Facilitated by Staff

- Character Builders
- 4 Steps To Success
- Preventing Summer Learning Loss
- Math at Home

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 a research-based home visiting/parenting curriculum. 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. The caseload for navigators is 45-55 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 occurred approximately once every 45 days. Each participant worked with their navigator to set personal and familial goals.

ENGLISH FOR PARENTS. Parents attended English language classes 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. One long-term goal is to enable 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 2016-17, BEST Plus was administered by the English teachers at LCCSO.

FAMILY PROBLEM SOLVING: 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 situation. The model of support continued to evolve as the family navigators and the liaisons worked collaboratively to best serve families in the program. In 2017, access to this service was limited as it was understaffed for most of the year.

INTERACTIVE PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITIES. Family activities were planned and implemented by the LCCSO staff and included a series of field trips to universities, family centered programs, museums and libraries to promote secondary education, graduation celebrations, and parent-child time during non-school days for students. Child activities programming included: Littles Lab (Do Space), Story Time (Omaha Public Library and Gateway Library), Nutrition Class (Center for Reducing Health Disparities) and Gardening for school-age students (City Sprouts).

COLLEGE PREPARATION FOR FAMILIES. One program offered to families is College Preparation in collaboration with the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). The benefit for the families at the center is that they leave with a better understanding of the college systems in the United States. This included familiarizing themselves with the college atmosphere, helping them set goals with their children, and understand where to go for more information.   This program has been offered since the fall of 2014 with 367 participants (adults and children) and 152 UNO students participating in this service learning program. Many of the families see it as so powerful that they request to repeat the process.
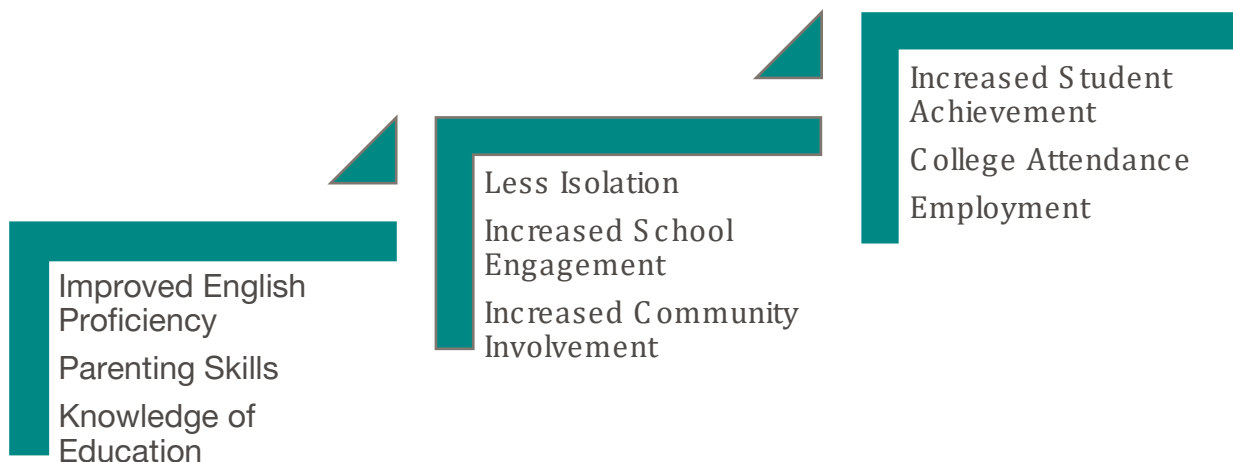
GATEWAY ELEMENTARY IMPLEMENTATION

Gateway Elementary school is one of the largest in Nebraska and the first in Omaha to integrate the family learning program into the daily routine of a school building in 2015. The Gateway principal, assistant principal, instructional facilitator, ESL teachers, K-3 teachers and others have made the team feel more than welcome at the school. Omaha Public Schools has dedicated a bilingual liaison to work in a similar role to the Educational Navigators – recruiting and supporting the families and conducting home visits (using the Growing Great Kids curriculum) every couple of months.

In 2016, the addition of a child activity center was implemented thanks to a grant from the Sherwood Foundation and there was an immediate increase of numbers (from 2 to 20 parents). Gateway supplied the physical room, snacks and supplies, and the Sherwood Foundation helped fund staffing and materials to start a child-activity room onsite. While the parents took English classes and parent workshops in the community room, their 5-year olds were down the hall learning, playing, and becoming comfortable with the learning area.

TWO-GENERATION APPROACH. Connecting parent and child strategies for improved outcomes has been part of the program strategy since its inception. The rationale for this model was that by improving parent skills and increasing their community involvement, it would result in improved outcomes for both the child and the parents.

Steps to Two-Generation Impact

Improved English Proficiency
Parenting Skills
Knowledge of Education

Less Isolation
Increased School Engagement
Increased Community Involvement

Increased Student Achievement
College Attendance
Employment

TWO-GENERATION EXAMPLE – A PARENT'S STORY

"In my experience, I have a seven-year-old daughter and a five-year-old boy. When my daughter entered Kindergarten, I never wanted to get near the teacher, in fear of her saying something or asking me something and I would not know what she was saying. My husband speaks English and so he would go to conferences or Open House or if she had any activity I always sent him, in fear that I would not understand her and I would not want to answer. This year presently, at Open House, my husband had to work and he could not go to school with us. I accompanied them and I felt happy because I moved closer to the teacher and I simply asked, "How have they been doing?"

And so this has helped me so that I could understand and I could answer and I felt proud because two teachers told me good things about my children. In A.'s case, he was here at LCCSO for two years and the teacher told me he is doing an excellent job, that he is reading really well, that he has great hand writing, that he was a leader of the group, and that he knew how to follow the rules. When I entered this program, A. was a very distracted child. He was a child who did not listen. A child who did not follow the rules. In my house we only speak Spanish, pure Spanish, and now A speaks both languages and I feel that it is thanks to my participation in this Center. Therefore, I feel this center has benefitted me in many ways: for English, for social skills, and for the development of my children."

-Parent from LCCSO

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2016-2017, the Family Learning Program served 336 families and 615 target students (birth to 6) across three sites. Two hundred sixty-nine children were served in the child-learning program during the year. The Learning Community Center of South Omaha had the highest number of family participants (n=239), followed by the program located at Gateway Elementary (n=71) and then Educare Omaha at Indian Hill (n=26).

MOST PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN IN THE PROGRAM FOR TWO YEARS OR LESS.

55%	28%	17%

■ 0-1 Years   ■ 1-2 Years   ■ 2-3 Years

OUTCOMES

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

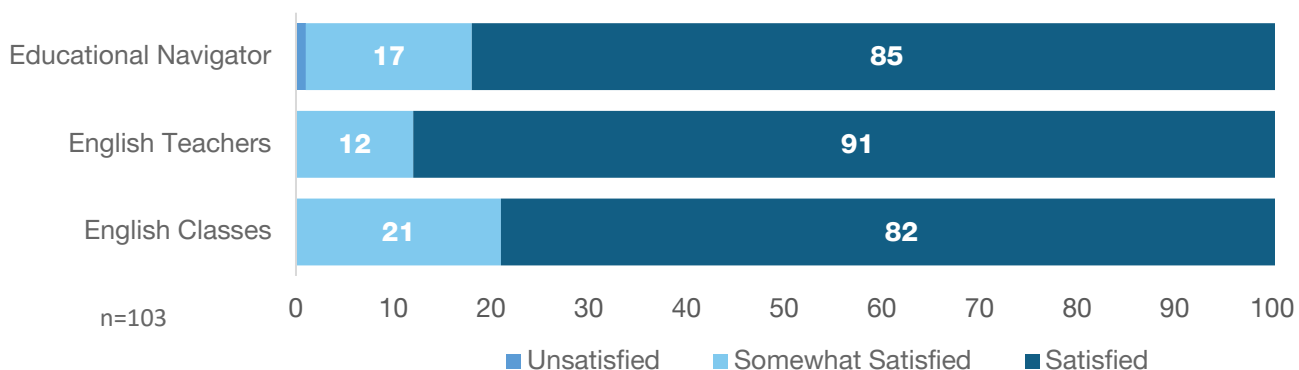### What was the quality of center-based services?

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 August 2017 to allow participants (N=103) 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.

SATISFACTION RESULTS

PARTICIPANTS REPORTED HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied
Educational Navigator	17	85
English Teachers	12	91
English Classes	21	82

n=103

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

■ Unsatisfied   ■ Somewhat Satisfied   ■ Satisfied

Participants reported high levels of satisfaction. All of the participants reported being at least somewhat satisfied with both the English teacher and classes. Less than one percent of the participants reported being unsatisfied with the services provided by an Educational Navigator.

The English language component was viewed as necessary and helpful. Participants remarked that the classes are engaging and the instructors accommodate and support them as they make progress with learning a new language. The words "patient, helpful, and understanding" were often used to describe the instructors. According to one parent, "I am very satisfied, I have attended other classes where they only speak English, and always leave with doubts but these classes, at the end the instructor explains in Spanish, and it helps me understand more."

"I think it is a mutual trust. Like my peer said, here, they help you, support you and give you information or help you resolve any doubt, help you make goals."
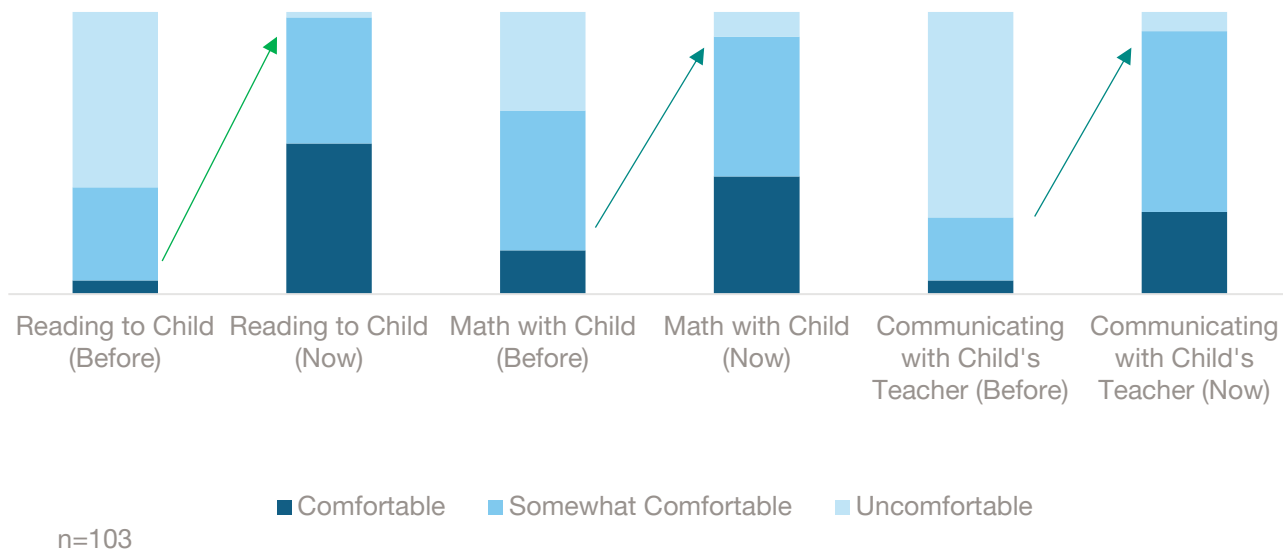
-a parent at LCCSO

Educational Navigators provided a sounding board, collaborative partner, and resource for families in the program. Most participants reported positive relationships with their assigned navigator and were grateful for assistance with understanding information from schools, helping with family goals and providing resources. However, a handful of participants across groups mentioned the approachability of navigators varied and that they preferred to work with navigators who were approachable and seemed to genuinely enjoy their job. While the participants understood that navigators follow up with families, some participants remarked that at times the follow up felt intrusive and unnecessary.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

School Engagement Results

PARENTS REPORTED FEELING MORE COMFORTABLE ENGAGING WITH ACADEMICS AND THE SCHOOL.

Reading to Child (Before) · Reading to Child (Now) · Math with Child (Before) · Math with Child (Now) · Communicating with Child's Teacher (Before) · Communicating with Child's Teacher (Now)

■ Comfortable ■ Somewhat Comfortable ■ Uncomfortable

n=103

Parents showed marked increases in their levels of feeling comfortable engaging their children with reading and math from entrance into the program until the focus groups. Additionally, parents reported feeling more comfortable communicating with their child's teacher and the school. Analysis of the comments made in the focus groups indicate that as parents feel more successful as learners they feel more comfortable encouraging their child's educational progress.

"My child has grown and developed with his reading skills in English because I am learning how to read and write in English."

"….motivates me to learn more because I can tell that my own learning motivates my children"

-parents at LLCSO

In addition to an increase in feeling comfortable engaging with the school, participants reported more interactions within their communities and with English-only speakers.

PARTICIPANTS REPORTED INCREASED LEVELS OF COMFORT WITH INTERACTION IN THE COMMUNITY.

■ Comfortable ■ Somewhat Comfortable ■ Uncomfortable   N=103
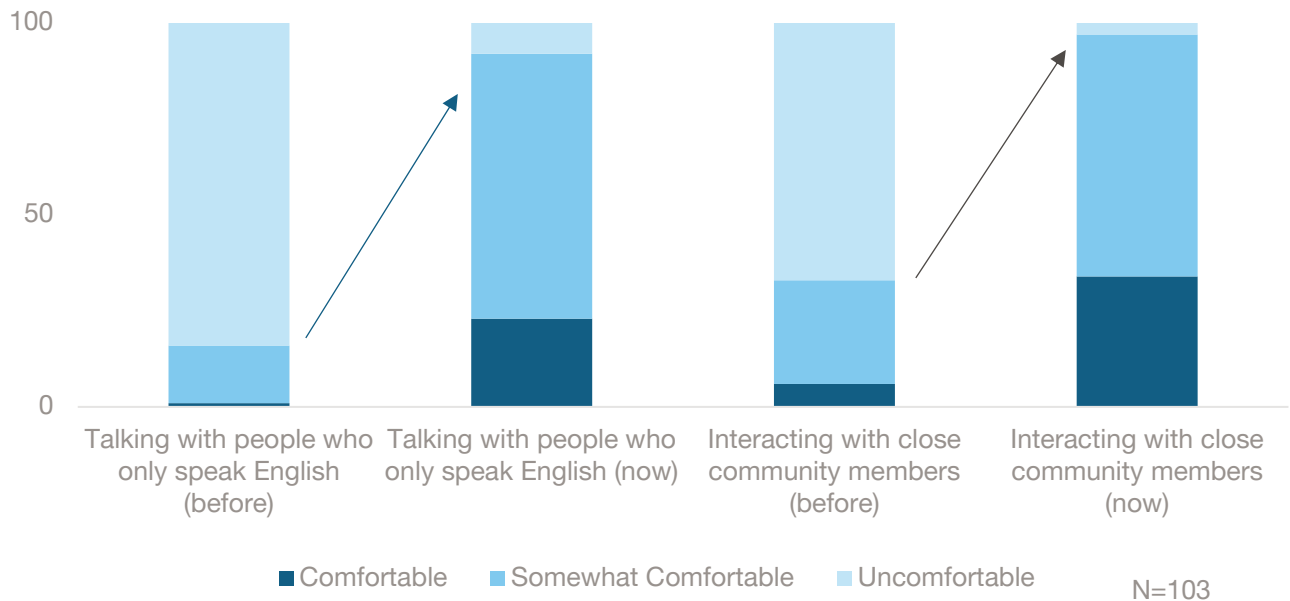
As participants improved in their English skills, they became more comfortable and at ease interacting with English speakers and participating in their community. Multiple respondents discussed talking with medical personnel without an interpreter and being able to interact with others independently of their spouse/ significant other.

"My son had surgery, that day they told me; we don't have an interpreter to help you discharge your son, if you want to do it we can do it just with you. At the end, I did not need the interpreter; I was able to understand everything and communicate with the doctor. Even the doctor asked me why you asked for an interpreter, if you can speak English. Now I feel more comfortable, that day I felt confident in myself."

-a parent at LCCSO

Looking to the Future: What were parents' suggestions?

Feedback was solicited on potential improvements for the program. Participants provided suggestions on all aspects of the programming; English classes, parenting, activities, additional classes, and logistics.

> Participants mentioned wanting additional opportunities for English classes. Some wanted longer classes, others wanted classes to be held more frequently and others wanted additional classes focused on reading and writing in English.
>
> Participants talked about adding GED classes, classes on child discipline such as Love and Logic, computer/technology classes, and additional financial literacy classes. Participants talked about having options on what classes to take.
>
> Participants see the need for the program for other families in the community. They wondered about adding personnel, opening up the program for those with children outside the targeted age range, or having a bigger building.
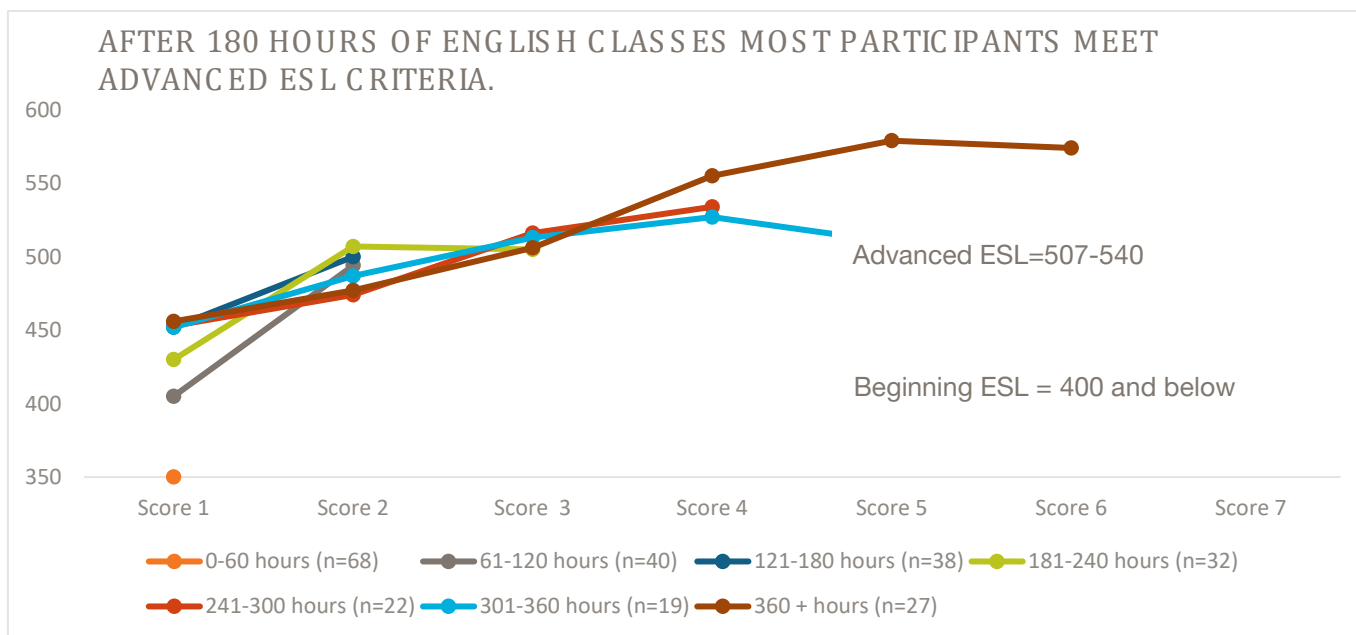
PARENT OUTCOMES

PARENT EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

What was the impact on English?

METHOD. Growth in English was assessed using the BEST Plus. The tool was administered by the Learning Community Center of South Omaha 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. For 2017-18, the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) were collected by Educational Navigators from families as a measure of parent-child interactions. Finally, as part of the Boys Town Common Sense Parenting, multiple scales were collected and 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) within two-three years of programming. 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. Some participants expressed interest in staying with the program longer to improve reading and writing skills and/or to prepare for the GED.

AFTER 180 HOURS OF ENGLISH CLASSES MOST PARTICIPANTS MEET ADVANCED ESL CRITERIA.

Advanced ESL=507-540

Beginning ESL = 400 and below

—●—0-60 hours (n=68) —●—61-120 hours (n=40) —●—121-180 hours (n=38) —●—181-240 hours (n=32)
—●—241-300 hours (n=22) —●—301-360 hours (n=19) —●—360 + hours (n=27)
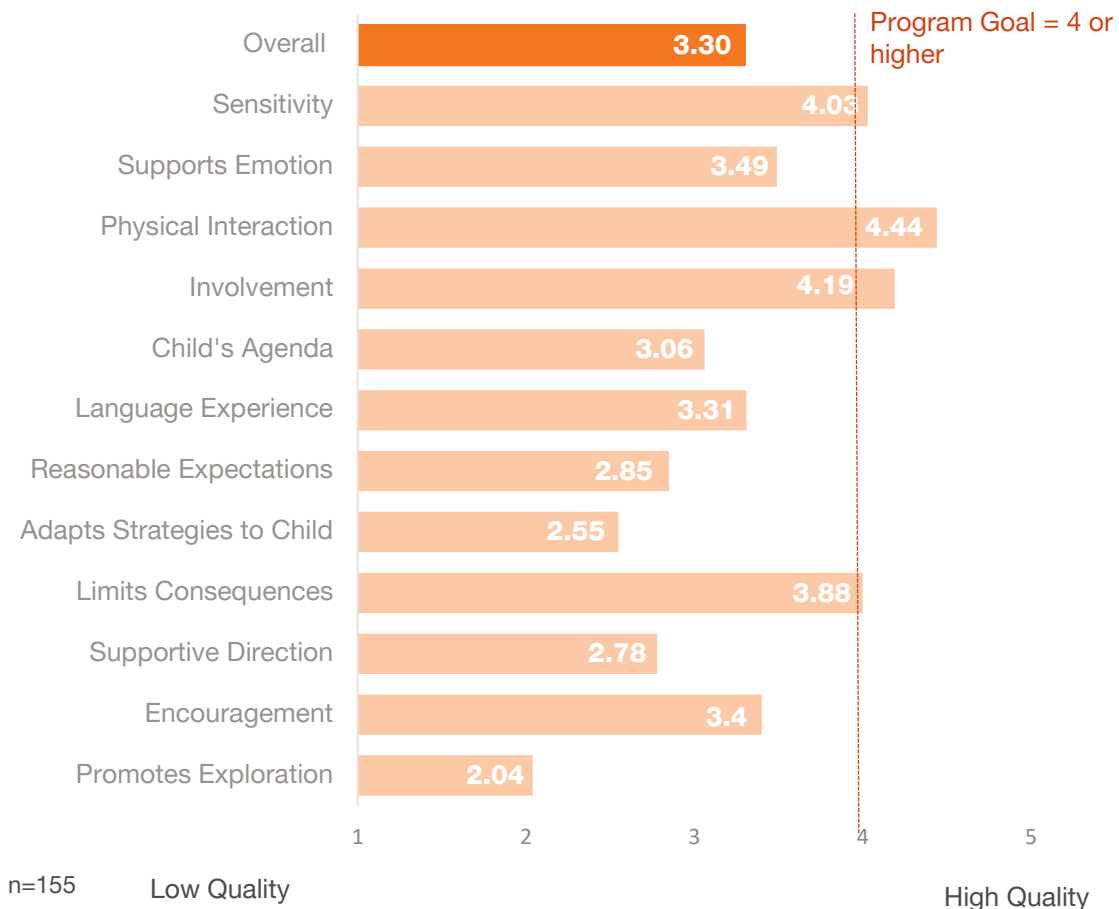
What were the parenting skills?

METHOD. Navigators provided video observations of parents and their children to the evaluation team. 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. Educational navigators receive a written report with scores and recommendations to use with families.

One hundred fifty-five parent-child observations were recorded and scored in 2016-17. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) measures parenting behaviors across three areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, and Supporting Confidence, based on a videotape of a parent playing with his or her child. Scores are based on a 5-point scale with 5 being high quality.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION RESULTS

Only twelve families had pre to post scores on the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scales (KIPS). While these scores were high, they are not significant due to the small number of families with pre and post scores. However, additional data from the focus groups and other assessments suggest an impact on parenting.

PARTICIPANTS DEMONSTRATED STRENGTHS IN THE AREAS OF SENSITIVITY AND PHYSICAL INTERACTION WITH THEIR CHILDREN. OVERALL, PARENTS SCORED IN THE MODERATE RANGE ON THE ASSESSMENT.
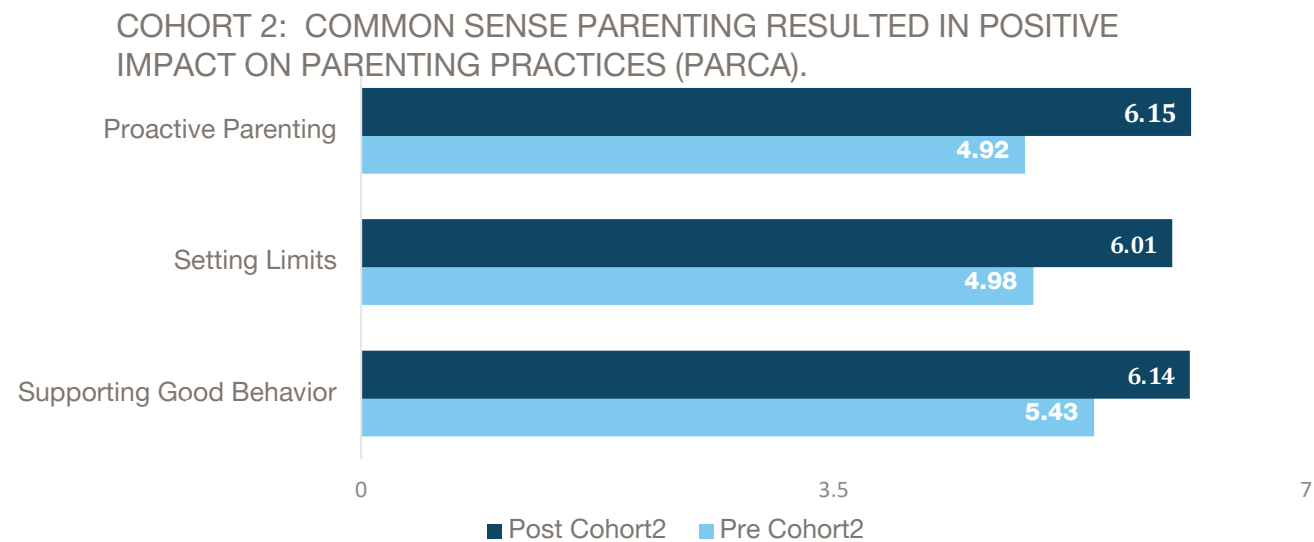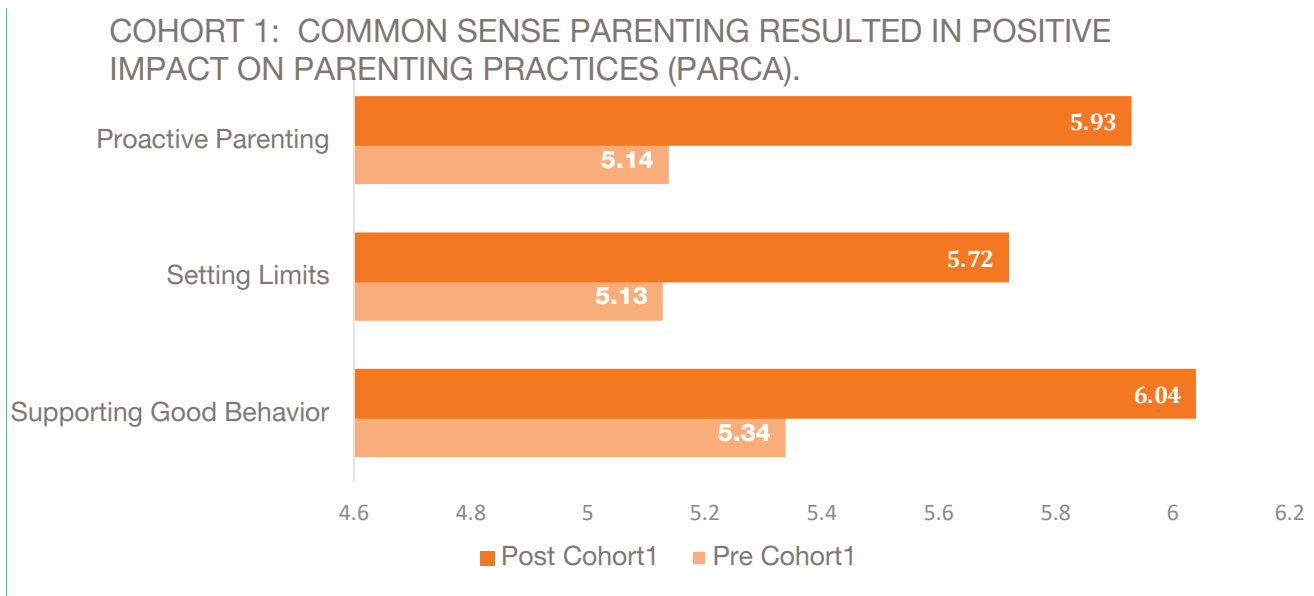
Category	Score
Overall	3.30
Sensitivity	4.03
Supports Emotion	3.49
Physical Interaction	4.44
Involvement	4.19
Child's Agenda	3.06
Language Experience	3.31
Reasonable Expectations	2.85
Adapts Strategies to Child	2.55
Limits Consequences	3.88
Supportive Direction	2.78
Encouragement	3.4
Promotes Exploration	2.04

Program Goal = 4 or higher

n=155   Low Quality   High Quality

COMMON SENSE PARENTING

METHOD. Two cohorts of participants completed the Boys Town Common Sense Parenting classes. Analyses of data showed significant gains for both cohorts. Paired t-tests (N=66) were conducted using pre-post data on the Parenting Children and Adolescents (PARCA) scale. Growth in the following areas was significant: Supporting Good Behavior, Setting Limits, and Proactive Parenting.

PARENTING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Not only did parenting practices improve on the scale, but the Common Sense Parenting classes were well-attended with average attendance of 85%. Family participants rated the classes high on both satisfaction and knowledge gained. On a parent survey administered at the end of the sessions, parents reported that the classes helped lower their stress levels related to parenting (95%), helped improve child(ren)'s behavior (97%), and helped to improve parenting practices (98%). Consistent with the results from 2015-16, the most frequent improvement requested was longer or more class time.

COHORT 1: COMMON SENSE PARENTING RESULTED IN POSITIVE IMPACT ON PARENTING PRACTICES (PARCA).

Category	Post Cohort1	Pre Cohort1
Proactive Parenting	5.93	5.14
Setting Limits	5.72	5.13
Supporting Good Behavior	6.04	5.34

COHORT 2: COMMON SENSE PARENTING RESULTED IN POSITIVE IMPACT ON PARENTING PRACTICES (PARCA).

Category	Post Cohort2	Pre Cohort2
Proactive Parenting	6.15	4.92
Setting Limits	6.01	4.98
Supporting Good Behavior	6.14	5.43

Overall results indicate that 76% of participants in cohort 1 and 91% of participants in cohort 2 experienced clinically significant improvements in supporting good behavior, setting limits and proactive parenting as measured by the PARCA Total Score.

All of the subscales measured by the PARCA pre to post found significant gains in each by both cohorts of participants. Below are the effect sizes for each pre to post changes. For Proactive Parenting the effect sizes were in the large range for both cohorts (d=0.81 for cohort 1 and d=0.79 for cohort 2). For the Setting Limits domain, the effect size was in the medium range for cohort 1 (d=0.64) and in the large range for cohort 2 (d=1.04). For Supporting Good Behavior both cohorts had large effect sizes (d=0.93 and d=1.13).

76% of participants in cohort 1 and 91% of participants in cohort 2 demonstrated clinically significant improvements in parenting practices.

> "The instructor of the class is very clear with her answers and never disrespected our opinions. It made me feel good and I learned a lot of things to do with my children in this class."
>
> ...a parent

STUDENT OUTCOMES

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND PERFORMANCE?

Student outcome data will be reported as an addendum when released from school districts.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: USE OF DATA

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT. The Learning Community Center of South Omaha focuses on being both family centered and data informed. The management team meets regularly 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 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

The Family Learning program continued to experience improvements in English, parenting practies, school engagement and community involvement. Working from a strengths-based approach contributes to a stronger program. Parents generally reported feeling safe, valued, and satisfied with the program and program staff.

School District Pilot Programs

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

Instructional Coaching

Instructional Coaching has been an ongoing pilot program since 2012-2013 and has grown to include four Learning Community school districts (Bellevue Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools, Ralston 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. Also, the changes and improvements seen in new teachers mirror 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 four districts. Coaches worked with teachers to provide consultation, modeling, data analysis, co-teaching, and lesson planning support. All districts 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 1,648 students.

RALSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS: The instructional coach primarily served two higher poverty buildings with academic data that showed high needs through the Jim Knight framework. The coach also assisted with the mentoring program to support new elementary teachers and developing peer coaches across the district. In 2016-17, instructional coaching had the potential to reach 47 teachers and 690 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 in teaching and coaching reading instruction. The focus for the OPS coaches (n=11) was reading instruction (both large and small group). A total of approximately 6,200 students and 287 teachers were part of the coaching across 13 buildings.

WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: Cognitive coaching 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 three years). Coaching activities included modeling, co-teaching, planning, videotaped 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 2016-17, 24 schools, approximately 555 teachers and potentially 9,238 students were served across the four participating districts. Instructional coaches worked in buildings with FRL rates ranging from 44%-92%. All of the schools funded by the Learning Community for instructional coaching were elementary buildings. Three districts provided coaching to all teachers, including special education staff, in their buildings. One district focused primarily on providing literacy coaching to teachers.
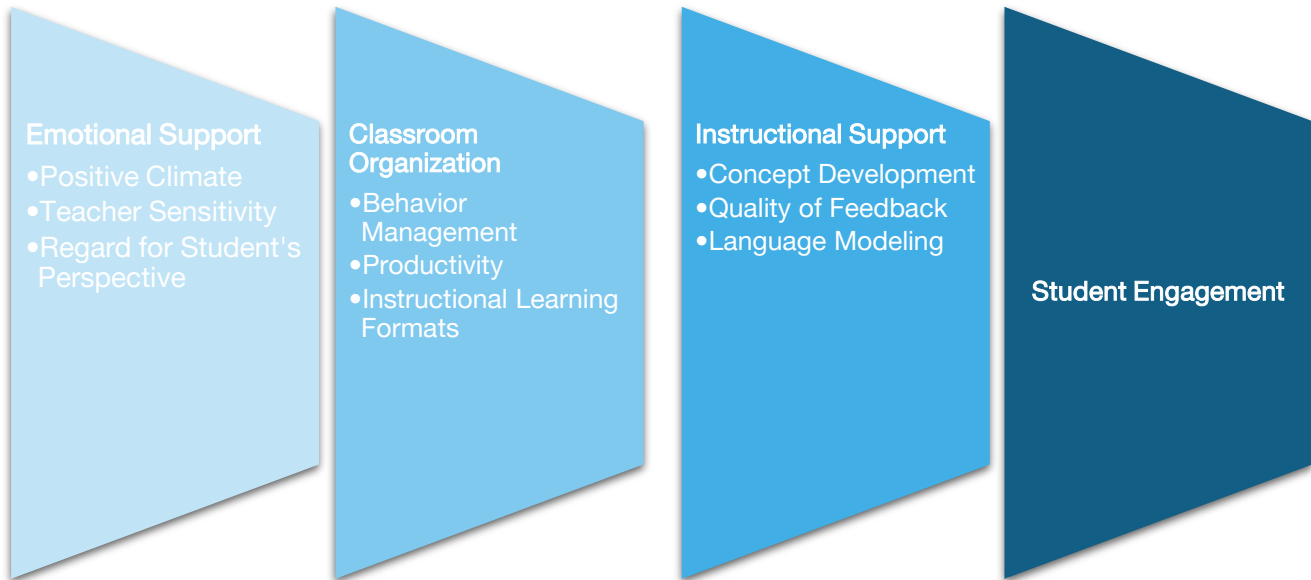
OUTCOMES

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

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 in the fall and spring for a sample of the teachers (n=60) 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
- 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

Student Engagement

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 or central office administrators.

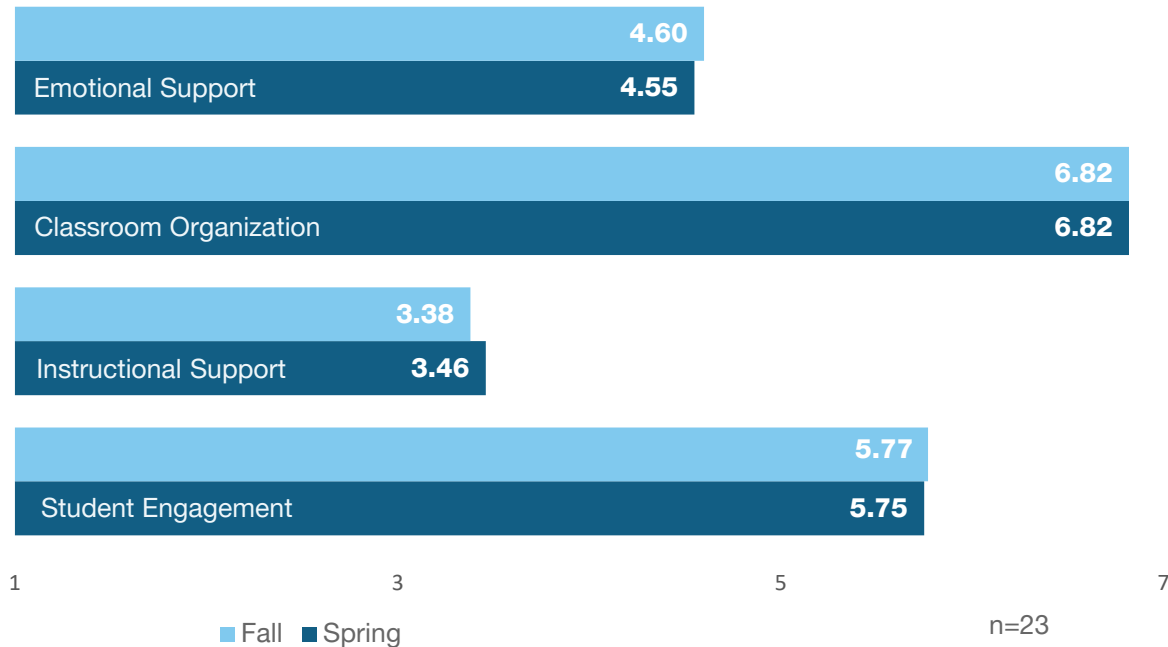### CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION WAS K-3 TEACHERS' STRENGTH.

Largest improvements were in instructional support.

Emotional Support — 5.61 / 5.54
Classroom Organization — 6.24 / 6.24
Instructional Support — 2.92 / 3.03

1   ■ Fall ■ Spring   3   5   7

n=37
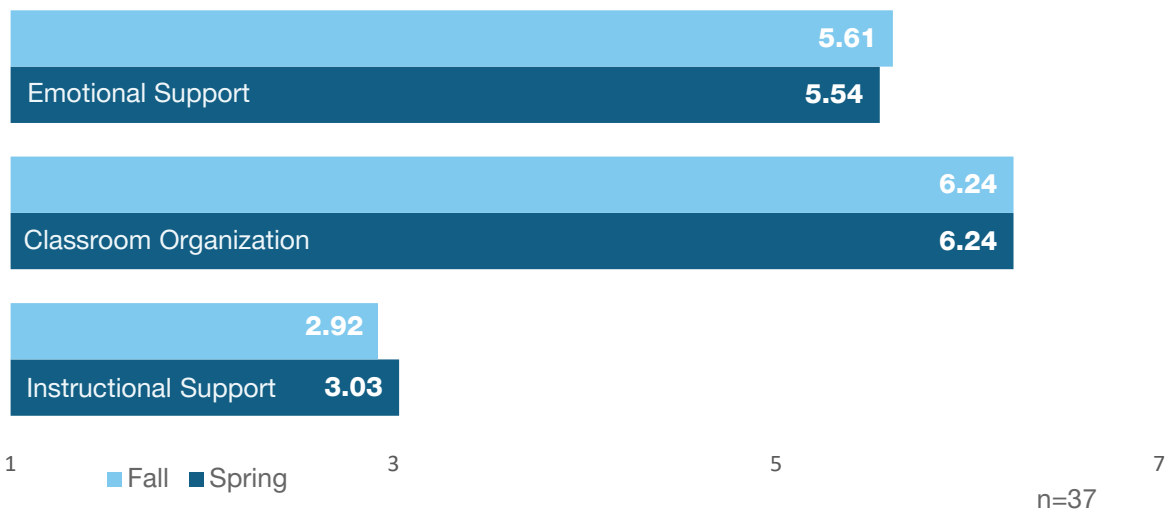
For K-3 teachers, Classroom Organization began and remained in the high range. This domain incorporates behavior management and having an efficient, productive classroom. The Instructional Support domain improved from fall to spring with the average scoring moving into the mid-range on the CLASS tool. Paired sample t-tests found there were no significant changes from fall to spring.

Largest improvement was in Instructional Support.

Domain	Fall	Spring
Emotional Support	4.60	4.55
Classroom Organization	6.82	6.82
Instructional Support	3.38	3.46
Student Engagement	5.77	5.75

■ Fall ■ Spring

n=23

Scores on the Upper Elementary CLASS tool were analyzed using paired sample t-test. As students enter 4th grade, a fourth domain, Student Engagement, was scored. While improvement was noted for Instructional Support, no significant differences were found from pre to post on any of the domains or dimensions.

COACH AND TEACHER FEEDBACK ON INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

METHOD. A combination of teacher surveys and instructional coach surveys were used to gather information on how both teachers and coaches perceived the instructional coaching programs across the four participating districts. A total of 187 teachers completed the teacher survey about the coaching practices within their respective districts and eight instructional coaches from three districts completed the instructional coach survey.

We have a positive working relationship — **90%**

My coach is available and flexible — **88%**

My coach has excellent communication skills — **88%**

Building leadership is supportive of the coaching program — **86%**

I seek out my coach to problem-solve — **82%**

I feel my instruction has improved as a result of working with my coach — **76%**

Overall, I am satisfied with the program — **80%**

n=187   % of teachers who agree and strongly agree with the statement
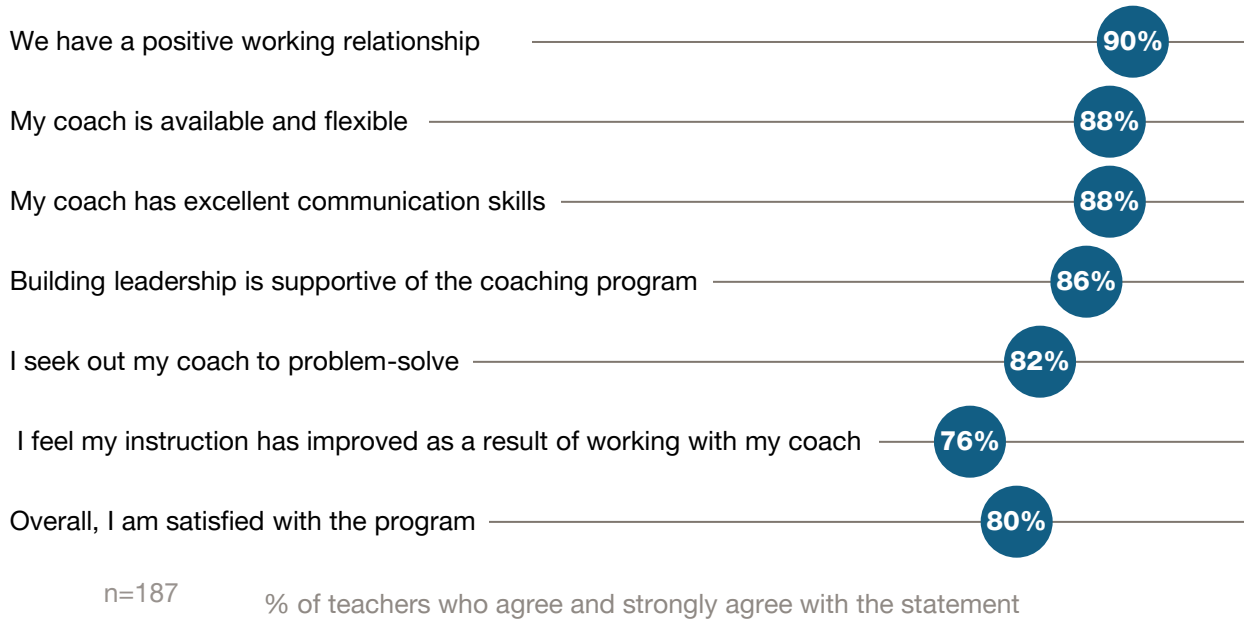
Eighty percent of teacher respondents had a favorable view (agree or strongly agree) of the overall coaching program in their district and 90% reported having a positive working relationship with their coach. The item rated the least favorably was that instruction improved based on coaching with 76% of the teacher respondents answering agree or strongly disagree. Teachers then rated coaching activities as to how useful they were to them as teacher. Teachers rated each item from either "not at all useful" to "extremely useful". The chart below reflects the percent of teachers finding each coaching activity either very or extremely useful.

90% of the teachers reported having a positive working relationship with their coach.

73% OF TEACHERS FOUND COACHING TO BE THE MOST USEFUL ACTIVITY.
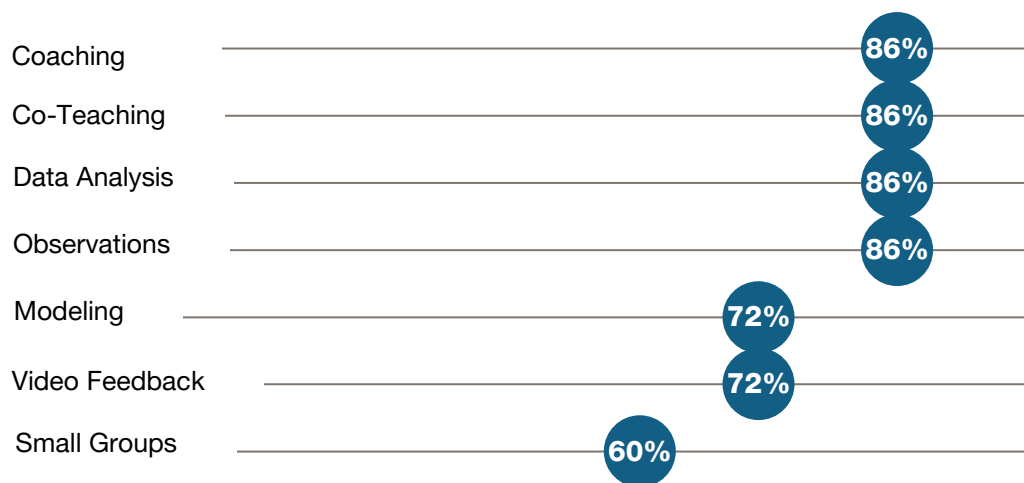JUST OVER HALF (54%) THOUGHT THAT OBSERVATIONS WERE USEFUL.

Coaching **73%**

Small Groups **70%**

Professional Development **68%**

Modeling **65%**

Lesson Planning **63%**

Data Analysis **63%**

Co-teaching **61%**

Observations **54%**
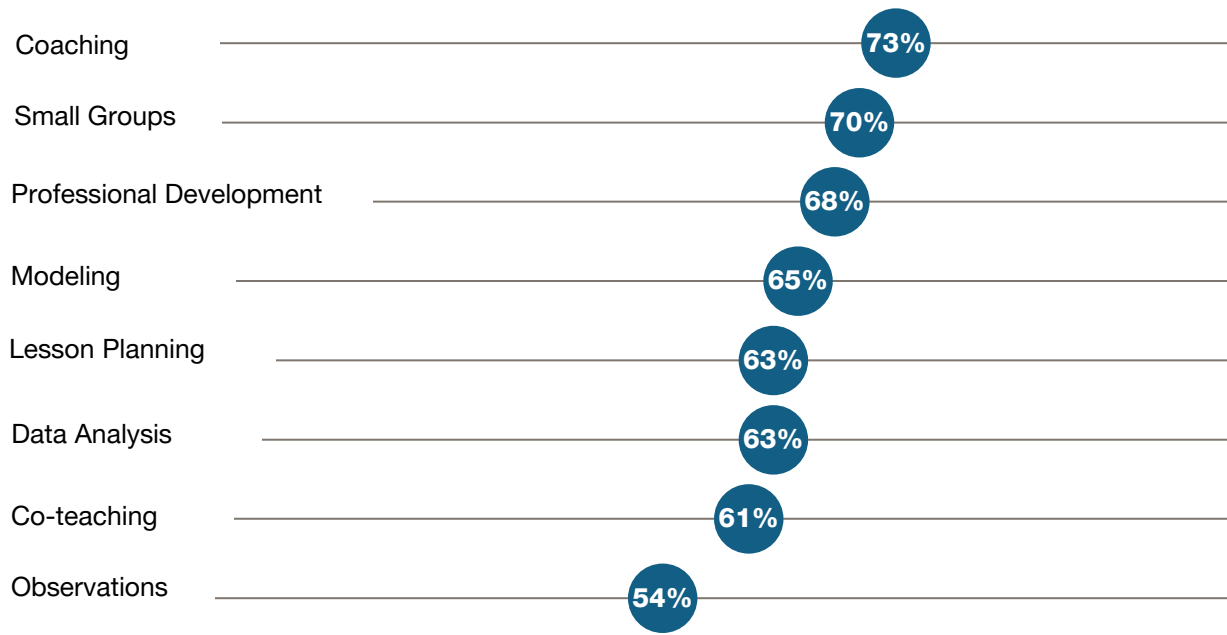
n=187

COACHES INPUT

Coaches across four districts provided input through surveys. Coaches were asked questions about successes, strategies, who seems to be benefitting the most, lessons learned, and obstacles in creating a coaching program.

86% OF COACHES FOUND FOUR COACHING ELEMENTS TO BE
HIGHLY EFFECTIVE IN IMPROVING INSTRUCTION.

Coaching **86%**

Co-Teaching **86%**

Data Analysis **86%**

Observations **86%**

Modeling **72%**

Video Feedback **72%**

Small Groups **60%**

n=8

Coaching, co-teaching, data analysis, and observations were all perceived to be very to extremely effective by most of the coaches (86%). Small groups (60%) were viewed as less effective in helping teachers improve instruction.

The following themes emerged from the coaches' input on the open-ended survey questions.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IS A BENEFIT FOR ALL TEACHERS BUT PARTICULARLY FOR NEW TEACHERS. Coaches continue to see the progress of new teachers who have been working with a coach since starting in the district. One coach noted, "My 3rd year teachers have continued to excel. They independently push themselves to dig deeper into their instructional practices and strive to become better".

RELATIONSHIPS ARE INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE COACHING. Coaches frequently pointed out the necessity of having time to build relationships with teachers and administration. The successes of a coach often begin by working with a couple of teachers, building up trust and respect and having those teachers talk positively about working with a coach. Working with grade level teams was a common strategy used by coaches to begin the coaching process and to start building relationships before initiating individual coaching cycles.

BUILDING AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING THE COACH ROLE CAN BE KEY TO SUCCESS OF COACHING. Coaches discussed the importance of having a district vision for coaching that included specific roles for administrators and coaches. One coach wrote, "One obstacle is the building administrator does not expect teachers to work with me, nor does he suggest teachers work with me." Additionally, several coaches mentioned the need to have a model that everyone could understand with clear roles from the district.
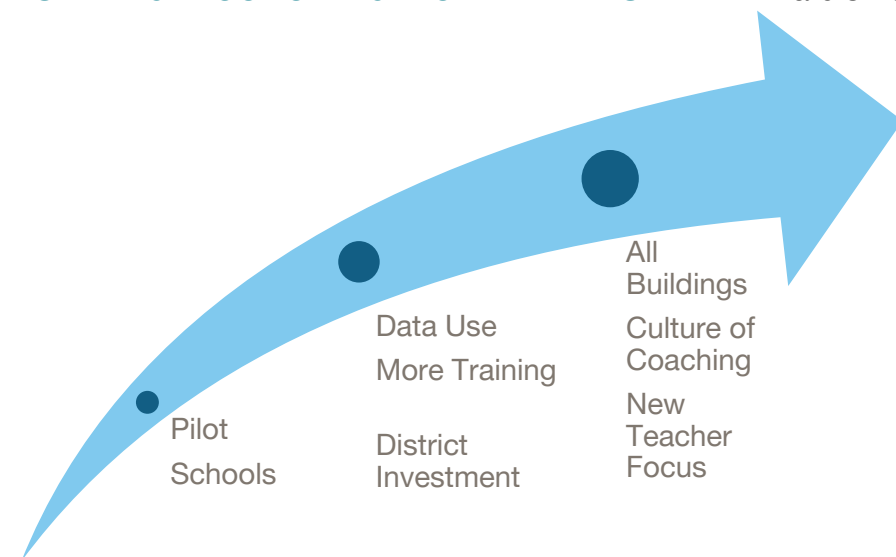
FROM PILOT TO GENERALIZATION: WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

As one of the longest implementing districts for instructional coaching, Westside Community Schools has continued to refine, expand, and generalize instructional coaching beyond the two schools funded through the Learning Community. A focus group was conducted with six of the district's instructional coaches and a central office administrator in charge of professional learning and coaching for the district. Two of the coaches were funded by the Learning

Community and the others were funded through a combination of other grant and district funds. All of the coaches currently worked in elementary buildings.

KEY FINDINGS AND LEARNINGS

BUILDING A COACHING MODEL TAKES TIME. At a district level, it took time to develop the clarity of purpose and the role(s) of the instructional coach.

Coaches discussed how the first year is difficult in building up trust, learning their role within a building, and learning how to work as a coach. A second year coach stated that at the beginning, "You do what you gotta do to get in" and that it was "ok to go slow". These sentiments were echoed by the other coaches who discussed working with only a few teachers in the beginning and how incredibly frustrating that can be. However, once teachers saw the coach as a resource and experienced success, more and more teachers start to become engaged. Word of mouth by teachers and marketing by the administrator were effective in having coaching become more "acceptable" and seen less as a sign of weakness.

Pilot Schools

Data Use
More Training

District Investment

All Buildings

Culture of Coaching

New Teacher Focus

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY TO SUCCESS. Coaches agreed that the non-evaluative status of the coach is imperative in building trust and relationships with teachers. The trust developed gives teachers the freedom to say, "I don't know how to do this" and receive support and coaching in a nonjudgmental space. Relationships are strengthened by the flexibility within the coaching framework. Flexibility by the coach "values and honors the expertise and ideas of the teacher."

COACHING HAS LED TO RICHER CONVERSATIONS AROUND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES USING DATA. A district model of coaching has led to higher level thinking in teachers with more teaching and leading with indicators and data. Coaches see tremendous growth in conversation with new teachers from Year 1 to Year 2 and a growth in capacity with all teachers. Coaching has become a culture in which reflective coaching questions happen as a part of conversations between peers and are not relegated only to times the coach is available or in the building.

COACHING IMPACTS HOW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS DELIVERED AND RECEIVED. Coaches and the administrator agreed that professional development has been streamlined with the addition of instructional coaches. Teachers receive the district training and district message around curricula and standards, but the coaches then provide the follow-up for

specific strategies and building level differences. Due to the flexibility within the coaching framework, coaches are able to differentiate the follow-up for teachers in a way that meets the needs of all. First year teachers all receive individualized professional development with their coach. While they don't meet as frequently the following two years, the coach remains a constant resource for the first 3 year period of a teacher's career.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

DID INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES?

Student outcome data will be reported as an addendum when released from school districts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Instructional coaching is viewed as a valued resource by teachers and coaches. Data from surveys and focus groups suggest high impact when a coaching model has administrative support, clear roles for coaches, and time to develop relationships within a building.

Due to instructional coaches providing coaching and feedback based on the goals, indicators, and curricula within their respective districts, the CLASS tool may not be the most appropriate to show growth in instructional practices. One recommendation would be to determine an assessment/process reflective of the work being focused on by the coaches.
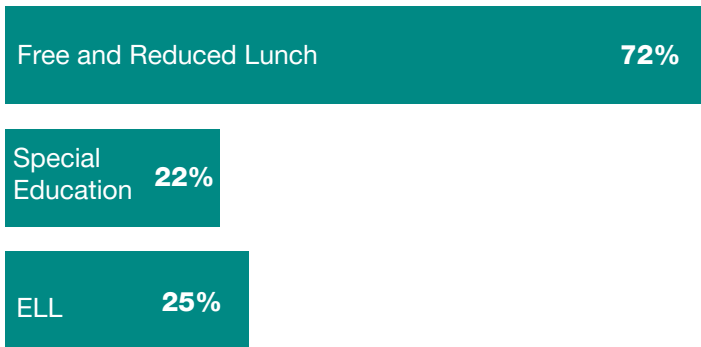
Jump Start to Kindergarten

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 the 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 2017, Jump Start to Kindergarten was implemented in four districts: Elkhorn, Millard, Omaha, and Papillion La Vista. A total of 588 Kindergarten students served of which 497 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 HIGH RISK
POPULATION OF STUDENTS.

Free and Reduced Lunch	72%
Special Education	22%
ELL	25%

n=588

Jump Start to Kindergarten served 52 classrooms in 32 schools across the four participating districts. The program served slightly more males (53%) than females (47%). The majority of children served were five years of age.

MOST OF THE STUDENTS SERVED REPRESENTED MINORITIES.

White	30%			
Non-White	30%	22%	12%	4%
	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Multi-Racial
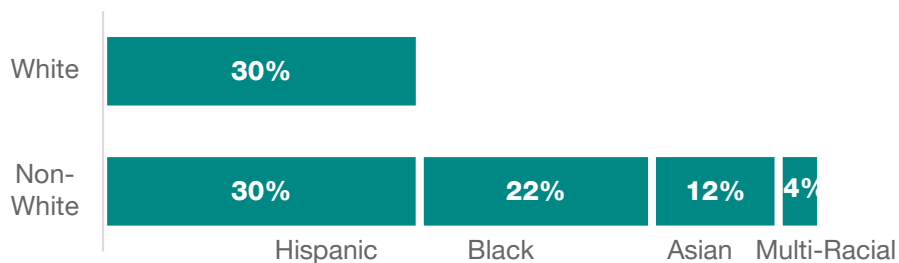
n=588

OUTCOMES

STUDENT OUTCOMES

### Did the student's school readiness change over time?

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 2017 summer, 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 ($t=-11.468$, $p<.001$, $d=0.51$) suggesting substantial, meaningful change within the zone of desired effects. While results varied throughout the programs, all four programs made significant gains.
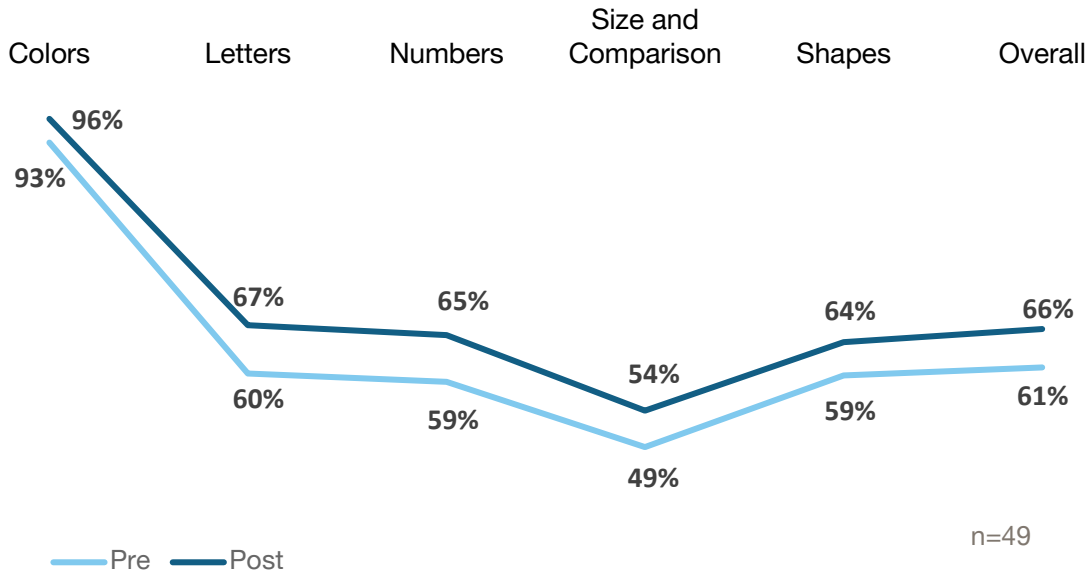
STUDENTS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OVERALL IN ALL FOUR JUMP START TO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS. EFFECT SIZE VARIED BY DISTRICT.
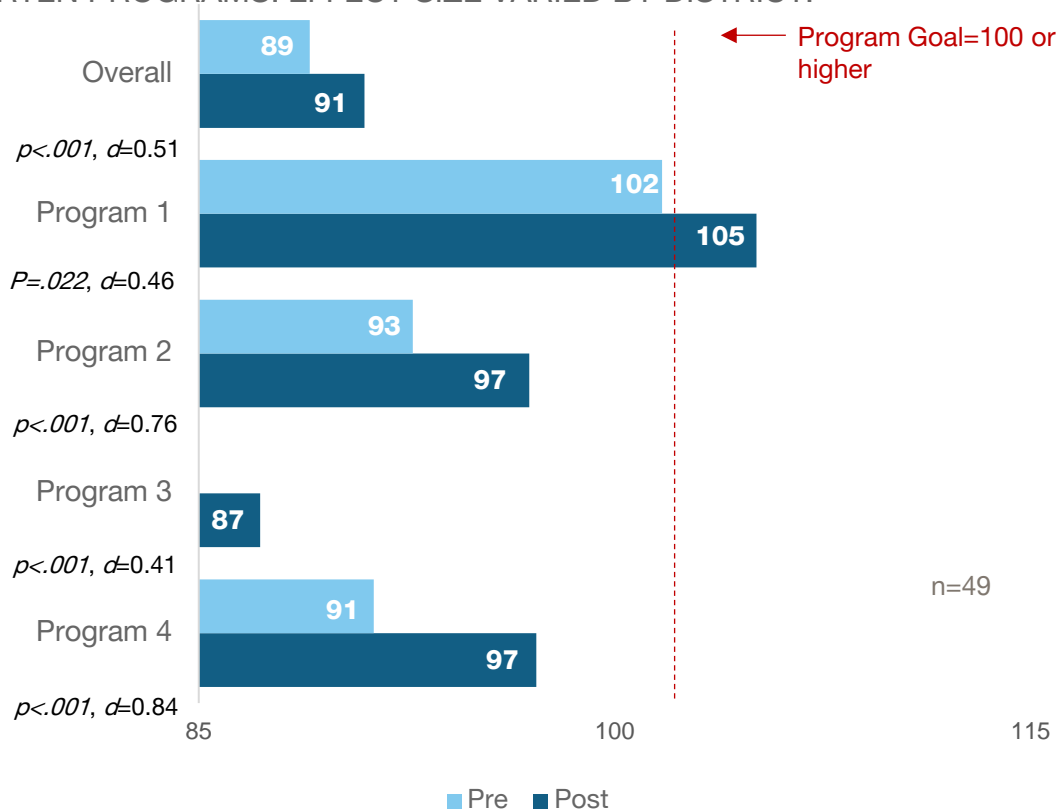
The overall mean standard scores on the Bracken increased from 89 to 91, moving them slightly closer to the desired mean of 100. The goal each year is to move the group as close to mean scores of 100 or greater as possible.

When examining individual subtests, the percentage of mastery increased in all areas, with an overall increase of 5.5 percentage points. An area of strength for these students was color naming (96% mastery). An area for improvement would be Sizes/Comparisons (54% mastery). Sizes/Comparison may be a higher cognitive 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 |

96%
93%
67%
65%
64%
66%
60%
59%
54%
59%
61%
49%

—— Pre —— Post

n=49

PARENT SATISFACTION

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 tables (n=244).
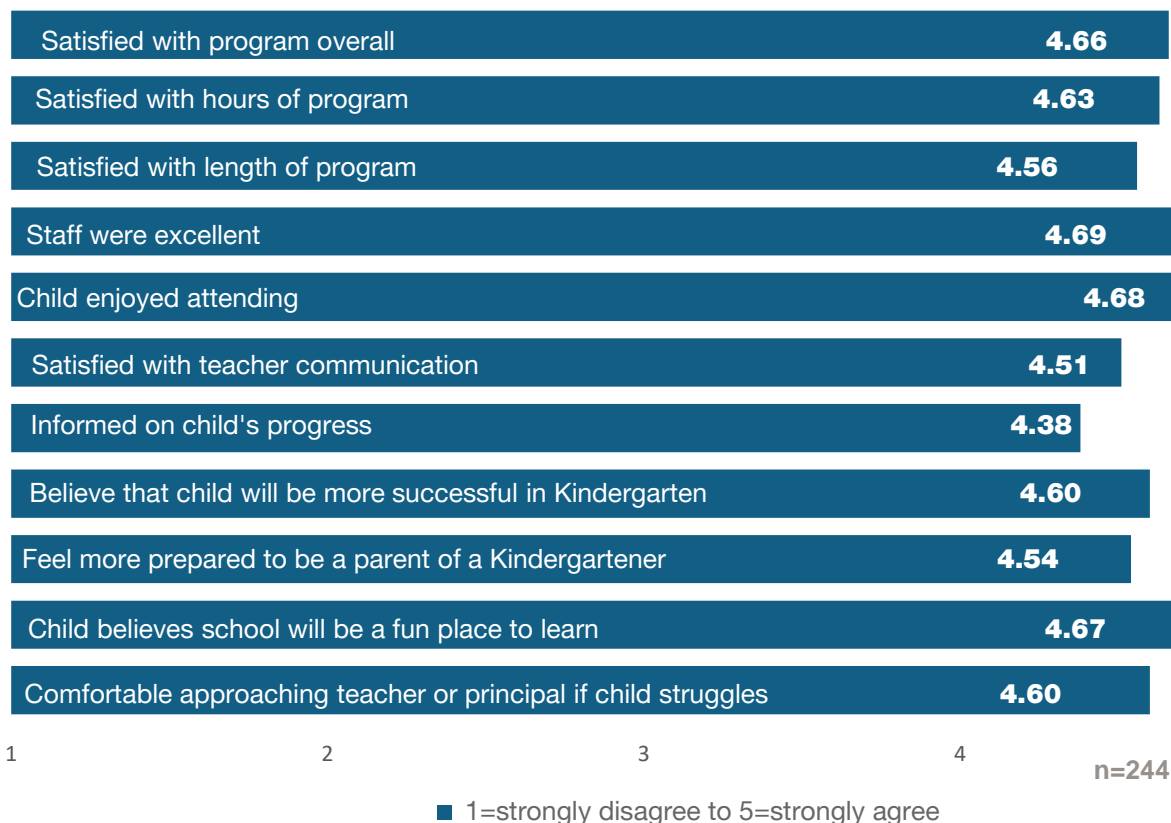
Disagree 1%

Not sure 2%

Strongly Disagree 1%

96% WERE SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRAM
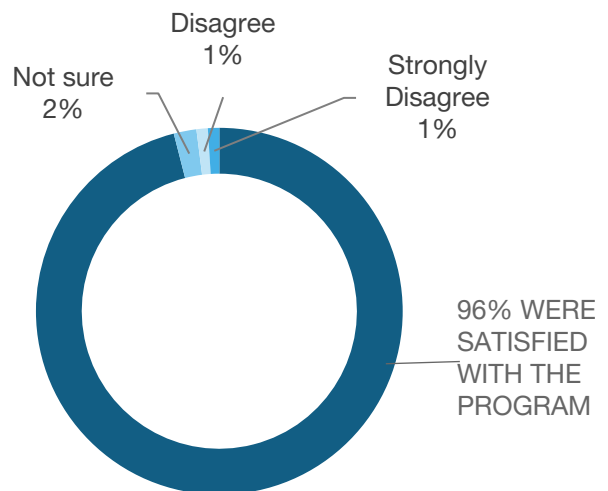
n=244

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 satisfaction on such items as believing the program staff were excellent and feeling that their child enjoyed attending the program. The lowest level of satisfaction was for being informed about their child's progress.
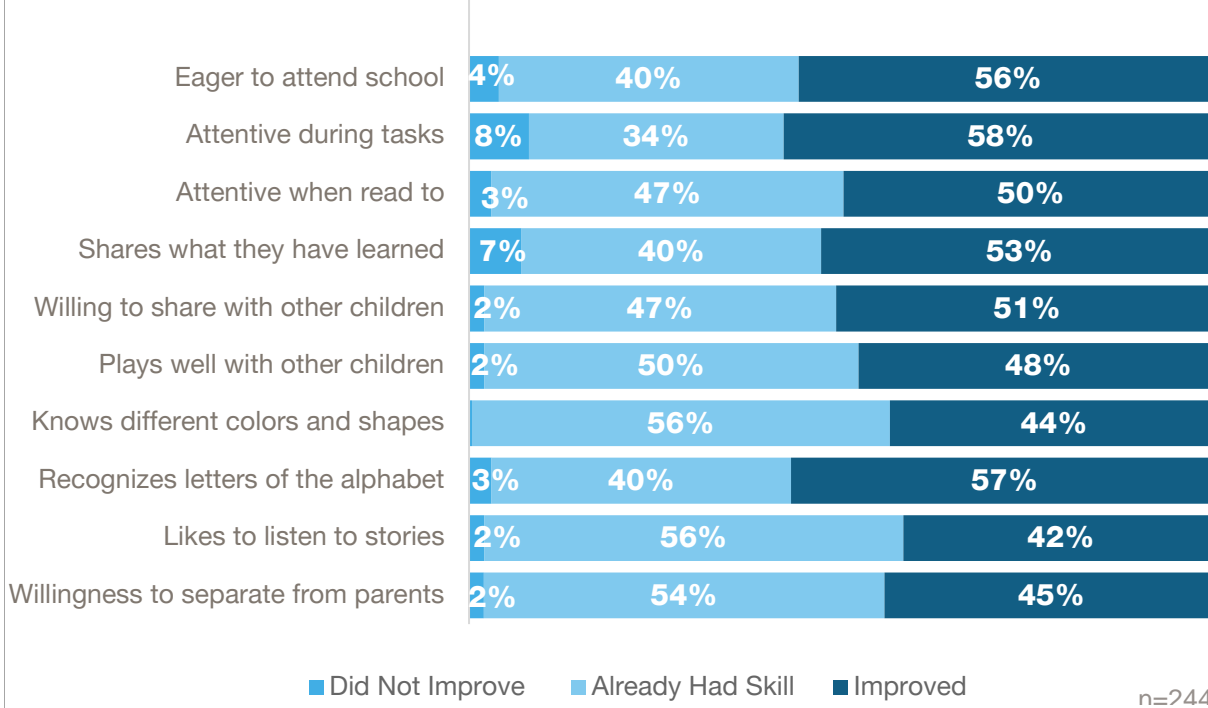
PARENT REPORTED HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN ALL AREAS.

	Rating
Satisfied with program overall	4.66
Satisfied with hours of program	4.63
Satisfied with length of program	4.56
Staff were excellent	4.69
Child enjoyed attending	4.68
Satisfied with teacher communication	4.51
Informed on child's progress	4.38
Believe that child will be more successful in Kindergarten	4.60
Feel more prepared to be a parent of a Kindergartener	4.54
Child believes school will be a fun place to learn	4.67
Comfortable approaching teacher or principal if child struggles	4.60

n=244

■ 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

How did parents' rate their students readiness for school?
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, attentiveness when read to, willingness to share with other children, and eagerness to attend school. Some areas where the majority of students already possessed the skills included:willingness to separate from parents, likes to listen to stories, and knows different colors and shapes. Attentiveness during tasks had the highest percentage of "did not improve" (8%), but also showed the greatest improvement (58%).

THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS REPORTED THAT THEIR CHILDREN EITHER IMPROVED OR ALREADY HAD THE SKILL GOING INTO THE PROGRAM.
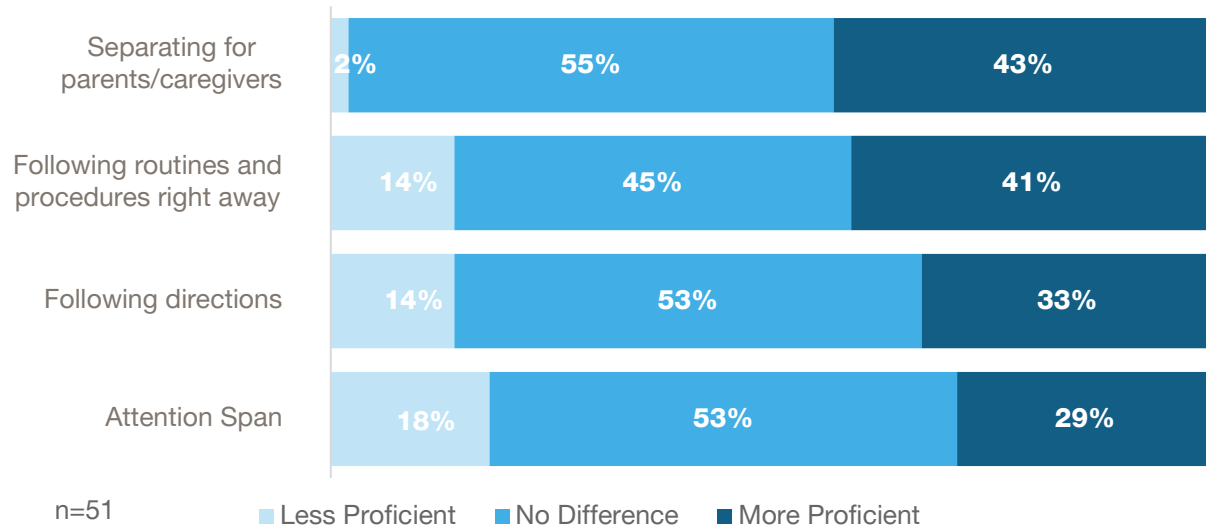
Skill	Did Not Improve	Already Had Skill	Improved
Eager to attend school	4%	40%	56%
Attentive during tasks	8%	34%	58%
Attentive when read to	3%	47%	50%
Shares what they have learned	7%	40%	53%
Willing to share with other children	2%	47%	51%
Plays well with other children	2%	50%	48%
Knows different colors and shapes		56%	44%
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	3%	40%	57%
Likes to listen to stories	2%	56%	42%
Willingness to separate from parents	2%	54%	45%

■ Did Not Improve ■ Already Had Skill ■ Improved

n=244

What did teachers report about students who attended the Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs?

METHOD. In the Fall of 2017, all Kindergarten teachers who had 2017 Jump Start to Kindergarten students in their classroom were asked to fill out a survey about the overall level of proficiency of students who attended the Jump Start to Kindergarten program compared to those that did not. Three of the four participating districts used the survey. Participation in the teacher survey was equal across the three districts, each district made up roughly 33% of the surveys. Of the 51 teachers that were surveyed, 5 taught Jump Start to Kindergarten this year, and 46 (90%) did not.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teachers reported high overall proficiency in all areas, including separating from parent/caregivers and following routines and procedures right away. Teachers consistently reported that Jump Start to Kindergarten students were either more proficient or that there was no difference in skill level, when compared to their peers that did not attend the program.

Category	Less Proficient	No Difference	More Proficient
Separating for parents/caregivers	2%	55%	43%
Following routines and procedures right away	14%	45%	41%
Following directions	14%	53%	33%
Attention Span	18%	53%	29%

n=51

■ Less Proficient ■ No Difference ■ More Proficient

Extended Learning

RATIONALE

The Extended Learning programs developed on the premise that providing academic opportunities and instruction during out of school time (after school or during the summer) will 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 provided additional 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.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

DC WEST COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: Students were provided instruction in reading, writing and math during this 3-week program for students in grades K-11 (n=46). 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. Forty-seven percent of students in this program qualified for FRL status.

COMPLETELY KIDS: Completely KIDS exists to stop the cycle of poverty by providing educational and supportive services to children and families so that they can overcome barriers to their success. The mission of Completely KIDS is to educate and empower kids and families to create a safe, healthy, successful, and connected community. Eighty-five students were served in this before school program located at Field Club elementary. The strongest focus in the before school program is on academic enrichment (successful KIDS). Programming focused largely on building reading and math skills through games and other fun activities during the before school program. In addition to the academic programming, health, safety, and family engagement activities and resources were incorporated into the programming.

ELKHORN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: Jump Start to Reading provided students at-risk for reading failure three weeks of intense reading intervention. Students (n=90) 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. Twelve percent of students qualified for FRL. The DRA reading assessment was used to measure student progress.

MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS: Summer programming in Millard was provided at one site for students from ten elementary buildings for three weeks. Students invited to participate in the program were those qualifying for free/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=191). The goal of the program was to reduce/prevent learning loss occurring from spring to fall. Students qualifying for FRL status made up 55% of the students attending. AIMSweb reading and math assessments were used to measure student progress.

SPRINGFIELD-PLATTEVIEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: Students targeted for this school year program (43 weeks and 41 weeks) received individual/small group math instruction at two elementary buildings. Students (n=12) 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. Third grade was the level targeted for this

limited intervention program. NWEA MAP data were used to measure student progress. One-third of the students participating in this intervention qualified for FRL.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 424 students were served through extended learning programming across five sites. Of the students participating in the extended learning programs, 53% qualified for free/reduced lunch status.

OUTCOMES

PARENT OUTCOMES

Method. A total of 106 parents completed the survey (return rate of approximately 25%) 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 WITH THE HOURS AND PROGRAM STAFF.
Areas for improvement are both in the area of communication with parents.

Satisfied with Hours	4.66
Staff are Excellent	4.62
Satisfied with Length	4.56
Overall Satisfaction	4.49
Child Enjoyed the Program	4.36
My child will be more successful in school	4.32
Informed about my child's progress	3.91
Satisfied with level of communication	3.7

n=106

Parents overall reported high levels of satisfactions 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 parent satisfaction with the hours of the program (M=4.66). Overall satisfaction was high (M=4.49). The results of this survey are consistent with previous years' results. Parents have typically been satisfied with the overall programming, but continue to ask for more communication about their child.

"I have seen a huge jump in my son's reading ability. It is so amazing."

"All the teachers really seemed to care and love what they do."

"My son was excited about the topics they were reading about. All the science topics engaged him."

.....parents of students

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. Several parents commented on how teachers were willing to differentiate the instruction for their child and used a variety of material and activities to improve student engagement. Parents commented on their child's excitement and enthusiasm for wanting to attend programming. One parent commented, "My son was excited about attending/participating in math club. He reminded me weekly." Another parent wrote, "My daughter enjoyed going to class every day. She shared what her teacher did with her in class and was eager to please her and me".

Improvements suggested by parents included more communication about student progress and/or things that could be worked on at home. Frequent comments from parents indicated appreciation for materials, books and activities that were sent home for practice and for parents to use with their child.

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 outcome data, 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.

Student outcome data will be reported as an addendum when released from school districts.

LEARNING COMMUNITY ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY: 2016-2017

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA: EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Intensive Early Childhood Services	Parent University	Future Teacher Clinical Training	Childcare Director 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 meaningful gains in vocabulary and school readiness skills • By spring, more children demonstrated executive functioning and social skills in the average range.	• 161 parents were enrolled with majority representing low income & minority populations • Parents participated in 130 course sessions which focused on parenting, school success, leadership, and life skills • Parents demonstrated substantial meaningful gains in parent-child interaction skills. • Family liaisons supported parents to reach their goals and decrease stress.	• 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 students to continue their education	• 10 center-based and one home-based director participated in the program. • Teachers instructional practices improved with strengths in the emotional support of children. • Directors reported that the training and coaching were highly valuable and resulted in changes in their practices within their childcare centers.

Learning Community Center of South Omaha: Family Learning

Family Learning	Parenting Outcomes	Student Outcomes
• 336 families were enrolled • 1015 children; 615 (0-8 years of age) • High levels of satisfaction were found with the English classes, Boys Town offerings and Educational Navigators • Parents reported increased levels of school and community engagement	• Parents across 2 cohorts showed significant improvement in parenting practices after completing Boys Town Common Sense Parenting • Parents demonstrated high levels of sensitivity and physical interaction with their children	

School District Pilot Programs

Instructional Coaching	Jump Start to Kindergarten	Extended Learning
24 schools, 555 teachers, and 9238 students were served across 3 districts - Teachers demonstrated gains in instructional practices and high levels of classroom organization. - Majority of the teachers rated the coaching experience positively.	588 kindergarten eligible students enrolled in Jump Start across 4 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. - Kindergarten teachers consistently reported JSK students had skills equal to or more proficient than peers not attending the program.	424 students were enrolled in Extended Learning with 53% with FRL. 4 districts and 1 community agency participated. - Parents were highly satisfied with the program. They reported that their children enjoyed the program and felt the experience would benefit them in school.

Learning Community: 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. Coaching is particularly effective for new teachers.

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

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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.	, B. (2002). t 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)		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)

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Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Executive Summary

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, a collaboration between the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, and the superintendents of the districts that make up the Learning Community, offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing income- and race-based achievement gaps of young children from birth through Grade 3. The plan was developed with the superintendents of the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties in response to legislation (LB 585) passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 2013 directing the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact an early childhood program created by the metro Omaha superintendents for young children living in high concentrations of poverty.

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan reflects research about young children's development and learning. All work undertaken as part of the plan revolves around six evidence-based ideas and is based on three interconnected levels of implementation through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals can strengthen efforts targeted at reducing opportunity and achievement gaps in early childhood.

THREE LEVELS OF IMPLEMENTATION
1. Full Implementation of the Birth – Grade 3 Approach
2. Customized Assistance to Districts
3. Professional Development for All

The purpose of this report is to present findings from the second year of evaluation activities, those focused on the implementation of the Superintendents' Plan during the 2016-17 school year. Evaluation activities were designed to address two broad questions about program implementation and changes in key outcomes.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS
1. What has been learned about the implementation of the Superintendents' Plan?
2. What progress has been made in specific processes and outcomes related to Superintendents' Plan components?

A multiple-cohort longitudinal design was used to learn about program implementation and to determine how processes and outcomes related to the Superintendents' Plan components are changing. Two cohorts were constructed: Birth – Age 3 and PreK – Grade 3 (children ages 3 – 8). Current enrollment in the birth – age 3 voluntary home visiting program is 99 families. In the PreK – Grade 3 cohort 3,612 students were enrolled in 184 PreK – Grade 3 classrooms at the 10 full implementation sites (or schools) in the 2016-17 year. This included 679 PreK students enrolled in 29 classrooms and 2,933 students in 155 Kindergarten – Grade 3 classrooms.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND MEASURES

A series of qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and focus groups, provided information about program implementation. Quantitative data collected to inform progress on key processes and outcomes included surveys and formal measures closely associated with the plan's hypotheses and widely used in the early childhood literature.

Qualitative results demonstrated that the Superintendents' Plan was widely embraced by personnel in all of the full implementation schools; awareness of the importance of early childhood beginning at birth and recognition that it extends through Grade 3 were also noted. Similarly, family partnerships and community connections have become a greater emphasis for schools. Those participating in the Superintendents' Plan have developed strong relationships and reported a sense of pride in their participation.

From a quantitative perspective, children are demonstrating age-appropriate levels of development and change in key developmental domains. Gains in vocabulary and general academic skills were observed across all students as well as within subgroups of students stratified according to race/ethnicity and Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) status. Similar gains were observed in social-emotional and executive function skills. Particularly encouraging is the percentage of children progressing beyond the lowest percentile ranks on each measure over time.

Parents/caregivers and families report positive experiences with teachers and schools as well as supportive environments and relatively strong relationships with their children. Parents/caregivers were particularly positive in reporting a collaborative relationship with their child's school. School personnel also report a better understanding of the need to support families in all of their children's school activities.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the plan is operating as expected with all participants reporting positive effects of the plan's components. Strategies for improving key aspects of each component of the plan are already in place. The 2017-18 evaluation will focus on continuous improvement within each component as well as addressing more comprehensively such areas as recruitment for birth – age 3 home visiting and transitions at key points across the continuum. Engaging more families and children in birth – age 3 programming and developing a stronger understanding about transition points will be critical for reaching the ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps.

Introduction

ABOUT THE SUPERINTENDENTS' EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing income- and race-based achievement gaps of 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 in 2013 directing the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact an early childhood program created by the metro Omaha superintendents for young children living in high concentrations of poverty. The plan is financed by a half-cent levy, resulting in annual funding of approximately $2.9 million to be used for this purpose.

In 2013, the superintendents of the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties invited the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to work with them 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 2014-15. Implementation of all plan components was fully launched in summer 2015.

The goal of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is to reduce or eliminate social, cognitive, and achievement gaps among young children living in high concentrations of poverty. By translating research into practice, the plan provides for a 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 present evaluation findings from the second year of implementation of the Superintendents' Plan, which occurred during the 2016-17 school year. A brief overview of the Superintendents' Plan will be provided as a precursor to the evaluation section.

FOUNDATION OF THE PLAN: SIX EVIDENCE-BASED IDEAS

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

Birth – 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 PreK, 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 and take time to reach their full potential. By maintaining continuity through the end of third grade, children are more likely to achieve lasting success in school and beyond.

School as Hub

At the core of the plan is the idea that schools can serve as the focal point 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.

Developmental Change

We are committed to helping children negotiate the ongoing biological, neurological, psychological, and social pathways of development by which they evolve from a newborn infant to a competent and confident third-grader. Sustained learning does not 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 available over time.

Parent and Family Support

Parents and families are key to children's success and our most powerful allies in supporting and enhancing children's strengths and abilities. But families know too well the personal stress and toxicity that can accompany poverty and social inequality. Active family engagement and support are central to our work and to children's growth.

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.

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. This requires a long-term, comprehensive commitment—one that can lead to a lifetime of accomplishment and fulfillment. Persistence of effort yields persistence of effect.

THREE LEVELS OF 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.

Full Implementation of the Birth – Grade 3 Approach

In this intensive level of implementation, schools serve as hubs that connect young children and their families to a continuum of high-quality, comprehensive, and continuous early childhood education and community services from birth through Grade 3. 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.

Customized Assistance to Districts

This implementation option offers school districts focused assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs related to birth – Grade 3 policies and programming. Customized technical assistance provides districts with access to local 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 – Grade 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. Professional Development 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. Community-based

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 – Grade 3.

Evaluation activities are specific to each of the three interconnected levels of implementation in the Superintendents' Plan and will be reported below. Design, data collection, and analysis was led jointly by three University of Nebraska units: the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Evaluation of the Full Implementation of the Birth – Grade 3 School as Hub Approach

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

For the 2016-17 school year, evaluation activities were designed to address two broad questions about program implementation and changes in key outcomes:

1. What has been learned about the implementation of the Superintendents' Plan?
2. What progress has been made in specific processes and outcomes related to Superintendents' Plan components?

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Full implementation of School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3 is not a single program but a comprehensive, school-wide approach that leads to significant shifts in traditional school practices. All teachers, staff, and children in birth – Grade 3 participate in the program, including the home visitor and family facilitator who have been hired by each full implementation site to provide early childhood parenting supports and to promote family-school-community partnerships.

In the 2016-17 year, 3,612 students were enrolled in 184 PreK through Grade 3 classrooms at the 10 full implementation sites. This included 679 PreK students enrolled in 29 classrooms and 2,933 students in 155 Kindergarten through third grade classrooms. At the time of reporting, 183 children had enrolled in home visiting.

TABLE 1 | SCHOOL AND DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS: FULL IMPLEMENTATION SCHOOLS

District Schools	District and School Population	% Free/Reduced Price Lunch	% Minority Population	% At or Above Proficient Reading	% At or Above Proficient Math
Bellevue	**10,076**	**38**	**28**	**81**	**72**
Bellaire	292	72	38	78	67
DC West	**836**	**32**	**11**	**83**	**75**
DC West	336	39	12	89	93
Millard	**23,702**	**18**	**19**	**89**	**82**
Cody	348	46	31	78	74
Sandoz	381	47	49	83	70
Omaha	**51,928**	**73**	**70**	**67**	**54**
Gomez Heritage	865	90	91	77	72
Liberty	731	91	86	65	53
Mount View	414	91	92	62	52
Pinewood	247	72	64	76	59
Ralston	**3,179**	**54**	**42**	**75**	**63**
Karen Western	148	78	57	79	65
Meadows	273	45	38	90	71
Mockingbird	388	73	64	73	63
Westside	**6,106**	**32**	**25**	**83**	**79**
Westbrook	509	52	40	77	70

METHODOLOGY

Design

A multiple-cohort longitudinal design was used to learn about program implementation and to determine how process and outcomes related to the Superintendents' Plan components are changing. Two cohorts were constructed. The Birth – Age 3 Cohort consists of children ages 0 – 3 and the PreK – Grade 3 Cohort consists of children ages 3 – 8. This report presents baseline data for the Birth – Age 3 Cohort; the PreK – Grade 3 Cohort includes baseline data and an initial follow-up point of data collection.

Sample and Participant Characteristics

The cohort design required distinct processes of recruitment and sampling of children and families. These processes are described by cohort.

Birth – Age 3 Cohort

School personnel identified families for participation in the voluntary birth – age 3 home visiting program. Families enrolled chose whether or not to enroll in the evaluation. At the time of reporting, 183 children had enrolled in home visiting. Due to attrition and transition to PreK, current enrollment in the home visiting program is 99 families. Of those, 70 families and 78 children enrolled in the evaluation from April 6, 2016, through May 31, 2017. Table 2 provides a breakdown of program and evaluation enrollment numbers by district and school.

TABLE 2 | BIRTH – AGE 3 ENROLLMENT BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL (AS OF MAY 31, 2017)

District	School	Families in Evaluation	Children in Evaluation	Families in Program
Bellevue	Bellaire	5	6	7
DC West	DC West	8	9	12
Millard	Cody	5	6	12
	Sandoz	5	5	7
Omaha	Gomez Heritage	11	11	13
	Liberty	11	12	14
	Mount View	5	5	5
	Pinewood	13	15	15
Ralston	Karen Western Meadows Mockingbird	3	3	6
Westside	Westbrook	4	6	8
Totals		70	78	99

The age of children enrolled in the evaluation of the Birth – Age 3 Cohort ranges from 0 to 30.7 months at baseline (average age = 9.60 months; SD = 9.93; n = 71). Nearly 49% of children are male, 38% Hispanic, and 18% African-American. As reported by the primary caregiver, 92% of children have a regular health care provider and 17% have special health needs (e.g., allergies, eczema, asthma). Approximately 67% of families are English-speaking, 62% live in coupled households, and 75% receive public benefits. Over one-third of primary caregivers report an annual income of $17,000 or less, 48% do not have formal educational experience beyond high school, and more than half report worries about a shortage of food. Almost one-fourth of primary caregivers reported depressive symptoms. In contrast, only 1% report high levels of overall stress and 47% rate their own health as very good/excellent.

PreK – Grade 3 Cohort

The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort consists of a random sample of children collected from PreK and Kindergarten classrooms within each participating school during the 2015-16 school year. This sampling process resulted in 222 PreK through Kindergarten students participating in the evaluation study with parent consent. The retention rate of students over the first year of the evaluation was 95% (211 students). In the spring of 2017, the loss of an additional five students left 206 students remaining in the evaluation (46 students in PreK and 160 in Kindergarten through first grade). Table 3 provides a breakdown of children sampled within each school.

The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort consists of an equal number of males and females and a substantial percentage (69%) of students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL). A diverse sample of students is represented, with the largest proportion being Hispanic (37%), white (34%), and black (18%). There is also a notable percentage of students whose home language is Spanish (24%) or both Spanish and English (10%). Approximately 16% of children were eligible for early childhood special education services.

TABLE 3 | PREK – GRADE 3 EVALUATION ENROLLMENT BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL (AS OF BASELINE)

District	School	PreK Classrooms	K-3 Classrooms	PreK Children Sampled	K Children Sampled
Bellevue	Bellaire	1	8	4	8
DC West	DC West	2	14	8	15
Millard	Cody	4	8	11	8
	Sandoz	3	12	10	11
Omaha	Gomez Heritage	3	35	9	22
	Liberty	4	23	15	19
	Mount View	3	9	8	5
	Pinewood	2	7	8	9
Ralston	Karen Western	1	7	1	7
	Meadows	1	8	4	8
	Mockingbird	2	12	6	11
Westside	Westbrook	3	12	4	11
Totals		29	155	88	134

Evaluation Approach and Measures

A series of qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and focus groups, provided information about program implementation. Site visit observations were completed at all full implementation sites, some on multiple occasions. Retrospective interviews were completed with administrators, educational facilitators, and program specialists at all full implementation sites. Focus groups provided follow-up on information gained in the site visits and retrospective interviews. Four focus groups addressed the following topics: (1) establishing connections across the birth-Grade 3 continuum; (2) re-envisioning the School as Hub; (3) strategies for strengthening family partnerships; and (4) the evolution of the role of the family facilitator. Focus groups included four to six participants specifically recruited for their ability to inform investigators about the target topic.

Quantitative data collected to inform progress on key processes and outcomes included surveys and formal measures closely associated with the plan's hypotheses and widely used in the early childhood literature. Data collected from home visitors and teachers concerned the quality of home visiting and classroom environments. Family measures focused on understanding the family's social support system and the interaction of caregivers with children. Child measures focused on learning, general academic and language skills, and socio-emotional skills and executive function.

All measures used in the evaluation are briefly described in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Data Collection Process and Analysis

Data collection processes included direct assessment with evaluation staff, formalized coding of videos, and information gathered by home visitors. Baseline data collection for the Birth – Age 3 Cohort included a total of 78 children and 77 primary caregivers prior to the completion of the 2016-17 evaluation period. The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort baseline data (Time 1) were collected in spring 2016 for all school districts except for Omaha Public Schools (OPS), whose baseline data were gathered in fall 2016. Time 2 data were collected at all schools in spring 2017. Thematic analyses of qualitative data and descriptive analyses of quantitative data were used to summarize outcome data. Subgroup analyses examined differential progress for groups based on poverty (free/reduced lunch and paid lunch), home language status (English, Spanish, and dual English and Spanish), and race and ethnicity (black, white, and Hispanic).

Implementation Insights: Qualitative Findings

The dynamics of the Superintendents' Plan implementation were examined through a qualitative data collection process. The following themes summarize progress identified in key processes of implementing the birth – Grade 3 approach across the 10 full implementation school sites along with lessons learned about full implementation.

PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF A BIRTH THROUGH GRADE 3 CONTINUUM
All school sites are implementing the core components of the birth – Grade 3 approach, with most full implementation school sites reporting progress in connecting these components into a comprehensive continuum of early learning and family engagement supports starting at birth or even prenatally. Input from evaluation participants noted a number of implementation strengths:

- Use of a structured birth – age 3 home visiting curriculum has supported home visitors in providing consistency in implementation of home visits and parent-child playgroups across school sites. Parenting supports developed by the PreK – Grade 3 family facilitator at each school site have engaged families in parent-child playgroups and in a book bag exchange for 3- to 5-year-olds. Support for children and families transitioning into preschool and Kindergarten has been strengthened by strengthening teamwork between the birth – age 3 home visitor and PreK – Grade 3 family facilitator.

- Buffett Institute educational facilitators have provided substantial support to PreK – Grade 3 teachers, especially around the implementation of effective gap-closing instructional practices. These practices highlight five dimensions of instructional quality: (1) classroom relationships and interactions; (2) whole-child development; (3) language and communication; (4) intellectually rigorous learning experiences; and (5) strengths-based responsiveness to home culture and language.

- Implementation of home visiting, parent-child interaction groups, and other programming for families with very young children has shifted how most school sites approach family partnerships in general. Administrators report that staff and families increasingly view school as a place for the "whole family." Prior to the Superintendents' Plan, parents with very young children "wouldn't have thought to come to school and we wouldn't have thought to invite them." Similarly, having dedicated roles of home visitor and family facilitator has opened up "new trusting avenues for family engagement" that are enhancing home-school-community partnerships overall.

COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING AS IMPORTANT ENABLING FACTORS

Site visits, interviews, and focus groups identified collaborative learning and networking as pivotal factors in promoting full implementation of the Superintendents' Plan. This seemed to be particularly important given the need to integrate new staff roles and birth – Grade 3 practices within the ongoing work of participating elementary schools. Evaluation participants noted several dimensions of collaboration and networking most frequently:

- Strong, well-established professional relationships between Buffett Institute Superintendents' Plan staff and school personnel, including home visitors, family facilitators, teachers, and administrators, were cited as providing a necessary and valued resource in co-facilitating and advancing implementation of the innovative birth – Grade 3 approach.

- The birth – Grade 3 team put in place at each full implementation site provides a mechanism for planning, problem-solving, and improving implementation of the birth – Grade 3 system of supports. Consistent participants at each school's monthly birth – Grade 3 team meeting include the principal, home visitor, family facilitator, educational facilitator, and Buffett Institute specialists. In the majority of schools, these teams have shown themselves to be essential in clarifying and blending staff roles and responsibilities in order to provide greater quality and continuity for children and families across the birth – Grade 3 continuum.

- The Buffett Institute staff facilitate regular cross-school/cross-district networking meetings for home visitors, family facilitators, and school administrators from full implementation school sites. These "like-role" networking meetings give these pioneering full implementation staff opportunities to share promising implementation practices from their school sites and to work collaboratively to increase their understanding of the birth – Grade 3 approach. Observations of networking meetings revealed strong collegiality and productive working relationships among participants. Interviews indicated that participants consider these cross-school opportunities for collaboration to be one of their most rewarding learning opportunities as partners in the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of an initiative as comprehensive and multidimensional as the Superintendents' Plan is a process that takes place over time and requires a focus on continuous improvement. Findings from the qualitative data collection revealed a number of areas for improvements:

- Much of the effort of the first years of implementation was devoted to putting birth – age 5 components in place where none had existed before (e.g., home visiting, parent-child interaction groups, book bag exchanges, forging new relationships with families, connecting with community resources, etc.). Now that these family components are more solidly in place, more attention needs to be placed on extending targeted parenting supports and family engagement opportunities across the entire birth – Grade 3 continuum.

- The birth – age 3 home visiting program across school sites has benefited from the guidance of a structured curriculum. The preschool extension of this structured curriculum has proved to be less robust than anticipated. The identification of a high-quality research-based preschool curriculum to align with the birth – age 3 home visiting curriculum and to guide parent-child engagement for 3- to 5-year-olds will further strengthen the birth – age 5 components in full implementation school sites.

- The quality of PreK – Grade 3 classroom instructional practices is advancing across full implementation school sites. The importance of alignment of PreK through Grade 3 curriculum and instruction has not yet emerged at the forefront of conversations with the majority of administrators and educational facilitators. As quality continues to progress, attention must also be turned to continuity of instruction for children.

- As full implementation of the Superintendents' Plan began, the expectation was that most children transitioning out of birth – age 3 home visiting would move into school-based PreK classes. Although districts are making progress in expanding these transition opportunities, many children participate in community-based preschools or child care programs before transitioning into 4-year-old PreK or Kindergarten at the full implementation schools. An important step in implementation efforts will be outreach

and collaboration with key community-based preschools serving the families in each school site's enrollment area. This collaboration should target ways for the school and community-based educators to work together in advancing both the quality and continuity of preschool children's learning experiences.

- An important challenge reported by a number of administrators and educational facilitators was the alignment of Superintendents' Plan goals and activities with other initiatives taking place in schools and districts. Now that work is well underway at all sites, greater attention can be shifted to integrating birth – Grade 3 efforts more fully and explicitly into each school's site plan, staffing structures, and professional learning systems.

Home Visiting for Birth – Age 3: Quantitative Data at Baseline

QUALITY OF HOME VISITING

Home visitors' effectiveness in engaging the parent/caregiver and child during home visiting activities was assessed using the *Home Visiting Rating Scales* (HOVRS; Roggman et al., 2006). Data collected on an annual basis from up to three families per home visitor yielded scores on the process, quality, and effectiveness of the home visit. Twenty-seven home visits were studied and analyzed. Figure 1 provides average scores on each scale in comparison to a program target. Home visitor effectiveness and process quality are slightly below the recommended program target of "5" or "good." (G. Cook, personal communication, Sept. 1, 2017).

FIGURE 1 | HOME VISITING RATING SCALES (HOVRS), N = 27
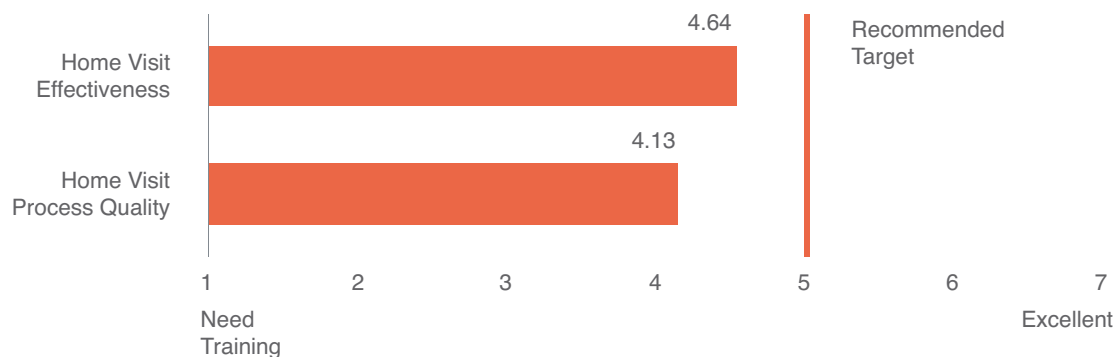
CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Language

The *Preschool Language Scale-5* (PLS-5; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2011) was used to evaluate the language skills of infants and toddlers participating in the home visiting plan. Seventy-two children were assessed during this evaluation period (April 6, 2016 – May 31, 2017). On average, infants and toddlers demonstrated typical language skills in comparison to a normalized scale mean of 100 (auditory comprehension = 98; expressive communication = 102; total language = 101). Very few infants and toddlers demonstrated above-average language skills. Figure 2 displays the percentage of children in each score category by subscale.

FIGURE 2 | PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE SCALE (PLS-5), N = 48

	Below Average	Average	Above Average
Total Language	15%	68%	17%
Auditory Comprehension	17%	68%	15%
Expressive Communication	13%	68%	19%

■ Below Average   ■ Average   ■ Above Average
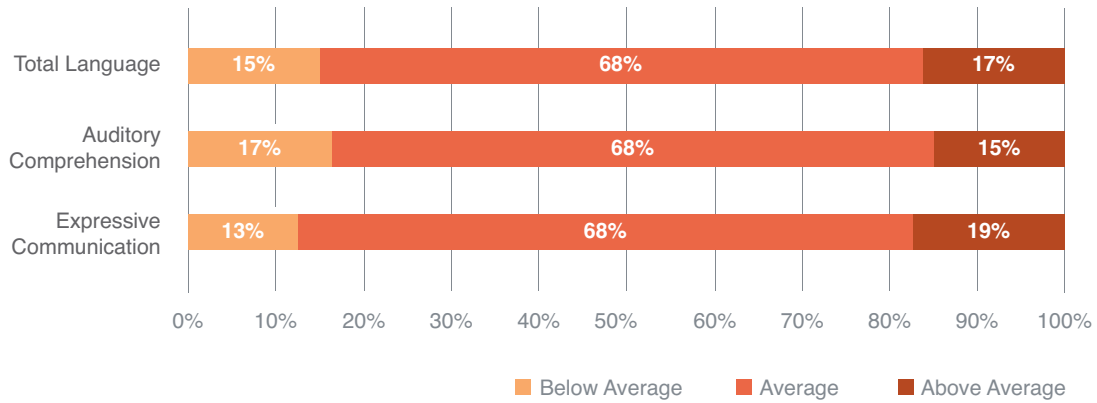
Social-Emotional

The *Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment* (ITSEA) was used to gather comprehensive information from caregivers about children's development across two broad domains: competence and dysregulation. (Dysregulation refers, among other things, to difficulty eating, sleeping, expressing emotions, and reaction to sensation.) The ITSEA was completed for 48 children meeting the criterion of being at least 12 months of age. Original scores were categorized according to their risk of a deficit or delay relative to their peers in the development of social-emotional competencies and behavior and emotion regulation. Figure 3 shows the percentage of children in each category for the domains measured. The majority of infants and toddlers were not at risk in either domain with 8% and 13% being of concern in the development of competence and dysregulation, respectively.

FIGURE 3 | INFANT-TODDLER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASSESSMENT (ITSEA), N = 48

	Of Concern	Normal	Above Normal
Competence	8%	83%	8%
Dysregulation	13%	68%	19%

■ Of Concern   ■ Normal   ■ Above Normal
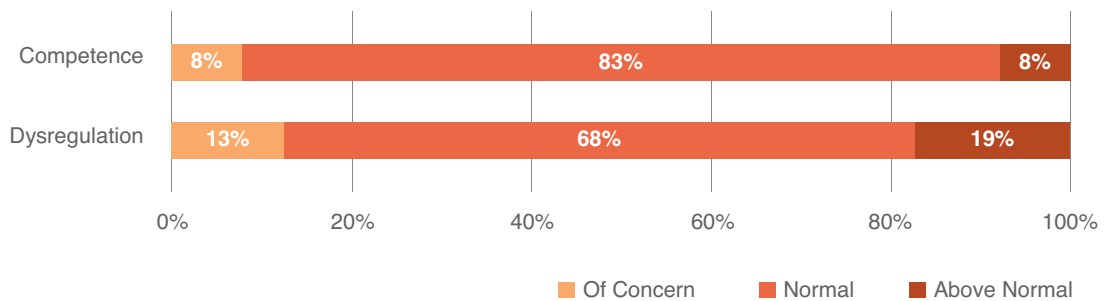
FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family Support

The *FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey* (PFS) (FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2011) was used to examine families' perceptions of social and concrete support. Parents or caregivers of 78 children competed the FRIENDS PFS survey. As shown in Figure 4, a very small percentage of Birth – Age 3 Cohort families report receiving low levels of support in both domains.

FIGURE 4 | PROTECTIVE FACTORS SURVEY (PFS), N = 78
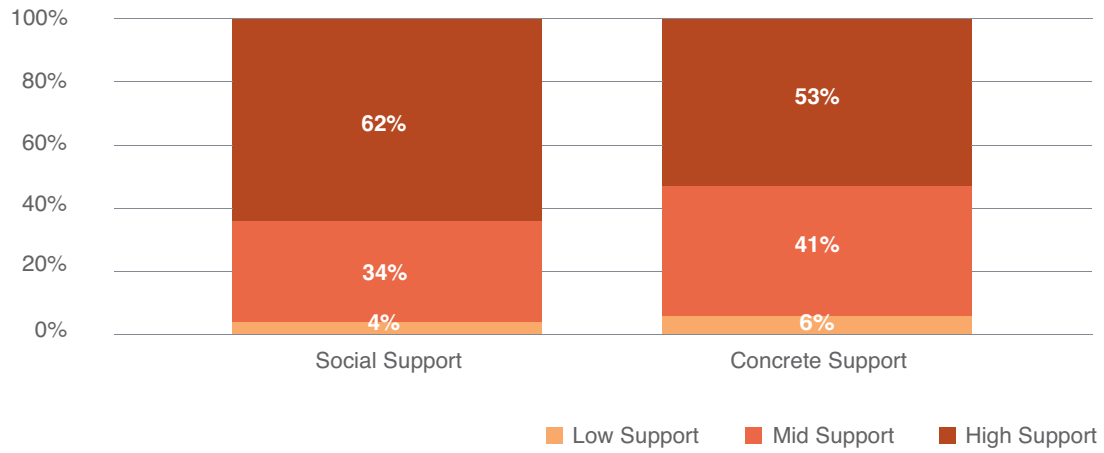
Caregiver-Child Interaction

The *Keys to Interactive Parenting* (KIPS; Comfort & Gordon, 2011) was used to evaluate parenting/caregiving behaviors during interactions with children. Scores on the KIPS were obtained for 78 parents or caregivers across three scales: (1) Building Relationships, (2) Promoting Learning, and (3) Supporting Confidence. As indicated in Figure 5, over half of caregivers demonstrate high quality in building relationships with their children while 63% of parents/caregivers showed low or medium quality in supporting their children's confidence.

FIGURE 5 | KEYS TO INTERACTIVE PARENTING (KIPS), N = 78
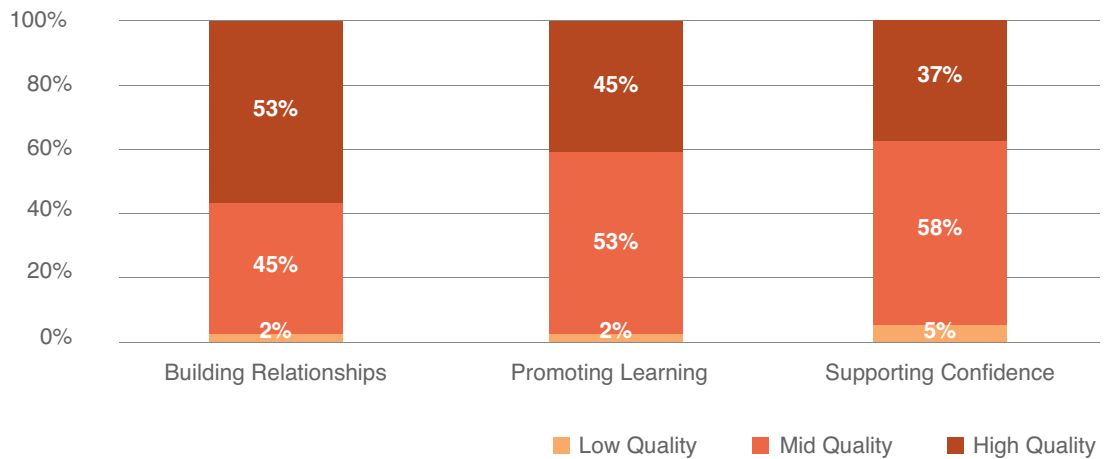
High-Quality Preschool For 3- and 4-Year-Olds: Quantitative Data

QUALITY OF PREK TEACHER PRACTICES

The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS; LaParo, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012) was used to evaluate the quality of participating classrooms. The CLASS has three dimensions: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. CLASS scores for 22 PreK classrooms at Time 1 and Time 2 are displayed in Figure 6. PreK teachers showed consistent improvement across subscales with the greatest gains coming in the area of emotionally supportive environments.

FIGURE 6 | PREK CLASS SCORES TIME 1 AND TIME 2, N = 22
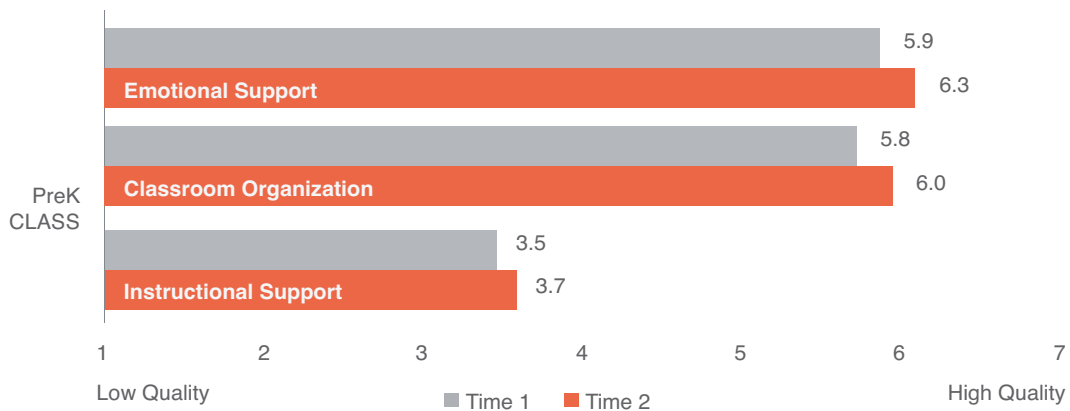
The *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS) (Pianta, 1992) was also administered in order to assess teacher-child relationships, another important dimension of high-quality classroom environments. The STRS was completed for 45 PreK children. Overall, teachers report high levels of closeness with low levels of conflict with their children.

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Language

The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) was administered to 45 children at Time 1 and Time 2. Results (Figure 7) indicate that PreK students' receptive vocabulary skills improved from Time 1 (m=88, SD=19) to Time 2 (m=94, SD=17). On average, students gained six points, yet were still below the national average. Of note, the percentage of students in the bottom 20th percentile decreased by 16%.

FIGURE 7 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: PREK RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*
Overall Receptive Vocabulary Skills: Time 1										
	22	49%	9	20%	3	7%	7	15%	4	9%
Overall Receptive Vocabulary Skills: Time 2										
	15	33%	10	22%	8	18%	7	16%	5	11%

Academic Achievement

The *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 3rd Edition Brief Form* (KTEA-3 Brief; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2015) was administered to 31 children at Time 1 and Time 2 and revealed positive results. Children's overall academic skills improved from Time 1 (m=84, SD=17) to Time 2 (m=88, SD=16). In addition, 13% more students scored above the 41st percentile at Time 2 on academic skills and 6% moved out of the lower 20th percentile.

FIGURE 8 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: PREK ACADEMIC SKILLS

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*
Overall Academic Skills: Time 1										
	18	58%	8	26%	3	10%	0	0%	2	7%
Overall Academic Skills: Time 2										
	16	52%	6	19%	4	13%	3	10%	2	7%

Social-Emotional

The *Behavioral and Emotional Screening System Third Edition* (BASC-3 BESS; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015) was administered to 45 children at Time 1 and Time 2. Results indicate that approximately 20% of children are demonstrating elevated risk in adaptive and social-emotional skills at both time points.

Executive Function

The *Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool Version* (BRIEF-P; Gioia, Espy, & Isquith, 2003) was administered to 45 children at Time 1 and Time 2. Results found the majority of PreK students were within the typical range for executive function skills at Time 1 (m=82%) and Time 2 (78%). "Executive Function" refers to the ability to control inappropriate behaviors or responses, to easily move from one task or activity to another, and to make use of short-term memory.

FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family Support

The FRIENDS PFS was completed by parents or caregivers of 44 PreK children. Parents of PreK children reported high access to concrete and social supports at both time points, with ratings improving at Time 2.

Child-Parent Relationship

The *Child Parent Relationship Scale* (CPRS; Pianta, 1992) was completed by parents of 44 PreK children. Parents or caregivers of PreK children report high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict with their children. These ratings remained stable over time.

Aligned Kindergarten – Grade 3: Quantitative Data

QUALITY OF K-3 TEACHER PRACTICES

CLASS scores were obtained for 149 K-3 classrooms at Time 1 and Time 2. As indicated in Figure 9, K-3 teachers displayed improvement across subscales with the greatest gain coming in the area of instructional support.

FIGURE 9 | CLASS SCORES (K — GRADE 1), N = 149
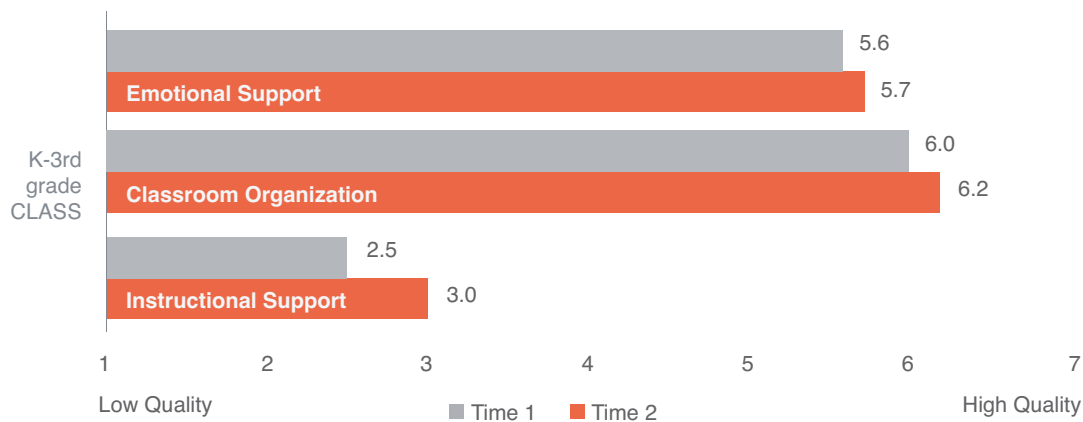
The *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS; Pianta, 1992) was also administered to assess the teacher-child relationship of 161 teachers in Kindergarten and first grade. As reported for PreK children, teachers report high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict with children.

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Language

The PPVT-4 was administered to 161 children in Kindergarten and first grade. The results demonstrate that, on average, children made only small gains in language skills from Time 1 (mean=99, SD=17) to Time 2 (mean=101, SD=16). However, 6% of the children moved out of the lower 20th percentile.

Figure 10 displays subgroup analyses of poverty, home language status, and race/ethnicity. All groups either made small gains in receptive vocabulary or showed stability. Noticeable differences were present between subgroups of children at Time 1 and Time 2. These gaps ranged from a low of 16 points at Time 2 between children eligible for FRL and their paid lunch peers to 19 points between children whose home language was Spanish or English.

FIGURE 10 | ANALYSIS OF K – GRADE 1 RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY BY GROUP
CHARACTERISTICS
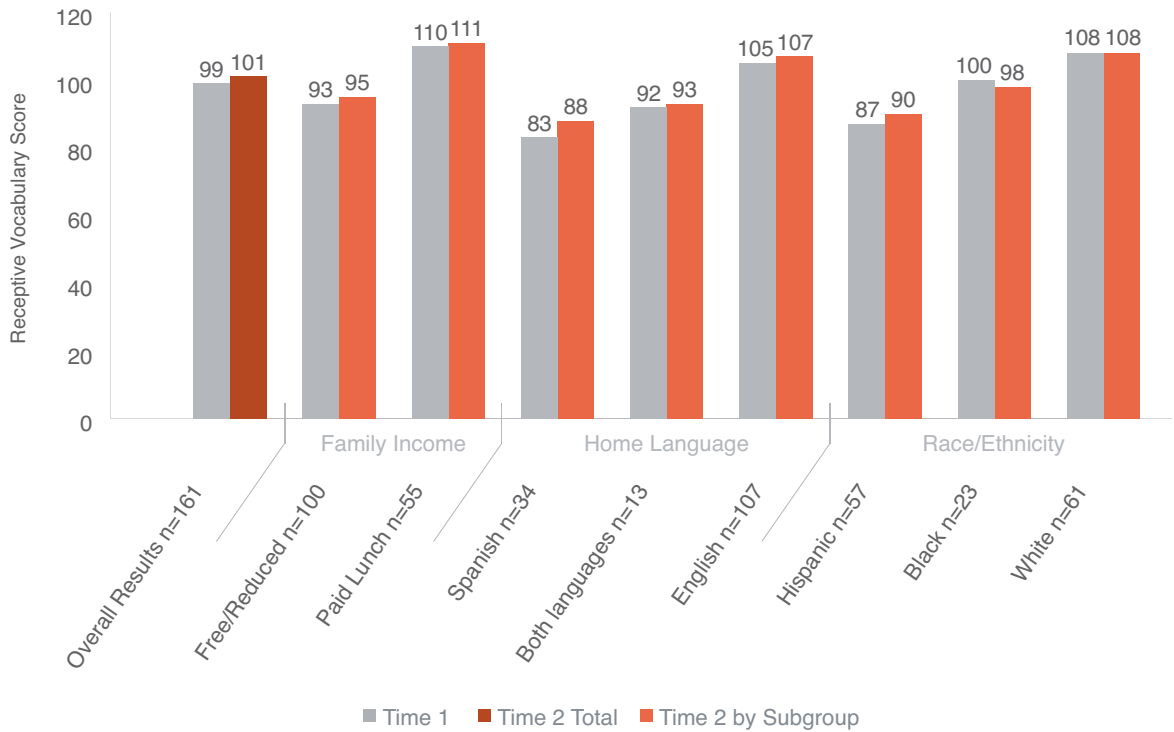
Academic Achievement

The KTEA-3 Brief was administered to 128 children in Kindergarten and first grade. The results (Figure 11) show that children made gains in overall academic skills from Time 1 (mean=91, SD=19) to Time 2 (mean=97, SD=18). Likewise, 16% more students were above the 41st percentile and 14% fewer were in the lowest 20th percentile.

FIGURE 11 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: K – GRADE 1 ACADEMIC
SKILLS

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*
Overall Academic Skills: Time 1	49	38%	29	23%	13	10%	28	22%	9	7%
Overall Academic Skills: Time 2	31	24%	27	21%	23	18%	29	23%	18	14%

Figure 12 displays subgroup analyses of family income, home language status, and race/ethnicity. All groups of children made gains in overall academic skills from Time 1 to Time 2. In general, the largest gains were made by minority children and those whose home language was other than English. The only exception was slightly smaller gains by children eligible for FRL as compared to their paid lunch peers.

FIGURE 12 | ANALYSIS OF K – GRADE 1 ACADEMIC SKILLS BY GROUP CHARACTERISTICS
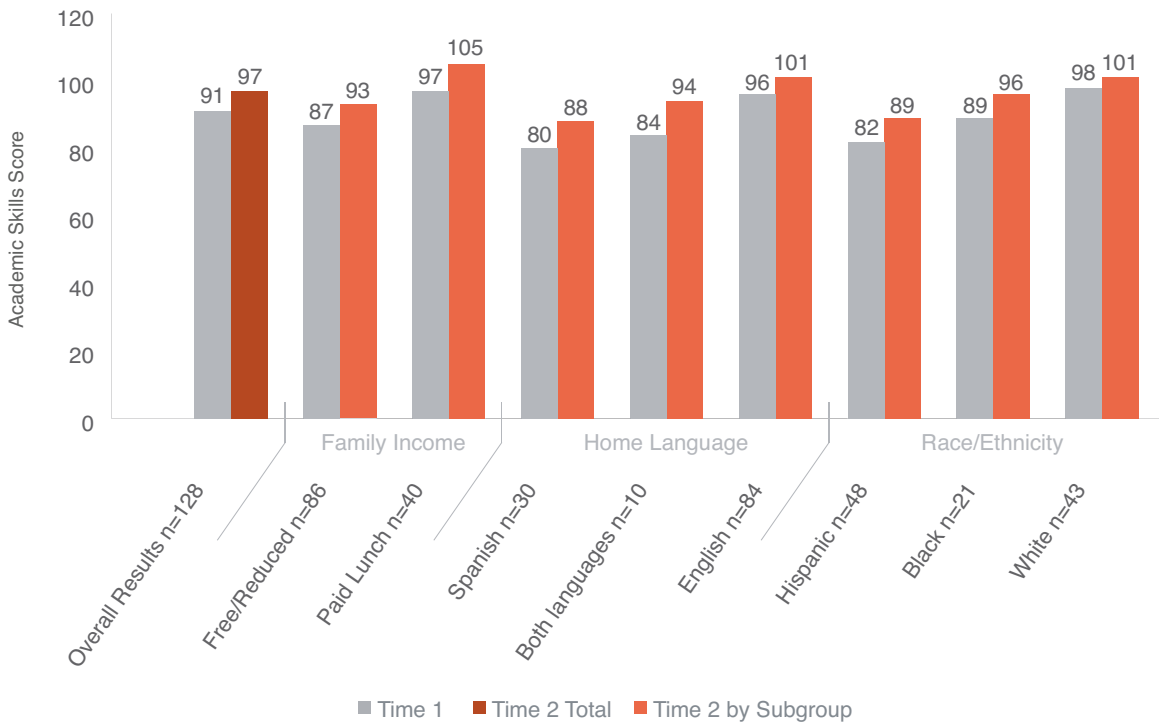
Social-Emotional

The BASC-3 BESS was administered to 162 children in Kindergarten and first grade. As was the case with PreK children, results indicate nearly 20% of Kindergarten and first grade children demonstrate elevated risk in adaptive and social-emotional skills at both time points.

Executive Function

The *Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory* (CEFI, Naglieri & Goldstein, 2012) was completed by teachers for 128 children in Kindergarten and first grade. The results (Figure 13) indicated executive function skills remained stable from Time 1 (m=101, SD=15) to Time 2 (m=101, SD 15).

FIGURE 13 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: K – GRADE 1 EXECUTIVE
FUNCTION SKILLS

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Overall Executive Function Skills: Time 1	28	22%	20	16%	23	18%	32	25%	25	19%
Overall Executive Function Skills: Time 2	25	20%	28	22%	15	12%	29	23%	31	23%

FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family Support

The FRIENDS PFS was completed by parents of 154 Kindergarten and first grade children. Consistent with findings for parents of PreK children, parents of Kindergarten and first grade children report high access to both concrete and social supports. These ratings were generally stable across time with a slight improvement in the area of social supports.

Child-Parent Relationship

The CPRS was completed by 153 parents of Kindergarten and first grade children. Consistent with findings for PreK parents, parents of Kindergarten and first grade students report high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict that remain stable over time.

Summary

This report presents findings from the 2016-17 implementation evaluation of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. Two broad questions were posed in order to gain a better understanding of how the Superintendents' Plan was implemented and to provide information about any changes in outcomes related to key components of the plan. This summary will cover general implementation findings, child and family outcomes, and recommendations concerning quality improvement followed by a brief conclusion.

Implementation of the Superintendents' Plan was widely embraced by personnel in all of the full implementation schools. This was evident by staff and administrators' heightened awareness of the importance of early childhood beginning at birth and recognition that it extends through Grade 3. It was also seen in their commitment to the concept of School as Hub. Home visitors, family facilitators, and educational facilitators have become important staff members, integrated into each of the schools. Similarly, family partnerships and community connections have become a focal point for schools. The participants in the Superintendents' Plan have developed strong relationships and reported a sense of pride in their participation.

Children are demonstrating age-appropriate levels of development and change in key developmental domains. Gains in vocabulary and general academic skills were observed across all students as well as within subgroups of students stratified according to race/ethnicity, home language, and free or reduced lunch status. Ongoing efforts will be required to reduce these disparities further. Similar gains were observed in social-emotional and executive function skills. Particularly encouraging is the percentage of children progressing beyond the lowest percentile ranks on each measure over time. Parents/caregivers and families report positive experiences with teachers and schools, supportive environments, and relatively strong relationships with their children. Parents/caregivers were particularly positive in reporting a collaborative relationship with their child's school. School personnel also report a better understanding of the need to support families in all of their children's school activities.

Home visitor effectiveness is approaching the recommended program target. Continued support for improvement and coaching will be provided to advance the quality of home visiting. Classroom teachers created emotionally supportive environments and positive classroom organization. Improvement in all areas of classroom interaction was found across time. Continued support of teachers is needed to enhance instructional support strategies within their classroom practices.

CONCLUSION

All full implementation schools have the components for a successful Birth – Grade 3 approach in place. Overall, the plan is operating as expected with all participants reporting positively about the key components of the plan. Strategies for improving key aspects of each component of the plan are already being implemented. The 2017-18 evaluation will focus on continuous improvement within each component and will address more comprehensively such areas as recruitment for birth – age 3 home visiting and transitions at key points across the continuum. Engaging more families and children in birth – age 3 programming and developing a stronger understanding of how to facilitate transition points will be essential for reaching the ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps.

Evaluation of Customized Assistance to Districts

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Customized technical assistance provides Learning Community school districts with access to state and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts intended to affect system-wide early childhood education and services. Customized professional development engages districts in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities for staff by addressing key dimensions of early childhood programming, birth – Grade 3. During the past year, as shown in Figure 14, eight Learning Community school districts received intensive assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs they identified.

FIGURE 14 | FOCUS AREAS AND IMPLEMENTATION: CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE, 2015-17

District	2015-16	2016-17
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 develop 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 PreK – Grade 3 classrooms.	Continue PD plan and classroom implementation. Implement a program evaluation plan to assess impact on classroom practices and student outcomes.
Papillion La Vista	Enhance home visiting conducted by early intervention specialists and PreK – 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 what was learned 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 early 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

Distinct evaluation plans are necessary for each customized assistance plan. Measures are aligned with the goals and expected outcomes for the specific plan and with the overall goals of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. These include child, family, classroom, school and/or district level measures, as well as implementation evidence. Districts are at differing stages in their customized assistance initiatives. Below is an example of the evaluation of one district that has reached a more advanced stage in its implementation of customized assistance.

CASE STUDY: GRETNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan professional development focus of Gretna Public Schools is on strengthening teacher practices and the school environment to support children's social-emotional development using the Nebraska Department of Education Pyramid Model. The Pyramid is an evidence-based model for supporting young children's social competence and preventing and addressing challenging behaviors.

The project includes all five elementary buildings in the district and will eventually involve all K-3 teachers, counselors, resource specialists, and students in those classrooms. Beginning in 2015-16 with the Kindergarten cohort, the professional development and coaching process was expanded to include first grade in 2016-17 and second grade in 2017-18. In 2018-19, the plan will extend through third grade in all elementary school buildings.

TABLE 4 | COHORT DESCRIPTIONS

Cohort	Grades	Classrooms/ Teachers	Students
2015-16	Kindergarten	20	419
2016-17	First	20	430
2017-18	Second	20	433

Project Evaluation

Purpose and Need

Gretna Public Schools educators are seeking evidence that their professional development around the Pyramid Instructional Model with a focus on self-regulation is having an impact on the overall program, the instructional practices used, and children's social-emotional development. The current evaluation addresses the following questions:

1. What was the fidelity to the Pyramid Model for program-wide implementation?
2. Are those students identified as at risk doing better, the same, or worse than a randomly selected sample of children?

Sampling Procedure

In 2016-17, Gretna Public Schools selected 159 children for the evaluation sample across four elementary buildings and 40 Kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The sample represents approximately 20% of the student population in Kindergarten and first grade. Eighty were in Kindergarten (34 males, 37 females) and 79 were in first grade (39 males and 38 females). Gender is unknown for 11 students.

Approximately two students in each 2016-17 first grade classroom were selected by their previous Kindergarten teachers based on observed social and emotional risks. Preschool teachers, who were not involved in the 2016-17 training, also identified students with challenges for the 2016-17 Kindergarten sample.

An additional two to three students were selected using a stratified random selection process through the student information system at ESU 3. Therefore, the final sample included approximately 50% at-risk students (as identified by their previous teacher) and 50% randomly selected students.

Results: What Was the Fidelity to the Pyramid Model for Program-Wide Implementation?

The Measure

The *Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool* (TPOT) measures the implementation of classroom practices specifically related to promoting young children's social-emotional competence and addressing challenging behavior in the preschool classroom. For the purpose of this evaluation, a modified version of the TPOT was administered in both fall and spring by trained, objective professionals in Kindergarten and first grade classrooms during the 2017-18 school year.

TABLE 5 | KINDERGARTEN KEY PRACTICES

The table summarizes the 14 indicators observed within the three subscales (out of 114 possible) and the degree to which the indicators were present during each observation.

Item	% Indicators Present Fall	% Indicators Present Spring	% Change
Schedules, routines, and activities	91.7	97.0	+5.3
Transitions between activities	96.0	98.0	+2.0
Supportive conversations	95.6	100.0	+4.4
Promoting children's engagement	95.7	99.2	+3.5
Providing directions	94.7	100.0	+5.3
Collaborative teaming	93.5	100.0	+6.5
Teaching children behavior expectations	71.4	95.5	+24.0
Teaching social skills and emotional competencies	65.1	100.0	+34.9
Teaching friendship skills	95.9	100.0	+4.1
Teaching children to express emotions	92.8	100.0	+7.2
Teaching problem solving	74.3	100.0	+25.7
Interventions for children with persistent challenging behavior	89.5	100.0	+10.5
Connecting with families	92.1	99.3	+7.2
Supporting family use of the Pyramid Model practices	75.9	100.0	+24.1
Key Practices Subscale	**87.2**	**99.2**	**+12.0**

TABLE 6 | FIRST GRADE KEY PRACTICES

The table summarizes the 14 indicators observed within the three subscales (out of 114 possible) and the degree to which the indicators were present during each observation.

Item	% Indicators Present Fall	% Indicatorsl Present Spring	% Change
Schedules, routines, and activities	91.7	98.4	+6.7
Transitions between activities	96.0	99.3	+3.3
Supportive conversations	95.6	100.0	+4.4
Promoting children's engagement	95.7	100.0	+4.3
Providing directions	94.7	98.4	+3.7
Collaborative teaming	93.5	100.0	+6.5
Teaching children behavior expectations	71.4	93.5	+22.1
Teaching social skills and emotional competencies	65.1	100.0	+34.9
Teaching friendship skills	95.9	100.0	+4.1
Teaching children to express emotions	92.8	100.0	+7.2
Teaching problem solving	74.3	100.0	+25.7
Interventions for children with persistent challenging behavior	89.5	100.0	+10.5
Connecting with families	92.1	99.3	+7.2
Supporting family use of the Pyramid Model practices	75.9	100.0	+24.1
Key Practices Subscale	**88.4**	**99.2**	**+10.8**

Child Outcomes

The *Work Sampling System* (Meisels, Marsden, Jablon, & Dichtelmiller, 2013) is a curriculum-embedded, authentic performance assessment used to assess the skills of children age 3 through third grade in multiple domains. Students demonstrate what they know through a series of evaluations which allows teachers to make informed decisions about how to guide instruction.

Gretna teachers used the personal and social development domain within *Work Sampling System* to document children's skills in four designated areas: (1) self-concept, (2) self-control, (3) approaches to learning, and (4) interaction with others. Teachers acquire information about children's social competence and approaches to learning by interacting with them, observing their interactions with other adults and peers, and reflecting on how they make decisions and solve academic and social problems.

Results

Table 7 summarizes *Work Sampling System* results for those Kindergarten students selected for at-risk social-emotional behaviors (indicated in the identified column as "yes") as compared to those in the sample who were not identified (indicated in the identified column as "no").

Table 8 summarizes *Work Sampling System* results for those first grade students selected for at-risk social-emotional behaviors (indicated in the identified column as "yes") as compared to those in the sample who were not identified (indicated in the identified column as "no") Fall, winter, and spring samples are an exact match.

Summary

Gretna Public Schools is launching its third year of professional development and instructional improvement in the area of social and emotional learning. This report represents the first full set of data (pre- and post-) since the inception of the project. All data collection will be consistent with this format and will also provide more information about each cohort as the plan moves forward.

Results are generally positive with some areas that may merit further investigation as determined by the Gretna leadership team.

TABLE 7 | KINDERGARTEN WORK SAMPLING RESULTS

Item	Identified	N	Fall Proficient %	Winter Proficient %	Spring Proficient %	Year Change %
A1. "Demonstrates self-confidence"	No	56	44.1	55.4	66.1	+22.0
	Yes	18	33.3	38.9	44.4	+11.1
A2. "Shows initiative and self-direction"	No	56	44.6	53.6	62.5	+17.9
	Yes	18	22.2	22.2	33.3	+11.1
B1. "Follows classroom rules and routines"	No	55	70.9	70.9	74.5	+3.6
	Yes	18	38.9	55.6	50.0	+11.1
B2. "Manages transitions and adapts to changes in routine"	No	56	69.1	80.0	87.3	+18.2
	Yes	17	55.6	66.7	72.2	+16.6
C1. "Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner"	No	56	55.4	76.8	83.9	+28.5
	Yes	18	58.8	70.6	76.5	+17.7
C2. "Sustains attention to a task, persisting even after encountering difficulty"	No	56	46.4	55.4	69.6	+23.2
	Yes	18	27.8	33.3	38.9	+11.1
C3. "Approaches task with flexibility and inventiveness"	No	56	42.9	60.7	73.2	+30.3
	Yes	18	22.2	22.2	44.4	+22.2
D1. "Interacts easily with familiar peers"	No	56	67.9	83.9	87.5	+19.6
	Yes	18	55.6	66.7	83.3	+27.7
D2. "Interacts easily with familiar adults"	No	56	71.4	83.9	89.3	+17.9
	Yes	18	66.7	66.7	77.8	+11.1
D3. "Participates in the group life of the class"	No	56	57.1	73.2	85.7	+28.6
	Yes	18	50.0	44.4	55.6	+5.6
D4. "Identifies feelings and shows empathy for others"	No	56	57.1	73.2	76.8	+19.7
	Yes	18	33.3	44.4	61.1	+27.8
D5. "Uses simple strategies to resolve conflicts"	No	56	39.3	67.9	69.9	+30.6
	Yes	18	16.7	22.2	38.9	+22.2

TABLE 8 | FIRST GRADE WORK SAMPLING RESULTS

Item	Identified	N	Fall Proficient %	Winter Proficient %	Spring Proficient %	Year Change %
A1. "Demonstrates self-confidence"	No	30	30.0	46.7	86.7	+56.7
	Yes	48	18.8	37.5	60.4	+41.6
A2. "Shows initiative and self-direction"	No	30	34.5	44.8	82.8	+48.3
	Yes	48	14.6	29.2	41.7	+27.1
B1. "Follows classroom rules and routines"	No	29	41.4	58.6	79.3	+37.9
	Yes	49	20.4	30.6	44.9	+24.5
B2. "Manages transitions and adapts to changes in routine"	No	30	33.3	63.3	86.7	+53.4
	Yes	49	18.4	28.6	51.0	+32.6
C1. "Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner"	No	30	43.3	66.7	83.3	+40.0
	Yes	49	34.7	49.0	71.4	+36.7
C2. "Sustains attention to a task, persisting even after encountering difficulty"	No	30	33.3	53.3	70.0	+36.7
	Yes	49	18.4	28.6	46.9	+28.5
C3. "Approaches task with flexibility and inventiveness"	No	30	30.0	50.0	76.7	+46.7
	Yes	49	16.3	24.5	46.9	+30.6
D1. "Interacts easily with familiar peers"	No	30	56.7	60.0	83.3	+26.6
	Yes	49	16.3	32.7	51.0	+34.7
D2. "Interacts easily with familiar adults"	No	30	63.3	76.7	90.0	+26.7
	Yes	49	28.6	40.8	67.3	+38.7
D3. "Participates in the group life of the class"	No	30	30.0	46.7	73.3	+43.3
	Yes	49	18.4	30.6	55.1	+36.7
D4. "Identifies feelings and shows empathy for others"	No	30	50.0	56.7	80.0	+30.0
	Yes	49	34.7	42.9	61.2	+26.5
D5. "Uses simple strategies to resolve conflicts"	No	30	30.0	33.3	73.3	+43.3
	Yes	49	8.2	20.4	38.8	+30.6

Professional Development for All

Professional development is essential to assist educators and other professionals in enhancing their knowledge and skills so they can perform their roles in promoting young children's learning and development more effectively. The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan offers a "Professional Development for All" series to all teachers, early childhood caregivers, school principals, district administrators, community-based program administrators, and family support professionals in the Learning Community who serve young children, birth – Grade 3, and their families.

Professional Development for All is a connected series of professional learning institutes that introduces research and innovative practices to participants along with the opportunity to come together and learn from one another. During 2016-17, 1,080 individuals participated in the PD for All series, a 23% increase over 2015-16. Participants included staff from across the 11 Learning Community districts as well as staff from community child care and other agencies. More than 80 different agencies and organizations were represented at PD for All institutes, including home visiting programs, Educare, the Learning Community Centers of North and South Omaha, Metropolitan Community College, and an array of center-based and family child care providers.

Topics for the PD for All institutes focus on research-based practices for early childhood caregiving, teaching and family-school-community connections that help reduce opportunity and achievement gaps for low-income children, English language learners, and children of color. The 2016-17 PD for All series highlighted gap-closing practices that rigorously promote each child's academic and intellectual growth while nurturing the development of the whole child. The themes for the three 2016-17 PD for All institute sessions included:

1. Engaging Young Children as Active Thinkers
2. It's More Than Words: Language as the Foundation for Thinking and Learning
3. Integrated Experiences to Deepen Children's Learning

Based on participant feedback and input from the PD for All Advisory Committee, the 2016-17 PD for All institutes were designed to incorporate important enhancements and extensions. The goals were to increase accessibility for diverse early childhood professionals and to support application of content from the institutes. Through these revisions, each full-day institute was repeated twice—once on a weekday and the second time on a weekend—and an evening session was provided. This resulted in participation by a broader range of community-based early childhood educators and family child care providers who are unable to attend during weekday hours. In addition,

selected institutes offered either simultaneous translation of presentations into Spanish or separate workshops presented in Spanish. These enhancements addressed the significant unmet need for professional learning by Spanish-speaking early educators across the Learning Community.

A third modification in the 2016-17 PD for All series consisted of a half-day leadership seminar that was convened in conjunction with each PD for All institute. The seminars allowed principals, program directors, district-level administrators, and instructional coaches to review institute content with keynote presenters. They also helped participants plan strategies to integrate the content into their programs' ongoing early childhood professional learning and increase translation of the content into practice. An average of 25 program administrators and instructional leaders participated in each of the 2016-17 PD for All leadership seminars.

Participant surveys were administered following each 2016-17 PD for All institute. The surveys asked participants to rate whether the sessions provided a productive balance between research and practice, provided new knowledge and skills, and provided content with a high likelihood of being applied to practice. Across all 2016-17 sessions, average scores for each item ranged from 3.3 to 3.9 on a four-point scale. Feedback was shared with institute presenters and used by the PD for All advisory committee to inform ongoing planning. Participant surveys and advisory committee feedback indicated the need for follow-up support for classroom implementation following each PD for All institute. Strategies for providing this follow-up implementation support will be incorporated into the design of future PD for All series.

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Appendix 1:
Birth – Age 3 Measures

CHILD: BIRTH – AGE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Cognitive-Language-Academic	Preschool Language Scales, Fifth Edition (PLS 5)	An interactive, play-based assessment of developmental language skills in the areas of auditory comprehension and expressive communication. Administered annually at time of enrollment.	Direct assessment by Eval Team
Social-Emotional	Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment (ITSEA)	Provides in-depth analysis of emerging social-emotional development and intervention guidance. Four domains include externalizing, internalizing, dysregulation, and competence. Forms are designed to be applicable to a wide range of parents including those with limited education and from different cultural backgrounds.	Parent report via Eval Team
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) English speakers only	A measure of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English.	Direct assessment by district SLP
	Preschool Language Scales-Spanish Edition (PLS-S) Spanish speakers only	An interactive assessment for monolingual and bilingual Spanish-speaking children.	Direct assessment by Eval Team

PARENT			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Parent-Child Interactions	Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)	A self-report instrument completed by mothers or fathers that assesses their perceptions of their relationship with their child. The 15 items are rated on 5-point Likert scales and the ratings can be summed into groups of items corresponding to conflict and closeness subscales. Applicable to children ages 3 to 12.	Parent report via Eval Team
	Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME)	Measures the quality and quantity of stimulation and support available to a child in the home environment. The focus is on the child in the environment, child as a recipient of inputs from objects, events, and transactions occurring in connection with the family surroundings. Clustered into six subscales: Parental Responsivity, Acceptance of Child, Organization of Environment, Learning Materials, Parental Involvement, Variety in Experience.	Structured parent interview and direct observation by HV/parent
	Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS)	A structured observation tool for parent-child interaction, assesses interaction during play in a familiar environment.	Video observation by Eval Team

Social Support Networks	Parenting Stress Index (PSI 4)	Screening measure for evaluating the parenting system and identifying issues that may lead to problems in the child's or parent's behavior. Focuses on three domains of stress: child characteristics, parent characteristics, and situational/demographic life stress. Only the Parental Distress and Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation.	Parent report by Eval Team
	Protective Factors Survey (PFS)	Primary purpose is to provide a snapshot of the families served, changes in protective factors, and areas where workers can focus on increasing individual family protective factors. It is not intended for individual assessment, placement, or diagnostic purposes. Five protective factors are included in the complete PFS. Only social-emotional support and concrete support protective factors were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation. Social-Emotional Support = perceived informal support (from family, friends, and neighbors) that helps provide for emotional needs. Concrete Support = perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.	Parent report by Eval Team
	Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale Revised (CESD-R)	A screening test for depression. Measures symptoms defined by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V) for a major depressive episode.	Parent report by Eval Team

Appendix 1: Birth – Age 3 Measures

HOME VISITING: BIRTH – AGE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
HV-Parent and HV-Child Interactions	Home Visit Rating Scales (HOVRS)	Developed to describe and evaluate strategies used in home visiting interventions. Measures the home visitor's effectiveness in engaging the parent and the child in home visiting activities and in interactions with each other.	Video or direct observation by Eval Team

SCHOOL: BIRTH – GRADE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
School as Hub System Change	Staff and Administrator Focus Groups	Staff and Administrator Focus Group Interviews (initiated spring 2017)	Focus group

Appendix 2:
PreK – Grade 3 Measures

CHILD: PREK – GRADE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Cognitive-Language-Academic	Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Academic Skills Battery (KTEA-ASB) PreK (age 4+)	Individually administered, norm-referenced battery of key academic skills including a composite score and three subtests (Math Concepts and Applications, Letter and Word Recognition, Written Expression).	Individual assessment by Eval Team
	Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition (KTEA BA-3) Kindergarten	Individually administered norm-referenced battery that provides assessment of key academic skills including a brief achievement composite score and three subtests (Letter and Word Recognition, Math Computation, Spelling).	Individual assessment by Eval Team
Social-Emotional	Behavior Assessment System for Children: Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC 3– BESS) PreK and Kindergarten	A brief, universal screening system for measuring behavior and emotional strengths and weaknesses in children and adolescents in preschool through high school.	Teacher report
	Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF-P) PreK	A standardized rating scale developed to provide a window into everyday behaviors associated with specific domains of executive functioning in children aged 2 to 5 years. Consists of a Global Executive Composite, three overlapping summary indexes each with two scales (Inhibitory Self-Control = Inhibit and Emotional Control, Flexibility = Shift and Emotional Control, Emergent Metacognition = Working Memory and Plan/Organize).	Teacher report

| | Comprehensive Executive Functioning Inventory (CEFI)

Kindergarten | A standardized behavior rating scale of executive function. In addition to a Full Scale Score, CEFI uses nine rationally derived scales to pinpoint targets for intervention: Attention, Emotion Regulation, Flexibility, Inhibitory Control, Initiation, Organization, Planning, Self-Monitoring, Working Memory. | Teacher report |
| **Language** | Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)

PreK and Kindergarten | A measure of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English. | Direct assessment by district SLP |

PARENT			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Parent-Child Interactions	Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) PreK and Kindergarten	A self-report instrument completed by mothers or fathers that assesses their perceptions of their relationship with their child. The 15 items are rated on 5-point Likert scales and the ratings can be summed into groups of items corresponding to conflict and closeness subscales. Applicable to children ages 3 to 12.	Parent report
Social Support Networks	Protective Factors Survey (PFS) PreK and Kindergarten	Primary purpose is to provide a snapshot of the families served, changes in protective factors, and areas where workers can focus on increasing individual family protective factors. It is not intended for individual assessment, placement, or diagnostic purposes. Five protective factors are included in the complete PFS. Only the social-emotional support and concrete support protective factors were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation. Social-Emotional Support = perceived informal support (from family, friends, and neighbors) that helps provide for emotional needs. Concrete Support = perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.	Parent report

CLASSROOM/TEACHER: PreK – GRADE 3

Domain	Measure	Description	Method
Teacher-Child Classroom Interactions	Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) All PreK – Grade 3 teachers	An observational instrument to assess teacher-student interactions in PK-12 classrooms and in settings serving infants and toddlers. It describes multiple dimensions of interaction that are linked to student achievement and development and has been validated in over 6,000 classrooms. Can be used to reliably assess classroom quality for research and program evaluation and also provides a tool to help new and experienced teachers become more effective.	Video observation by Eval Team
Teacher-Child Relationships	Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) PreK and Kindergarten	A teacher-report instrument designed for teachers of children between the ages of 3 and 12 that measures a teacher's perception of conflict, closeness, and dependency with a specific child. Only conflict and closeness were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation.	Teacher report

SCHOOL: BIRTH – GRADE 3

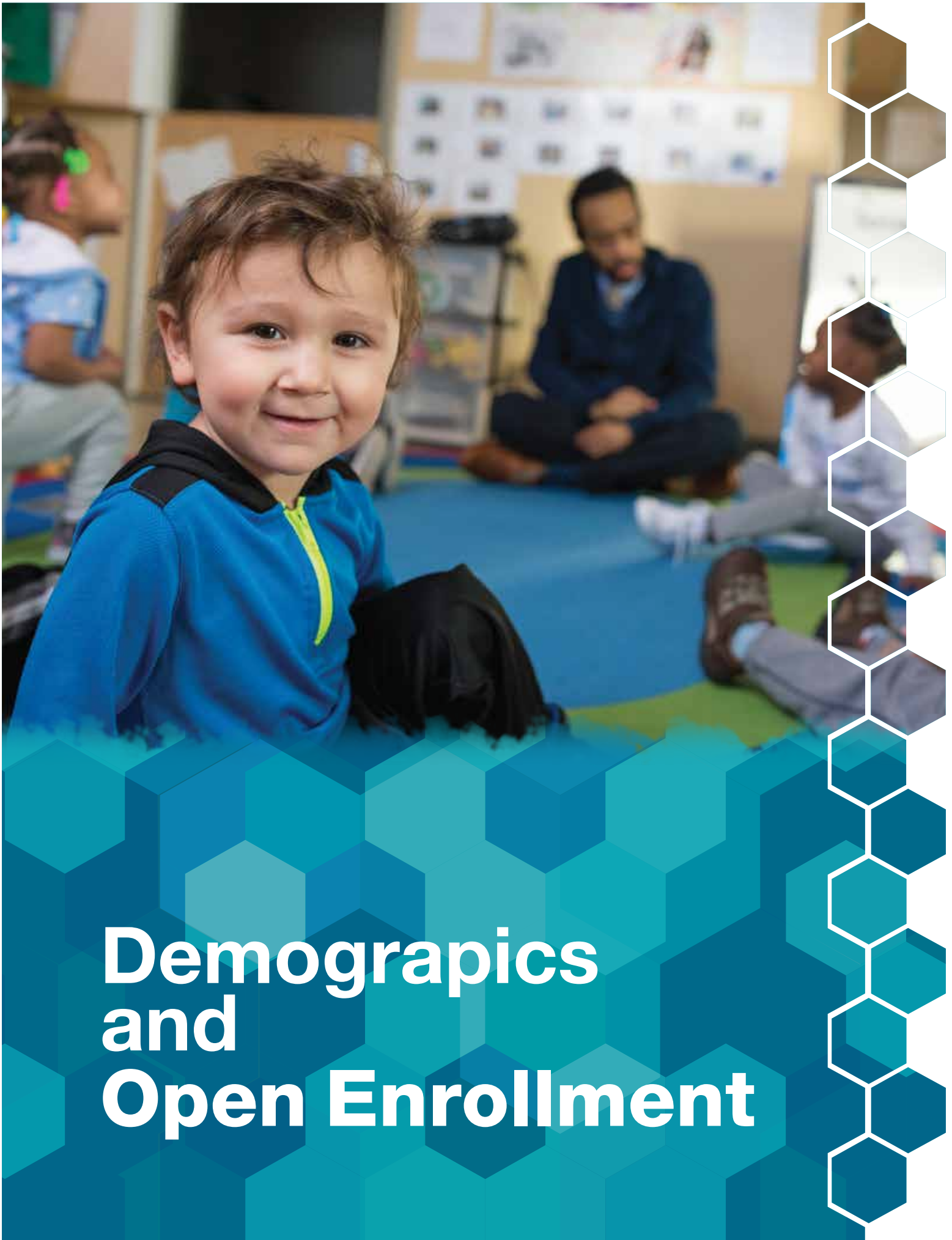| Domain	Measure	Description	Method
School as Hub System Change	Staff and Administrator Focus Groups	Staff and Administrator Focus Group Interviews (initiated in spring 2017)	Focus group

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Demograpics and Open Enrollment

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 2016-2017 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. The population is divided among the Subcouncils as equally as feasible.

Table III.1 presents demographic data for each Subcouncil for the 2016-2017 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: 2016-2017 Total Enrollment, Free and Reduced Lunch, and ELL by Subcouncil

	SC	Total Enrollment	Number FRL	Percent FRL	Number ELL	Percent ELL
K-6	1	8,482	3,515	41.4%	584	6.9%
7-12	1	7,302	3,685	50.5%	316	4.3%
Subcouncil Total	**1**	**15,784**	**7,200**	**45.6%**	**900**	**5.7%**
K-6	2	8,696	7,264	83.5%	1,872	21.5%
7-12	2	7,395	4,683	63.3%	556	7.5%
Subcouncil Total	**2**	**16,091**	**11,947**	**74.2%**	**2,428**	**15.1%**
K-6	3	9,475	5,411	57.1%	1,669	17.6%
7-12	3	6,126	3,070	50.1%	291	4.8%
Subcouncil Total	**3**	**15,601**	**8,481**	**54.4%**	**1,960**	**12.6%**
K-6	4	12,244	2,784	22.7%	348	2.8%
7-12	4	11,023	2,127	19.3%	73	0.7%
Subcouncil Total	**4**	**23,267**	**4,911**	**21.1%**	**421**	**1.8%**
K-6	5	12,364	7,945	64.3%	3,787	30.6%
7-12	5	10,753	6,314	58.7%	787	7.3%
Subcouncil Total	**5**	**23,117**	**14,259**	**61.7%**	**4,574**	**19.8%**
K-6	6	14,449	2,354	16.3%	183	1.3%
7-12	6	11,713	1,805	15.4%	46	0.4%
Subcouncil Total	**6**	**26,162**	**4,159**	**15.9%**	**229**	**0.9%**
K-6	All LC	65,710	29,273	44.5%	8,443	12.8%
7-12	All LC	54,312	21,684	39.9%	2,069	3.8%
Learning Comm. Total	**All LC**	**120,022**	**50,957**	**42.5%**	**10,512**	**8.8%**

The growth within the Learning Community has been consistent over the last several years, with 1.32% growth year on year and 2.68% over 2 years. In fact, total enrollment has increased 6.7% over the past five years. This remains the case when viewing FRL data as well, which are largely unchanged or slightly reduced across the six Subcouncils. The one area of increase has been the increase in ELL students year over year.

Figure III.2: 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 ELL by Subcouncil

**% of English language learner (ELL) students by Subcouncil**
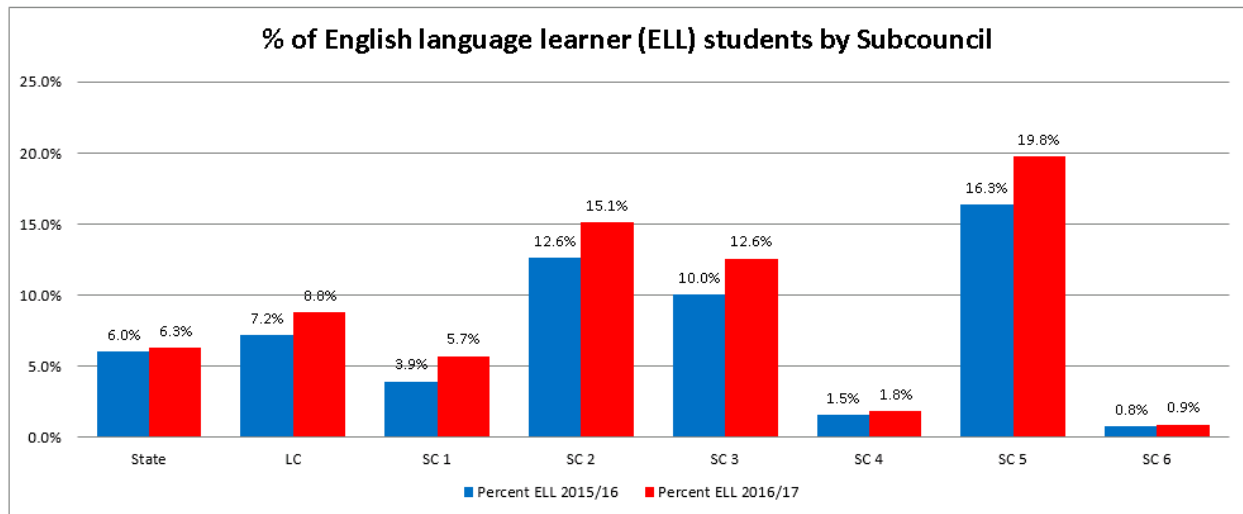
- The percentage of ELL increased nearly 25% across the Learning Community for the 2016-2017 school year compared to the 2016-2016 school year, with an increase of nearly 50% in Subcouncil 1.

Free and Reduced Lunch Concentration

Figure III.3 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 blue bar in each set represents the average number of schools in each interval in the previous five years and the red bar shows the number in the 2016-2017 school year.

Figure III.3: Number of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10% Comparing 2016-2017 with the Previous Five-Year Average

Learning Community FRL distribution (in 10 percent increments) w/ 5 year prior average
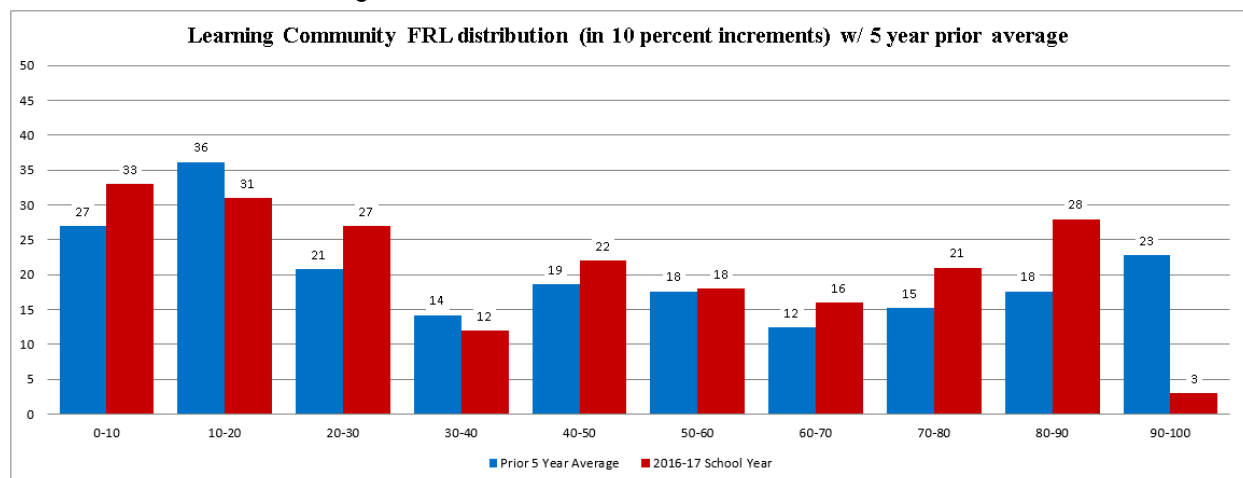
A primary goal of Open Enrollment is to improve the economic diversity of Learning Community schools. Progress toward this goal would be illustrated by an increase in the number of schools

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 lone highlight of the 2016-2017 school year has been the fifteen (15) school decrease, year over year, in the 90-100 percentile decile, which appear to have migrated to the 70-80 and 80-90 percent deciles.

Figures III.4 and III.5 (p. 4) provide a comparison of Learning Community schools with the remaining 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: 2016-2017 Percentage of Nebraska Schools in FRL Intervals of 10% (Excluding Learning Community)
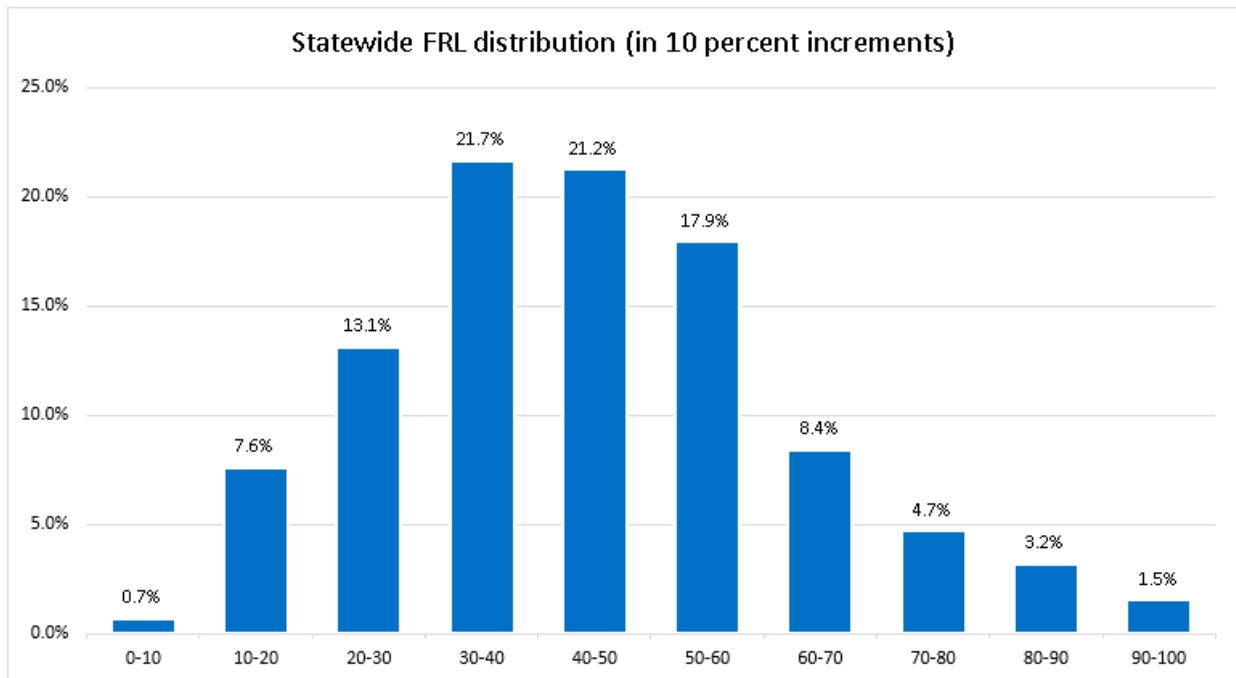

Figure III.4 illustrates that most Nebraska schools fall in the middle ranges of free and reduced lunch concentrations, and few schools fall in the very low and very high ranges.

Figure III.5 (page 4) 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: 2016-2017 Percentage of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10%

Learning Community FRL distribution (in 10 percent increments)
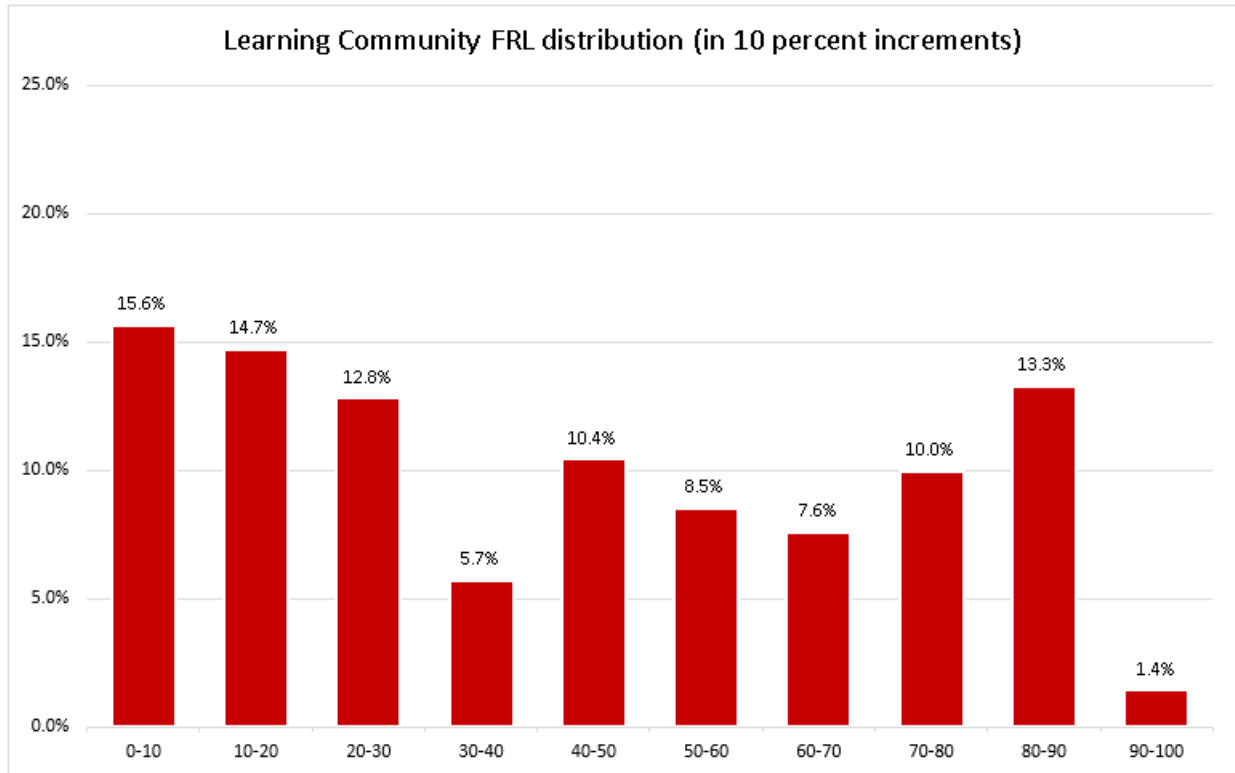
These data demonstrate the dramatic difference in the economic diversity of Learning Community schools in comparison to all other schools in Nebraska. The majority of schools in Nebraska are relatively diverse economically, while the majority of schools in the Learning Community are segregated economically 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 & 2016 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.

Open Enrollment

This section of the report describes the status of Open Enrollment. Data are provided by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and Learning Community school districts. The 2016-2017 school year marked the last year of the Open Enrollment process for new students in the Learning Community school districts. Only students currently in Open Enrollment will be eligible to continue at their current school building in the 2017-2018 school year.

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

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. Applications were available in November of the prior school year and were submitted to the requested districts by March 15th. School districts approve or deny an application based on available capacity and following the priority sequence outlined in the Learning Community Diversity Plan:[DM1]

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 notified applicants of approval or denial by April 5th, and applicants notified the districts of their acceptance by April 25th. Although families applied to multiple school districts, they could accept Open Enrollment in only one district. As required by Nebraska Statute, the number of applications received and approved is submitted to the Learning Community by member school districts in September of each school 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, were classified as Open Enrollment students. Those who transferred prior to the 2010-2011 school year were 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. This process will reverse in the succeeding years as Open Enrollment students transition back to Option Enrollment after leaving their current school building.

The Status of Open Enrollment and its impact on Diversity
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.

As stated earlier, the 2016-2017 school year marked the last year of the Open Enrollment process for new students in the Learning Community school districts. As such the Learning Community will be focusing on the impact Open Enrollment has had in improving the economic diversity of Learning Community schools.

Table IV.1 shows the total number of Open Enrollment students and the percent qualifying for FRL in each of the last six years of Open Enrollment.

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%
2016-2017	8,054	39.79%	42.46%

While the Learning Community school districts have faithfully implemented the Open Enrollment policy, it appears that the proportion of students who open-enroll is similar to the proportion that option-enrolled in the past. Additionally, the percentage of Open Enrollment students who qualify for FRL is similar to the percentage of the Learning Community districts as a whole. As such the impact of Open Enrollment on economic diversity is a very moderate one in comparison with the student membership as a whole.

Table IV.2 shows the total number of students in all Learning Community school districts and the total number of Open Enrollment students for the last six years.

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER LEARNING COMMUNITY STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP	TOTAL NUMBER OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS IN FALL MEMBERSHIP
2010-2011	108,800	2,563
2011-2012	110,908	4,334
2012-2013	112,498	5,769
2013-2014	114,699	6,535
2014-2015	116,886	7,244
2015-2016	118,460	7,826
2016-2017	120,022	8,054

Section 5 prepared by David Moon, Learning Community Finance Director