THEIR FUTURE. OUR FUTURE.

2017-2018 EVALUATION REPORT

learning community
DOUGLAS SARPY

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

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Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to share the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties 2017-2018 Annual Report. You will see our latest evaluation results respond to the growing educational needs of children and families across the Omaha metropolitan area.

Our purpose is to develop and demonstrate proven answers to challenge the opportunity gap. "Poverty creep" is a reality for the majority of our local school districts. In your role as a state senator, you may be seeing the same economic shifts in your legislative district. These are times to explore new practices and partnerships. As you look at changes in your local communities, please know that the Learning Community is a resource for practical strategies that need not add stress to local school budgets. We all want what's best for the children in our local schools.

POWERFUL INVESTMENTS

Instructional Coaching Pilot

Increasing poverty challenges even the most experienced educators. It can quickly create a tipping point in classrooms. How can we better support our teachers? Instructional Coaching.

The Learning Community has reached the six-year mark of an instructional coaching pilot program to improve student outcomes. The value of our Coordinating Council investment has multiplied many times over with significant benefit for current and future students You'll see in this evaluation that the teacher-coach relationship is especially powerful in the first three years of a teacher's career. With collaboration among four Learning Community school districts, we see the instructional coaching model becoming a valued resource integrated into school district budgets.

First Teachers

An engaged parent is a difference-maker in a child's learning starting at birth. The teaching teams in our community centers in North and South Omaha take a two-generation approach as they work with parents who want the best for their children.

In South Omaha, six consecutive years of positive, independent evaluations demonstrate strong student impact as parents become role models, teachers and advocates for their children. The population of young children from families with little experience in our educational systems continues to move well beyond Omaha's urban core. Our evaluation shows we are better prepared to help these children and families succeed together.

Education for the Whole Family

What does family stability have to do with a child's success in school? When a family lacks access to secure housing or a job with a living wage, children feel the stress. Research identifies family income and financial stability as strong predictors of a child's educational success, along with a parent's level of education. That's where the Learning Community's work to foster community partnerships supports children, families and our local workforce.

More than one hundred free parent education classes are available to Parent University members in the Learning Community Center of North Omaha. Learning English, securing stable employment, buying a home, completing a GED – these are just a few examples of the courses available in the last year.

In our South Omaha community center, parents choose from pathways for employment or higher education. Everyone wins with this 2-Gen approach. Our parents build skills and family resilience, while their children develop a social, emotional and academic foundation for learning.

Thanks to a multitude of strong community partnerships, the Learning Community never stops exploring new and innovative opportunities for children and families. Please don't hesitate to contact me to discuss any questions you may have about this report or the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

Sincerely,

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

Note: Due to the late release of student identifiable academic information, the Learning Community will submit a report addendum later this month due to the late release of student identifiable academic information.

Table of Contents

Our Mission

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

Introduction

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties is an educational subdivision focused on outcomes and opportunities for children and families. Impact grows through a collaborative network of metropolitan area school districts and community organizations. Independent evaluations demonstrate consistently strong results in the implementation of quality early childhood education and family engagement programs. Improvements in teaching practices are embedded in programs and bring proven value to everything.

RATIONALE

The Learning Community implements strategies built on research 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).

2GEN APPROACH

The Learning Community uses a two-generation (2Gen) approach in designing early childhood and family engagement programs at each of the Centers, Learning Community Center of South Omaha and Learning Community Center of North Omaha. This creates opportunities for and addresses the needs of both children and adults. Using the whole-family approach, programs focus equally and intentionally on children and parents.

The theory of change behind the 2Gen approach suggests aligning services for parents and children yields stronger and lasting results (ASCEND, 2018). Each Learning Community Center uses a different type of comprehensive program to address the opportunity gap for children and families based on the unique characteristics of each community and their needs.

Key elements of the 2Gen approach include:

- Early Childhood Development
- Health & Well-being
- Post-secondary & Employment Pathways
- Economic Assets
- Social Capital

SCHOOL DISTRICT PILOT PROGRAMS

The Learning Community also supports pilot programs in nine school districts. School districts customize pilot programs to meet specific needs but all have the opportunity to benefit from sharing their successes and lessons learned.

- Jumpstart to Kindergarten provides low-income students the opportunity to experience a school setting. Most students have little or no experience in classroom environments.
- Extended Learning provides additional direct instruction for children to prevent summer learning loss and improve their chances of success.
- Instructional Coaching allows teachers to reflect on strategies and enhances instructional practice.
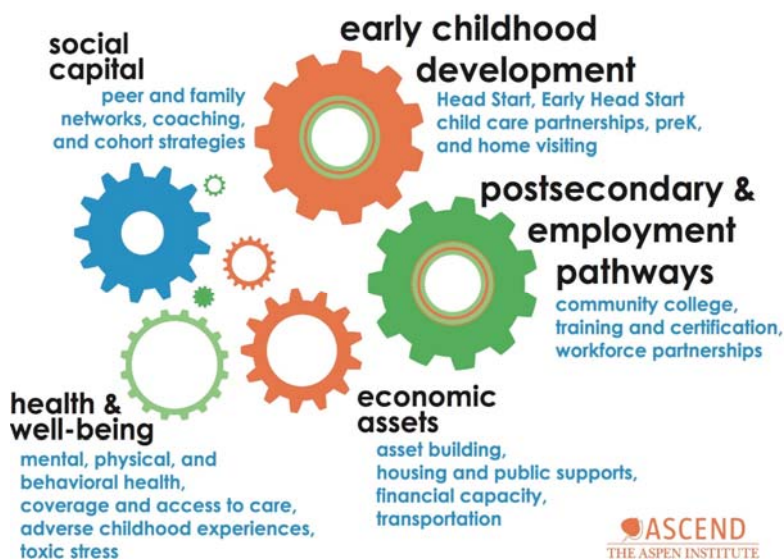
EVALUATION

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 are there quality practices in the classroom settings?

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 parents' 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' language in the fall 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 et. al., 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 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 2017 to 2018. 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.

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA

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 Magnet 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 Learning Childhood Partnership

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Intensive Early Childhood Education Partnership, a program that is in collaboration with Omaha Public Schools is based on evidence-based models (Yazejian & Bryant, (2012) that include four key components including intensive teaching teams, reflective coaching, professional development, and family engagement. The model was first introduced to eight inclusive classroom preschool programs in Kellom and Conestoga Magnet in 2013. After two consecutive years of positive outcomes based on the model, it was expanded to two additional schools, Lothrop Magnet and Franklin (seven inclusive preschool classrooms) and grades K through 1 at Kellom and Conestoga (13 classrooms).

INTENSIVE TEACHING TEAMS. Intensive early childhood teams are integrated in each school building as a system of teachers, leadership, and family support staff that implement a combination of services and supports. The leadership team includes the principal, an early childhood coordinator and instructional coaches. Each classroom has a lead early childhood teacher, special education teacher and paraprofessional staff. Using an inclusive model, these professionals work with all children and discuss effective teaching strategies using data for continuous improvement.

Leadership Staff & Coaches

Teaching Staff

Family Staff

Children & Families
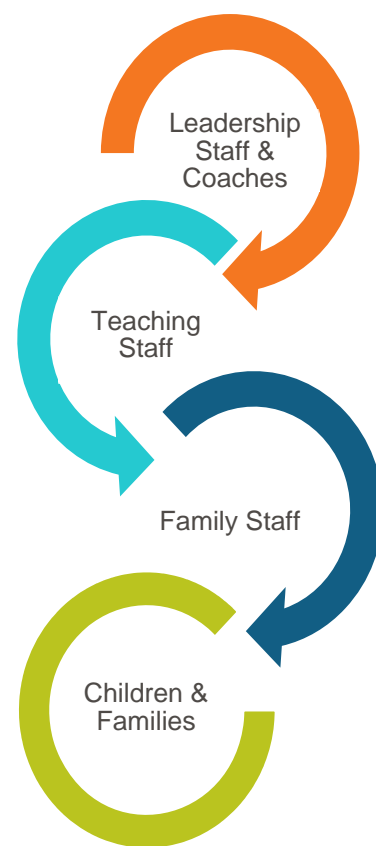
REFLECTIVE COACHING. Instructional coaches provide reflective consultation to the teaching staff both inside and outside of the classroom. They use a coaching approach adopted by Omaha Public Schools (i.e., Coaching with Powerful Interactions). A national consultant also provides ongoing reflective consultation to the coaches. Instructional coaches work to build teacher confidence and increase their active problem solving skills. During one-on-one sessions with teachers, helpful coaching tools include classroom videotapes and photographs. Long-term positive student outcomes are predicted with the continuity of coaching now occurring through first grade in two schools.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Teaching teams benefit from 11 days of additional professional development (PD) throughout the school year. PD sessions focus on the implementation of Conscious Discipline, as well as, literacy and language strategies to build the skills of teaching staff. The goal is to support child development outcomes related to social-emotional and language/literacy skills. The PD component is required for teachers at Kellom and Conestoga and elective for expanded schools. Teachers across all preschool classrooms participated in the offered PD.
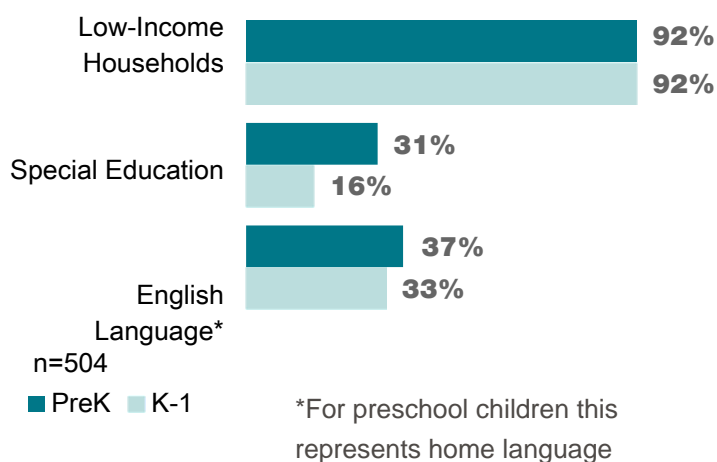
Implementing the Creative Curriculum is another key focus area. This curriculum targets the intentionality of vocabulary selection, repeated read-a-louds, selection of center materials, and alignment of literacy strategies (i.e. phonemic awareness and emergent writing).

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. Family liaisons and support staff work together to enhance the educational experience of children and their parents. They promote school engagement and help families access needed services. In addition to full-day preschool and school-sponsored family engagement opportunities, membership in Parent University (discussed later in this section) is offered to families.

DEMOGRAPHICS

INTENSIVE EARLY LEARNING CHILDHOOD CLASSES SERVED CHILDREN WITH A VARIETY

In 2017-2018, the Intensive Early Childhood Partnership preschool programs evaluated 249 students and 255 kindergarten and first grade students. Demographic information was collected to help interpret the evaluation findings, including eligibility for free and reduced lunch (a proxy for low-income households), English Language Learners (ELL), and/or enrollment in special education services. ELL is not designated for preschool children so the 37% in the chart represents the home language of the students.

Low-Income Households: 92% (PreK), 92% (K-1)
Special Education: 31% (PreK), 16% (K-1)
English Language*: 37% (PreK), 33% (K-1)

n=504

■ PreK ■ K-1

*For preschool children this represents home language

MOST OF THE STUDENTS SERVED REPRESENTED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

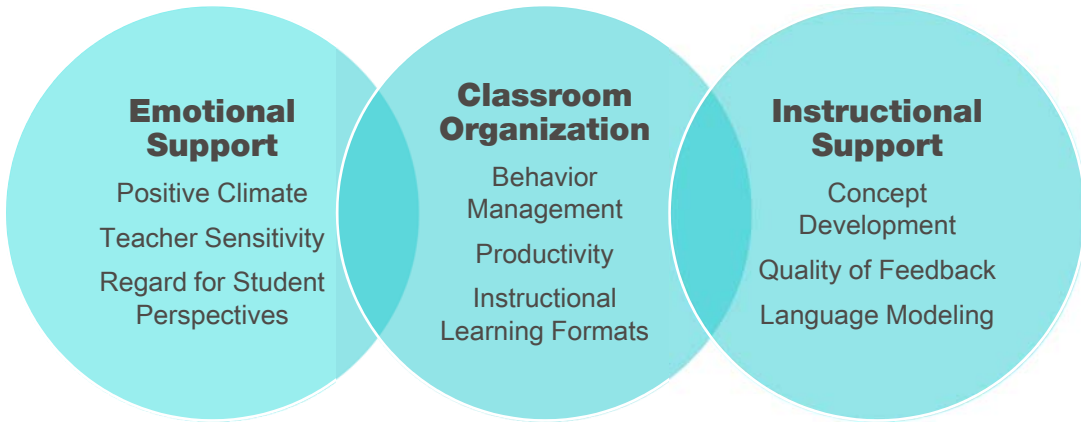|				
White	10%			
Non-White	54%	21%	7%	6%
	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multi-

n=504

The Intensive Early Children Partnership (preK to 1st Grade) served a racially and ethnically diverse population of children. Most of the students served were at-risk for academic challenges due to low income. Across all classrooms there were high percentages of children who were ELL. More special education students were served in preK classrooms. There were equal numbers of females (50%) and males (50%) served across all grade levels. The average days of attendance were 124 days for preschool students and 143 days for students in kindergarten or first grade. The results suggest students were consistently participating in the educational program.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

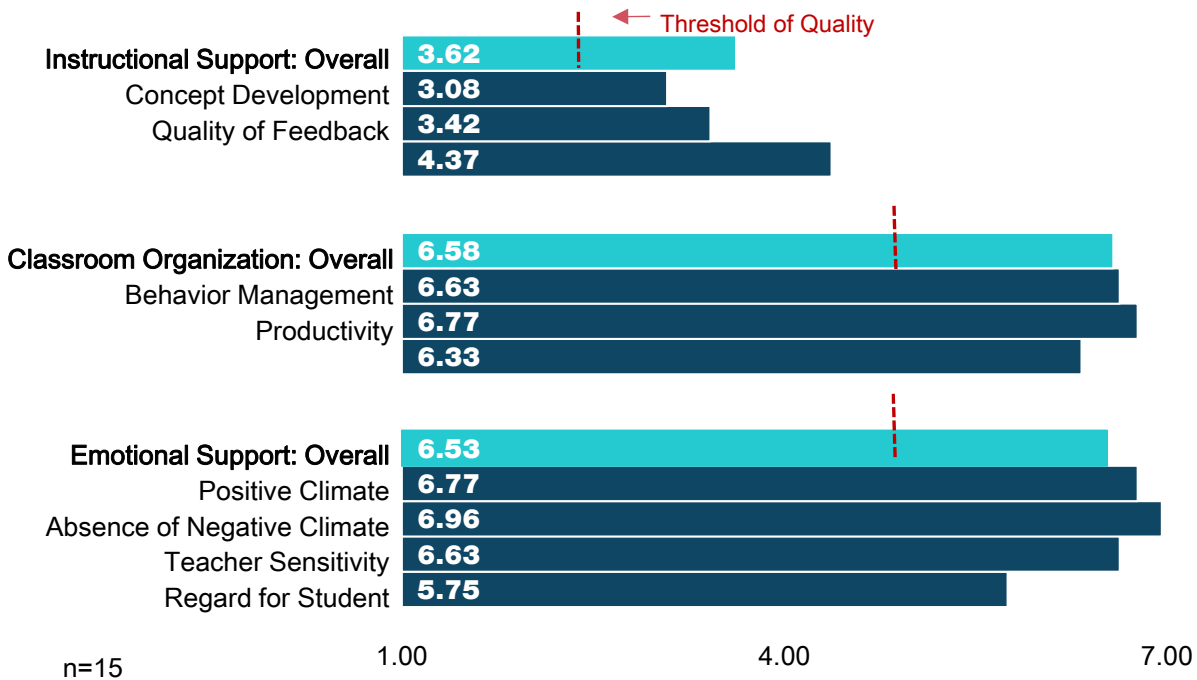## QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

METHOD. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) was used to evaluate the quality of the fifteen intensive early childhood preschool and eight kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms. This was the first year for CLASS® to be completed in the Grades K through 1 classrooms. This year there were four new preschool teachers out of the 15 total teachers observed. In addition, this is the first year that teachers from the two additional schools were evaluated as part of this project.

CLASS® for students preK to Grade 1 has three dimensions. Dimensions include emotional, organizational, and instructional supports. Nationally, 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 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).

Emotional Support
Positive Climate
Teacher Sensitivity
Regard for Student Perspectives

Classroom Organization
Behavior Management
Productivity
Instructional Learning Formats

Instructional Support
Concept Development
Quality of Feedback
Language Modeling

FINDINGS. The scores for the preschool classroom exceeded research reported thresholds necessary to have an effect on student achievement. The following figure provides the overall scores for each area and the dimension scores that are related to each overall score. Emotional Support and Classroom Organization were within the high-quality range. Instructional Support was within the mid-range of quality, with Language Modeling as an area of strength. Concept Development and Quality of Feedback had the lowest scores.

PREK CLASSROOOMS' STRENGTHS WERE IN THE AREAS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION.

Threshold of Quality

Instructional Support: Overall	3.62
Concept Development	3.08
Quality of Feedback	3.42
	4.37
Classroom Organization: Overall	6.58
Behavior Management	6.63
Productivity	6.77
	6.33
Emotional Support: Overall	6.53
Positive Climate	6.77
Absence of Negative Climate	6.96
Teacher Sensitivity	6.63
Regard for Student	5.75

n=15

1.00   4.00   7.00

During the 2016-2017 program year, the Office of Head Start (OHS) used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) during its on-site reviews of grantees. Data from this report, (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/fi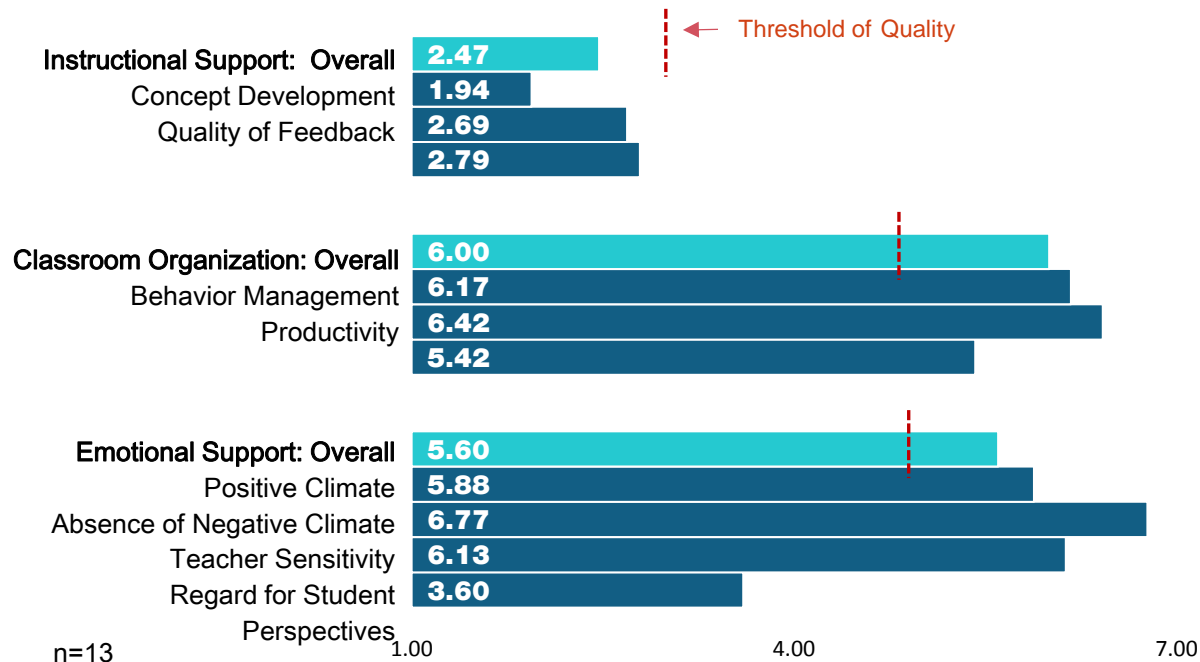les/pdf/national-class-2017-data.pdf), was compared to the results of the Intensive Early Childhood Learning Partnership data. Preschool teachers demonstrated classroom practices that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start (HS) classrooms nationally in Classroom Organization (HS=6.33) and Emotional Support (HS=6.48). They were just .03 lower than the top 10% in Instructional Support (HS=3.65).

Teachers met the threshold of quality needed to impact student achievement.

Since this was the first year of completing observations in Grades K-1 classrooms, this data is considered baseline. The scores for the Grades K-1 classrooms exceeded research reported thresholds reported necessary to have an effect on student achievement in the areas of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, which were within the high-quality range. For these scales, strengths were in productivity, behavior management, and absence of negative climate. Instructional Support was within the low-range of quality. In the area of Instructional Support, both Quality of Feedback and Language Modeling were relative strengths with Concept Development rated as the lowest area.

GRADE K-1 CLASSROOOMS' STRENGTHS WERE IN THE AREAS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION.

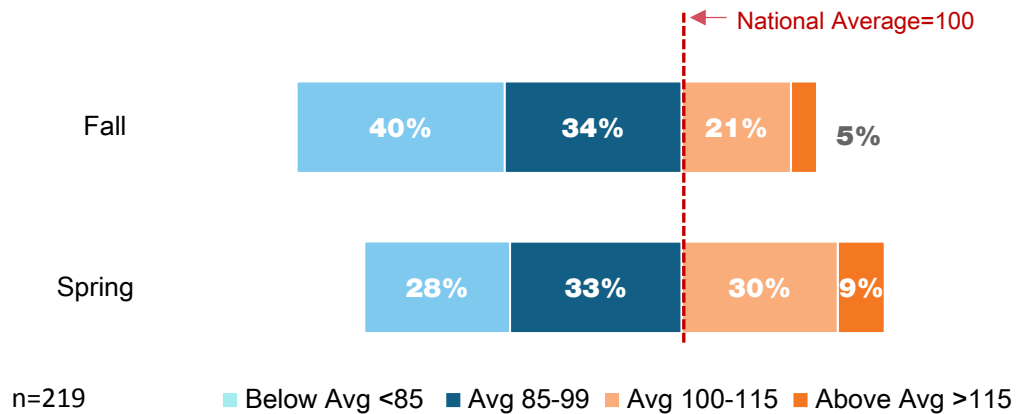Instructional Support was below the threshold of quality.

Threshold of Quality

Instructional Support: Overall	2.47
Concept Development	1.94
Quality of Feedback	2.69
	2.79
Classroom Organization: Overall	6.00
Behavior Management	6.17
Productivity	6.42
	5.42
Emotional Support: Overall	5.60
Positive Climate	5.88
Absence of Negative Climate	6.77
Teacher Sensitivity	6.13
Regard for Student Perspectives	3.60

n=13

CHILD OUTCOMES

PRESCHOOL VOCABULARY SKILLS

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 in English, was administrated in the fall and spring to all preschool children. There were 219 fall/spring assessments completed across schools.

FINDINGS. By spring, moderate percentages (39%) of the children were scoring at the national average, which is a standard score of 100. In comparison to fall scores (26%), by spring there were 13% more students scoring above the national average. Compared to the previous year 6% more students met this goal. By spring, 72% of the children were within the average range or higher (85 or higher). There were 12% 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 had an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

BY SPRING, MORE CHILDREN HAD ENGLISH VOCABULARY SKILLS WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE OR ABOVE.

← National Average=100

	Below Avg <85	Avg 85-99	Avg 100-115	Above Avg >115
Fall	40%	34%	21%	5%
Spring	28%	33%	30%	9%

n=219

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses was completed to determine if there was change in student scores over time and if any demographic variables predicted vocabulary outcomes. Approximately 3% of the variability in PPVT receptive language scores was due to the classroom, indicating that there was minimal variability in scores across classrooms. A significant change was found in children's PPVT scores when controlling for gender and family home language ($p<.01$). On average students scored five points higher in the spring. Family home language was a significant predictor of PPVT scores. Children whose home language was not English scored significantly lower ($<.001$) on average (-11.40 points) than children whose primary home language was English. Supporting children's language and literacy skills was a focus of professional development for the past two years.

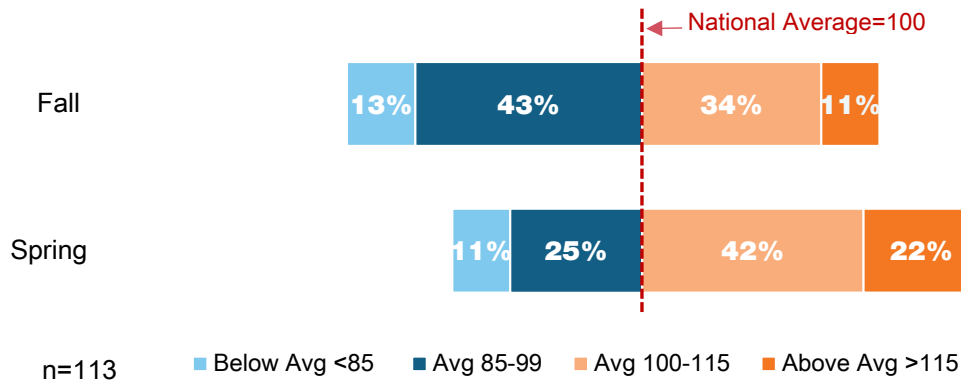**Students' vocabulary skills improved significantly from fall to spring.**

PRESCHOOL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

METHOD. The social-emotional development of preschool students was assessed using both the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA). This questionnaire assesses young students' social-emotional development by identifying total protective factors overall and in the areas of initiative, self-control, attachment, and behavior. The DECA was completed on 123 students across two schools.

FINDINGS. By spring, the majority (89%) of the students were in the average range.   The percentage of children within the average range was relatively stable over time; however, more children (19%) were scoring at the program goal in the spring than in the fall.

BY SPRING, MORE CHILDREN HAD SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AT OR ABOVE THE PROGRAM GOAL.

National Average=100

	Below Avg <85	Avg 85-99	Avg 100-115	Above Avg >115
Fall	13%	43%	34%	11%
Spring	11%	25%	42%	22%

n=113

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses was completed to determine if there was change in student scores over time and if any demographic variables predicted social-emotional outcomes. Approximately 22% of the variability in Total Protective Factors was due to the classroom, indicating that the scores were different across classrooms. A significant improvement in Total Protective Factors Scores was found when controlling for gender and ELL status ($p < .001$). On average there was a 4 point increase. Neither gender nor ELL status predicted children's Total Protective Factors scores. Conscious Discipline was the focus of professional development during this school year.

Students' social-emotional skills improved significantly from fall to spring.

PRESCHOOL SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS

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). The assessment selected to measure preschool 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. The BSRA was completed with 121 children from two schools.

Eight percent more students scored within the average range by spring.

FINDINGS. The majority of the students scored below the mid-point of the national average. By the spring, 65% of the children were within the average range. There were 8% 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.

BY SPRING, MORE CHILDREN HAD SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS AT OR ABOVE THE AVERAGE RANGE.
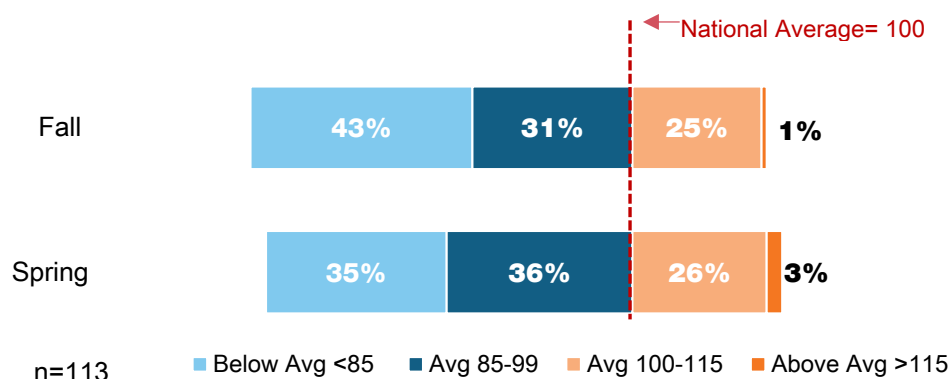
Students who were ELL scored significantly lower on school readiness than their English-speaking peers.

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses was completed to determine if there was change in student scores over time and if any demographic variables predicted vocabulary outcomes. Approximately 2% of the variability in Bracken scores was due to classroom, indicating minimal differences across classrooms. No significant change across time was found in Bracken scores. ELL status was a significant predictor of Bracken scores. Children who were English Language Learners (ELL) scored significantly lower than children whose home language was English ($p < .05$). They scored 6.81 points lower on average than children who were English speaking. Gender was not a significant predictor of Bracken scores.
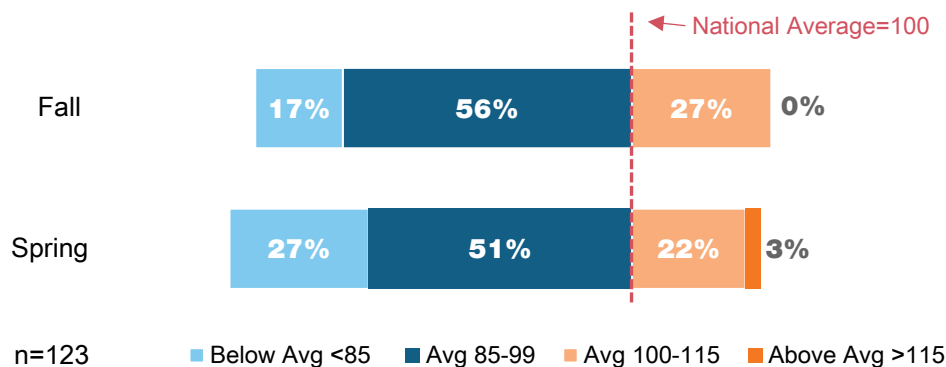
PRESCHOOL EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

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 (MEFS), an online assessment for children two and older, was used in the fall and the spring. This assessment was completed with 123 children from two schools.

FINDINGS. At both the fall and spring assessment periods, large percentages of children demonstrated executive functioning skills within the average range. By spring, fewer children scored at or above the national average.

BY SPRING, FEWER CHILDREN HAD EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE OR ABOVE.

A quarter 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	17%	56%	27%	0%
Spring	27%	51%	22%	3%

n=123

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses was completed to determine if there was change in student scores over time and if any demographic variables predicted executive functioning outcomes. Approximately 3% of the variability in the MEFS scores was due to the classroom, indicating that there was minimal variability in scores across classrooms. No significant change across time was found in MEFS scores.

Gender was a significant predictor of MEFS scores, with girls scoring significantly higher than boys ($p<.05$). On average, girls scored 2.93 points higher on the MEFS than boys. ELL status was not a significant predictor of MEFS scores.

Girls scored significantly higher than boys on their executive functioning skills.

Did parent participation in Parent University influence child outcomes?

At all of the schools, parents had the opportunity to participate in Parent University. Sixteen percent of the parents (n=40) engaged in Parent University courses and activities across the four schools. An analysis of covariance was completed to compare the language, social-emotional, and executive functioning school readiness outcomes of children whose parents participated in Parent University to those who did not, while controlling for ELL and IEP status. Children whose parents participated in Parent University did not score significantly higher than other children in the classroom. These results should be interpreted with caution given the small numbers used in the analyses.

GRADES K-1 STUDENTS READING AND MATH SKILLS

METHOD. In order to assess the academic outcomes of the children whose teachers received coaching in Grades K-1, the school district assessment, the MAP® Growth™ was used. The MAP® Growth™ assessment provides data on student academic growth in the areas of reading and math and monitors change over time. The MAP® Growth™ assessment was completed on 259 children across two schools.

FINDINGS. This is the first year that student outcome data was collected, so it should be considered as baseline data for the project. Data were analyzed in two ways, using national percentiles ranks (a comparison with a representative national sample) and Rasch UnIT (RIT) score (a determination of growth). After data from the school district is released, additional results will be reported including data comparison to other Reach Schools and analyses of Growth Percentiles. These results should be interpreted with caution, given that this is the first year this assessment has been used with Grades K-1.

The results of this baseline data for MAP Reading Assessment using national percentile ranks found that by spring 38% of the children scored at or above the 50th percentile rank. This was 8% fewer children than in the fall assessment period. MAP math results found the same percentage of students were at the 50th percentile rank or above at both assessment times. Results found that slightly more children scored at or above the 50th percentile rank in reading (38%) than in math (33%) in the spring, based on the national sample.

BY SPRING, FEWER CHILDREN HAD **READING** SKILLS AT OR ABOVE THE 50TH PERCENTILE RANK.
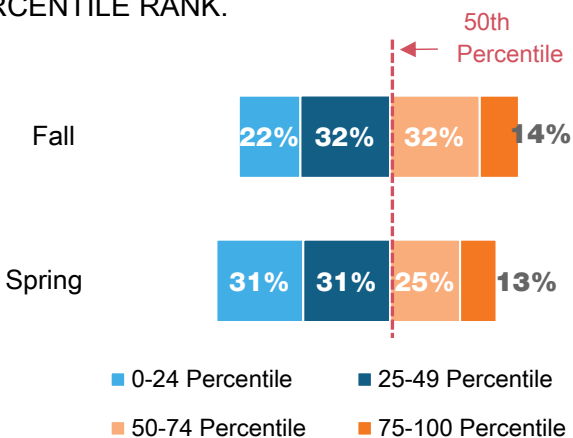

BY SPRING, SIMILAR % OF CHILDREN HAD **MATH** SKILLS AT OR ABOVE THE 50TH PERCENTILE RANK.
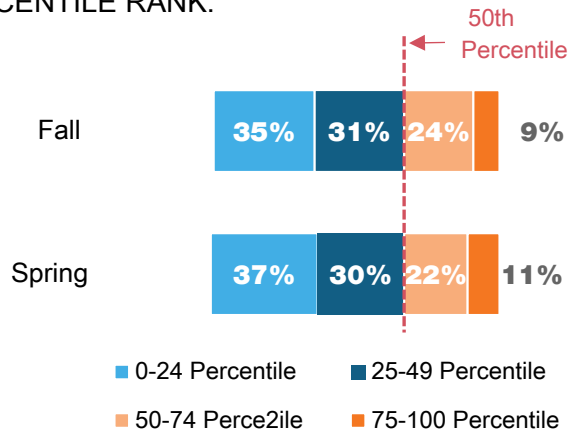
Descriptive analysis using the national percentile ranks was completed to examine patterns of scores based on ELL status. In reading, students who are English speaking had the highest percentages that were in the 50th percentile or higher. Both groups declined in percentages by spring. In math, students who were English speaking had the highest percentages that were in the 50th percentile or higher. By spring, there were slightly more students who were ELL that scored within this range, while for the students who were English speaking the percentages were relatively stable across time.

MOST STUDENTS' NATIONAL PERCENTILE RANK WAS LOWER IN THE SPRING IN **READING** AND WERE MAINTAINED OVERTIME IN **MATH**.

Students who were ELL demonstrated a slight increase in math.
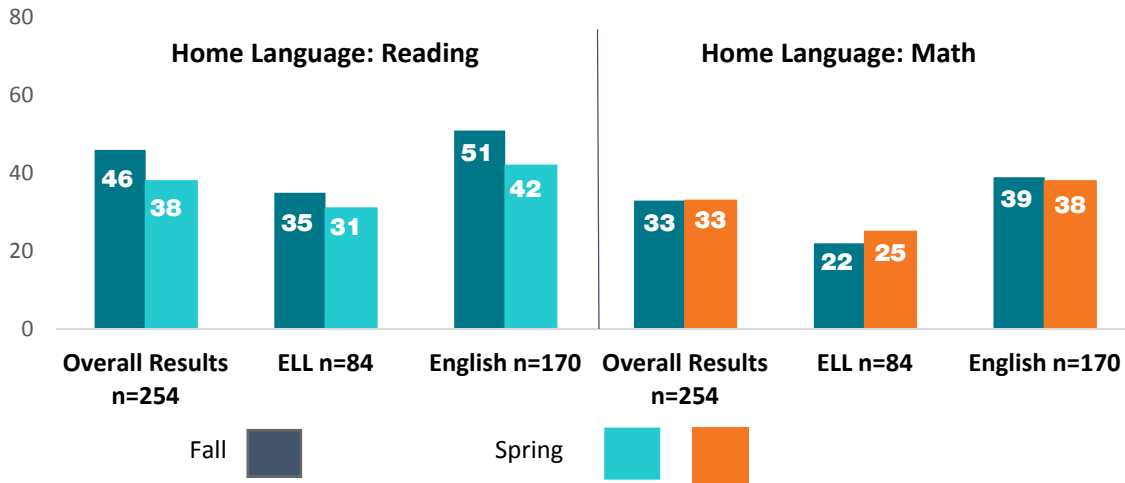
% of children that score at the 50th percentile rank or higher in Reading and Math: Comparisons across populations

The results of the growth analyses using MAP® GROWTH™ RIT scores found that almost all of the students demonstrated growth (improved RIT scores) in Reading (95%) and Math (98%). Of interest was the percentage of students whose rate of growth was sufficient to also improve their percentile rank score. This is seen as greater than expected growth. In reading, 38% of the students had greater than expected growth. In math, 44% of the student had greater than expected growth. These students demonstrated evidence of closing the academic gap in these two areas. There were also students who increased their RIT growth score, but decreased their percentile rank. In reading, this pattern occurred with 57% of the students and in math, it occurred with 48% of the students. These findings suggest that although this group of students demonstrated growth, they did not grow sufficiently to maintain their national percentile rank or narrow the academic gap.

Many K-1 students are making greater than expected gains in Reading (38%) and Math (44%).

Did student participation in preschool programs supported by the Learning Community influence student outcomes?

Twenty-nine percent of the students (n=74) in Grades K-1 participated in preschool programs that were supported by the Learning Community. An analysis of covariance was completed to compare the MAP reading and math scores of students who participated in the preschool programs compared to those who did not, while controlling for ELL and IEP status. The results found that students with the preschool experience demonstrated significantly higher scores in math as compared to their peers [$F(1, 242) = 6.014$, $p = .015$]. There were no significant differences between the two groups in reading [$F(1\ 250) = 3.505$, $p = .065$]. Significance is determined at $p < 05$.

Students with intensive preschool experience demonstrated significantly higher scores in math as compared to their peers at entrance to kindergarten.

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 personalized instruction for students and to improve classroom practices. Information from the data also informed coaching sessions. 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 demonstrated across all grade levels. Many supports were in place to support teaching staff including professional development opportunities and coaching, in addition to the dedication of the staff to implement change. Continued support to facilitate quality in the area of instructional support is recommended. Preschool children demonstrated significantly improved skills in social-emotional and vocabulary skills. Results also found differentiated outcomes based on demographics. Girls scored significantly higher than boys on executive functioning. Children who were ELL scored lower on school readiness and vocabulary skills. Students in Grades K-1 scored higher on reading than math skills. Continue to review curriculum practices for students in Grades K-1 to identify ways to enhance reading and math skills. In addition, continue to work with the teachers to identify ways to align curriculum and instructional practices across preschool to Grade 1 to maximize student learning.

Parent University

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Parent University is a comprehensive, two-generational family engagement program based on research and best practices that began in February 2015 at the Learning Community Center of North Omaha. Parent University provides individualized and center-based supports and services to families whose children are eligible to participate in the intensive early learning classrooms and families who have a child six or younger who reside in the following six elementary school attendance areas: Kellom, Conestoga, Franklin, Lothrop, Minne Lusa, and Skinner.

KEY COMPONENTS

INDVIDUALIZED SERVICES. Every parent who participates in Parent University goes through a thorough intake process and is assigned his or her own personal coach, an Educational Navigator, to assist in personalizing the program to best achieve the family's identified goals. The following individualized services are implemented based on need of the family.

NAVIGATOR SERVICES. Educational Navigators serve 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 visitation/parenting curriculum. In addition to home visits, the navigators attend courses with parents to be able to assist them in transitioning the concepts learned during center-based learning to opportunities in the home.

HOME VISITATIONS & GOAL SETTING. Navigators visit participants' homes to communicate with parents, conduct formal and informal needs assessments, connect parents with resources, model supportive learning activities, coach parenting skills, and attend to specific needs. Navigators use the Growing Great Kids curriculum to complete home visitations as necessary. On average, these visits occur approximately once every 30 days. Each participant works with their navigator to set personal and familial goals. All goals have strategies and both are S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound).   Goals and strategies are reviewed monthly during home visitations to ensure they remain relevant to the families' needs.

LIAISON SERVICES. Families who need more than monthly home visitation due to multiple risk factors such as, but not limited to homeless, history of trauma and lack of support system and knowledge of community resources can be assigned a Family Liaison through a partnership with Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc. Family Liaisons offer additional case management to families and serves as a liaison between Parent

University, the child's school and the families' homes. Family Liaisons have the capacity to meet with families weekly until the immediate needs are met.

CENTER-BASED LEARNING. Parents have access to an onsite Parent Resource Room with access to library services through a partnership with Omaha Public Library. In addition, parents can select to attend a variety of Parent University courses at the center developed based on the family needs. Courses fit into four primary majors which were developed based on identified family needs:

PARENTING. Parents learn effective ways to parent their child(ren) and ways to support child development and learning through a series of courses designed to strengthen the parent-child bond and interactions.

LIFE SKILLS AND WELLNESS. Parent University partner organizations provide courses to strengthen family self-sufficiency in areas like adult basic literacy, ESL, and employment skills. This strand or major contributes to stability so that families can support their students.

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

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

While parents attend courses, Parent University offers year-round child learning activities for the children focusing on the domains of early childhood development within two child learning rooms onsite.
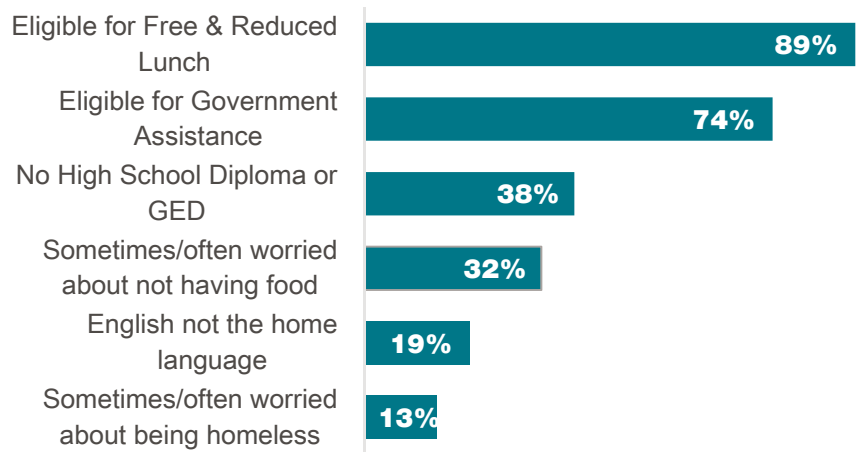
DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 218 parents were enrolled in Parent University, which was an increase of 50 participants from the previous year. There were more females (70%) than males (30%). The majority (93%) of the parents represent cultural and ethnic diversity. Most of the parents were African American (58%) or Hispanic (31%). Parents enrolled in Parent University had 395 children. Most of the parents (66%) were employed either part (12%) or full time (54%).   Slightly more than half of the parents had either less than a high school degree (38%) or a high school diploma (19%). The remainder of the parents had some college (28%) or a college degree (13%). The families had 375 children of which 178 were within the target age range (early childhood age range) for the program.

MOST OF THE PARENTS SERVED REPRESENTED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY.

White | 7%
Non-White | 58% (Black) | 31% (Hispanic) | Other

n=212
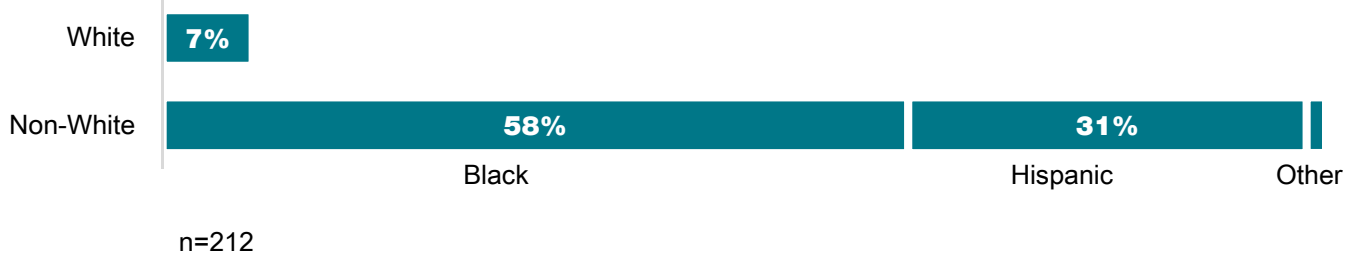
Parents in the program reported facing a number of challenges. Many parents (74%) accessed some type of government assistance (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, TANF, and Title XX). Food insecurities (worried about having adequate food for the family) or homelessness were of concern for many families. Several (30%) of the parents' home language was not English. Many (38%) did not have a high school diploma. 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 | 74%
No High School Diploma or GED | 38%
Sometimes/often worried about not having food | 32%
English not the home language | 19%
Sometimes/often worried about being homeless | 13%

n=218

COURSE PARTICIPATION

Program staff tracked parents' participation in the 38 courses that were offered this past year with many being offered more than one time. These courses represented different topics, each of which was aligned with at least one of the four primary majors of the Parent University. Throughout the year, many parents enrolled in more than one course. Across the 38 courses, 555 participants (duplicated count) were enrolled. The topics that had highest participation were Curriculum Night, Anger Management, Circle of Security, Healthy Relationships, Prime Time Reading, and Cooking Matters. This year there were fewer courses related to Life Skills and more presented in the other three areas.

MOST PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN COURSES RELATED TO LIFE SKILLS AND PARENTING.

Life Skills | 37%
Parenting | 34%
School Success | 21%
Leadership | 8%

0%   50%
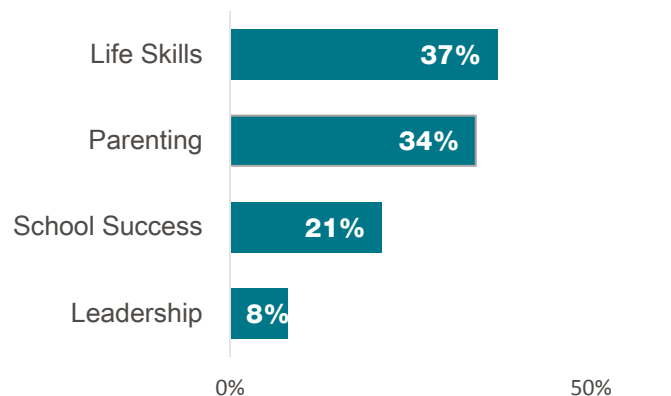
FAMILY OUTCOMES

FAMILY 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, participants completed the FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS), a broad measure of family well-being, at intake and every six months thereafter. The survey assesses five areas: Family Resiliency, Social Supports, Concrete Supports, Child Development Knowledge, and Nurturing and Attachment. Seventy-nine families completed the PFS at baseline and follow-up. The PFS is based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating strong protective factors.

FINDINGS. The results found that parents' attachment skills were the highest rated area. Other areas that were in the strengths range were Social Supports, Family Resilience (e.g., ability to openly share experience to solve and manage problems) and knowledge of Child Development. All of the areas were in the strong protective factors range.   Paired t-test analyses were completed to determine if there were significant changes over time. There was a significant improvement in parents' Family Resilience over time (p=.014, d=0.288) suggesting small meaningful change in this area.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED STRONG PROTECTIVE FACTORS ACROSS THE MAJORITY OF THE AREAS.

n=79   * Represents Signficant Change
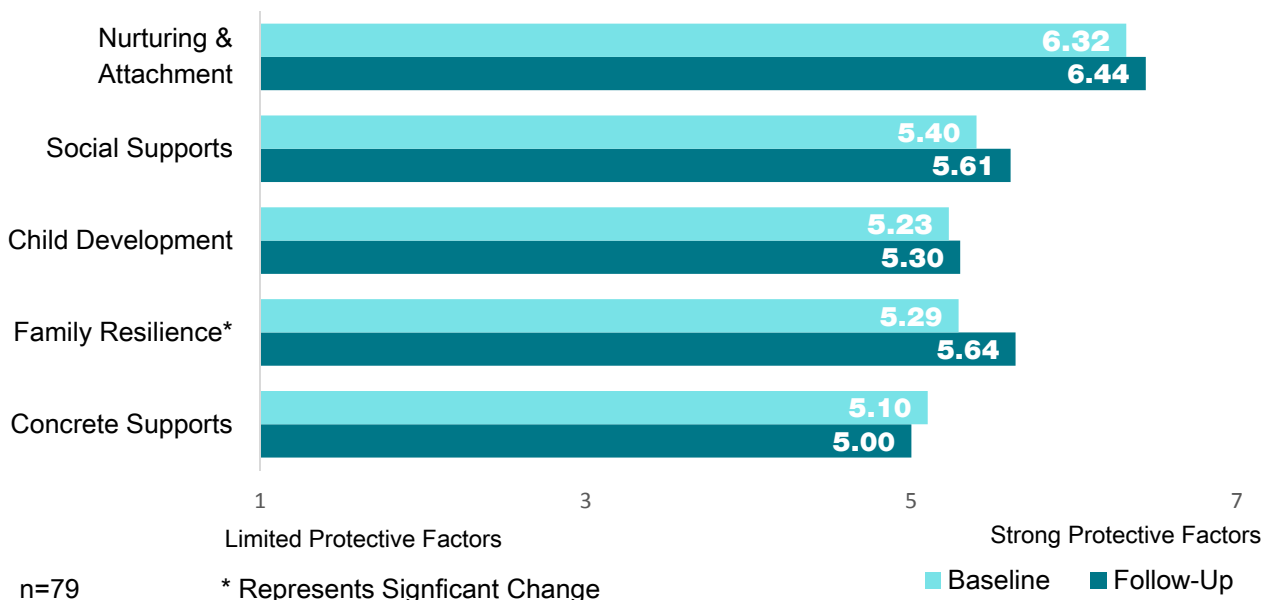
COMMON SENSE PARENTING (CSP)

Four Common Sense Parenting (CSP) sessions were conducted during the past year. A total of 39 parents participated and 67% 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 parents' 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.

FINDINGS. Twenty-five parents completed the PARCA. The results found that parents improved their parenting skills over time. The pre-test average score was 5.36 and the post-test scores were 5.56. No statistical analyses were completed.

Seven parents completed the PSS. The results found that parents' stress was lower at the conclusion of the course. The pre-test average score was 32 and the post-test scores were 28. No statistical analyses were completed.

CIRCLE OF SECURITY™-PARENTING (COS-P)

COS-P was another core parenting course provided at Parent University. A total of 14 participants enrolled across the two COS-P courses. These parents had 39 children.

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. Fourteen individuals completed the survey.
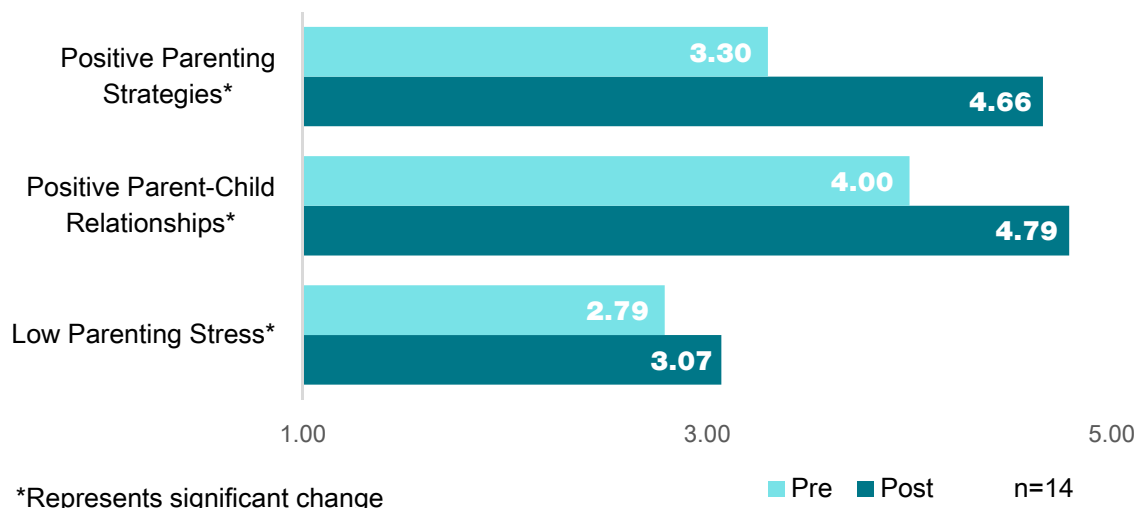
Circle of Security™-Parenting is an 8-week parenting program based on years of research about how to build strong attachment relationships between parent and child. It is designed to help parents learn how to respond to child needs in a way that enhances the attachment between parent and child. It is important to note this course is personalized to meet the needs of participating families.

FINDINGS. A descriptive analysis was completed to evaluate participants' perception by the end of the COS-P series across the program identified outcomes. There were positive differences found between scores at the beginning of the group and scores at the groups' conclusion in all three areas including parenting skills, low stress, and positive relationships with their children. The greatest gains were in the area of parenting skills.

Participants were very positive about their COS-P experience, using descriptors such as "very empowering" and "learning to interact with my child."

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED **SIGNIFICANT** IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR PARENTING STRATEGIES, THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN, AND LOWERED PARENTING STRESS.


Positive Parenting Strategies*: Pre 3.30, Post 4.66
Positive Parent-Child Relationships*: Pre 4.00, Post 4.79
Low Parenting Stress*: Pre 2.79, Post 3.07

■ Pre ■ Post   n=14

*Represents significant change

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

METHOD. The Child Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) measures the degree that parents report a positive close relationship with their child and the degree of conflict in their interactions. Scores are reported on a 5-point scale with 5 being representing high closeness or conflict. A total of 87 families had baseline and follow-up surveys.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND LOW CONFLICT WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

Families reported low levels of conflict.

FINDINGS. 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.

Conflict: Pre 2.15, Post 2.08
Closeness: Pre 4.66, Post 4.70
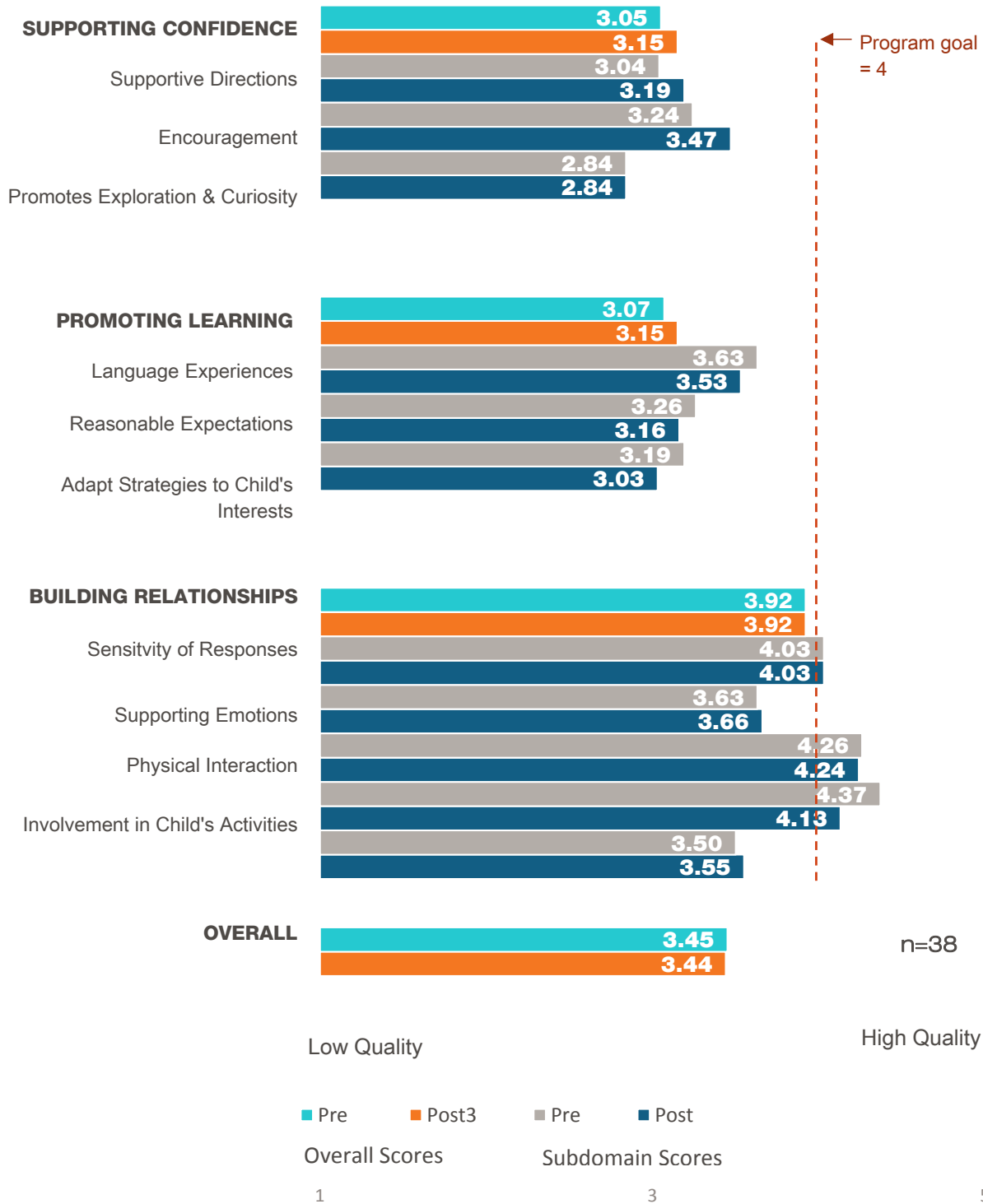■ Pre ■ Post   n=87
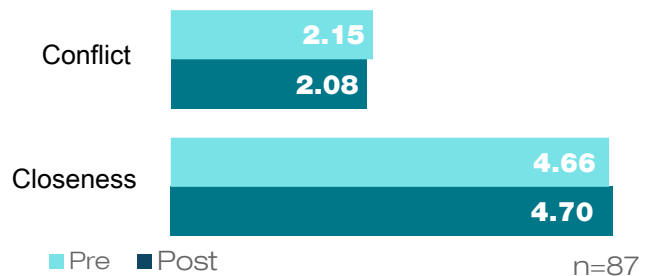
PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS

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. Thirty-eight parents had baseline and follow-up KIPS.

FINDINGS. Parent University families demonstrated parent-child interaction skills in the moderate range of quality.   A paired t-test analysis found that were not significant changes in Interactional Skills across time, suggesting skills were stable over time.   The strength of the parents' skills was in Building Relationships. The most improvement was in the area of Supporting Confidence (e.g., providing encouragement to their child).   The overall average scores for each subscale were below the program goal that was set by the state home visitation program.

There were many positive interactional skills rated on the individual items. Three areas that met the program goal were in the parent's sensitivity to their children's responses, their physical interactions (e.g., hugging, touching), and their involvement in their child's activities.   The most improvements were noted in their encouragement of their child, involvement in their actions, and providing them with supportive directions.

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.

SUPPORTING CONFIDENCE
- 3.05
- 3.15

Supportive Directions
- 3.04
- 3.19

Encouragement
- 3.24
- 3.47

Promotes Exploration & Curiosity
- 2.84
- 2.84

Program goal = 4

PROMOTING LEARNING
- 3.07
- 3.15

Language Experiences
- 3.63
- 3.53

Reasonable Expectations
- 3.26
- 3.16

Adapt Strategies to Child's Interests
- 3.19
- 3.03

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
- 3.92
- 3.92

Sensitvity of Responses
- 4.03
- 4.03

Supporting Emotions
- 3.63
- 3.66

Physical Interaction
- 4.26
- 4.24

Involvement in Child's Activities
- 4.37
- 4.13
- 3.50
- 3.55

OVERALL
- 3.45
- 3.44

n=38

Low Quality

High Quality

■ Pre ■ Post3 ■ Pre ■ Post

Overall Scores   Subdomain Scores

1   3   5

By spring, 54% 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 71% of parents read to their children at least three times a week. Analysis of baseline and follow-up data found that 44% of the parents were reading more to their children after participation in Parent University.

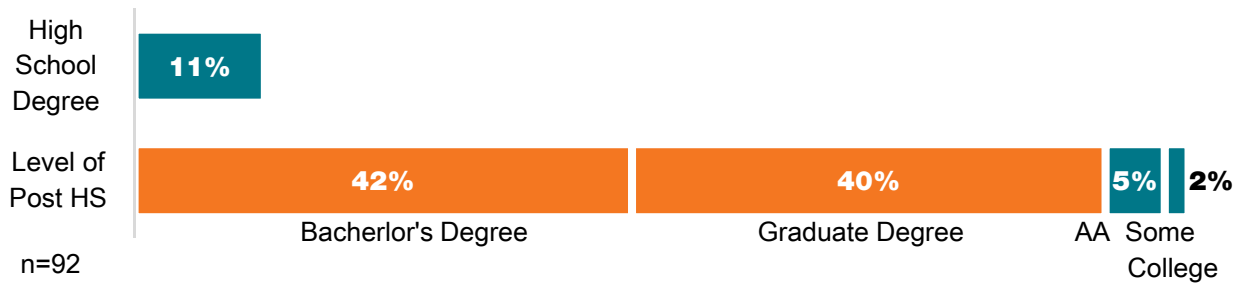**After participation in Parent University, 71% of the parents read to their children 3 times or more per week.**

FAMILY EDUCATION

What are the educational hopes for their children?

Parents were interviewed to determine their hopes for their child's future education. At the follow-up assessment, the majority of the parents reported that they expected their child to obtain a bachelor's (42%) or graduate degree (40%). Only 11% reported their child would only receive a high school diplomas. This data suggest that parents who participate in the Parent University have high aspirations for their children.

PARENTS HAVE A RANGE OF GOALS FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE.
MOST PARENTS HOPE THEIR CHILD OBTAINS A BACHELOR'S OR GRADUATE

High School Degree	11%

| Level of Post HS	Bacherlor's Degree 42%	Graduate Degree 40%	AA 5%	Some College 2%

n=92

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. Twenty-two parents participated in one of these two options, ELL (11) and GED (11). Pre-post assessments were obtained from 11 of the 22 parents, six from ESL and five in GED courses. The BEST assessment was used to assess their English proficiency. All ESL students with pre/post assessments (n=6) increased one or more levels on the BEST assessment, suggesting improvement of English skills. Only one (17%) of the parents at post-testing were in the Advance or High level of the BEST.

STUDENTS IN ESL CLASSES ARE GAINING ENGLISH SKILLS BY INCREASING AT LEAST ONE LEVEL.

ESL Students	100%

ESL

STUDENTS IN GED CLASSES ARE PASSED ONE OR MORE TESTS.

GED Students	45%

GED n=11
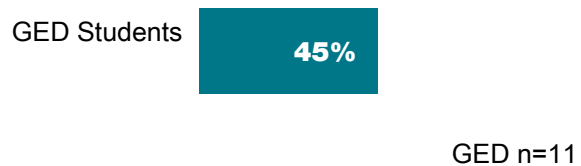
The Test of Adult Basic Education was used to assess student's math, science, reasoning, and social skills. Forty-five percent (45%) of the 11 enrolled parents passed one or more tests. One parent completed his GED.

How did Parent University support parents in obtaining their goals?

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. A total of 181 received this support and developed a service plan. The 274 goals were related to: School Success (35%), Life Skills and Wellness (44%), Parenting (18%) and Leadership (3%). High percentages of parents were continuing to work towards their goals with 38% had improved or achieved their goals.

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, plus two additional parents 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

Parents reported an increase in their parenting skills and relationship with their child.

Parents reported that participation in courses helped them "add tools to our tool box." Parents described how the courses helped them engage with their child, which resulted in better parent-child relationships. Parenting courses helped them both "reframe their emotions" so that their children know the "why" to their requests. They are adopting new disciplinary approaches that are different from what they experienced as children. Improved

> ### "Parent University adds tools to our toolbox."
>
> -Parent Advisory member

relationships between the parents and children were noted, by both mothers and fathers. They described how they are trying to help themselves and their children, and then they can reach out and help others.

Parent University creates a culture of caring and "family".
The benefits of Parent University, parents reported, were not limited to the courses. Several of the parents report that the center provides a culture of caring between parents, children and staff. "What keeps me here is the child care teacher enjoys my kids. That means a lot." The quality of the child care staff was noted to be much improved from previous years. There is a strong commitment of families to the

staff leadership, who they feel respect them. If leadership at Parent University makes request of the families, they "make it happen." A secondary benefit of Parent University is "the connections-I don't know where I would be without it." It was clear from the parents, that Parent University helped increase their social connections and networks. The families at Parent University serve as a support to each other. As one parent described, when she first came to the center the other parents were strangers. These parents then became "associates to friend and then family."

School-parent partnerships are being developed and strengthened. "I can advocate and work with the teachers better." This was a theme of the parents' conversations. They indicated that many parents feel intimidated by their school. Parent University has helped them learn that they can work as a team with their school and to address any concerns about how their child is doing early and not wait. 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 and also lets them know how they can support their child at home. Some of the parents have children in junior and senior high school. They felt that more information on how to support their children have access to ACT testing and information about college would be helpful. High school counselors are overwhelmed and they feel that they often are not informed about potential opportunities for their older children.

Life Skills and Education courses benefited parents. Several families started their involvement with Parent University by enrollment in GED or ESL classes, a key activity of a

2GEN approach. The English classes have been a big benefit to families. As one parent said, "The English lessons have given me more security. I can communicate better." These improved skills have helped them to communicate and connect with providers in the community (e.g., health clinics, schools, and grocery stores). The quality of the instructor was commented on by many, with parents using adjectives such as, creative, does a good job, and helpful.

Parents also found benefits in many of the other courses that Parent University had to offer. The life courses such as cooking and financial courses and mentoring have been important resources to the families. Learning to open and manage a bank account, engage in online banking and doing their taxes were all examples of skills learned in financial courses. The parents indicated that now they want courses that are not only about making ends meet, but also about how to invest so you could get ahead. To this point, expanding courses to include investment planning was recommended. Parents talked about how they have gained skills across many areas, "growth is awesome." As one described, Parent University "makes you get out of your comfort zone. When you get out of your comfort zone, it means you are growing." Some were surprised at how Parent University contributed to their own personal growth in leadership skills, advocating by speaking to legislators or speaking in front of community or parent groups.

Parents identified areas for improvement. Although the responses regarding Parent University were overwhelmingly positive, parents did identify a few areas for improvement. Parents find out about Parent University in a variety of venues, word of mouth, information at their school, and the media. Parents felt that expanded marketing efforts would benefit Parent University. Several suggested that there be more media coverage, "we have so many good things" that are happening at the center. Others recommended having parents talk about their involvement at

schools. Peer recommendations hold a lot of weight for parents. A second recommendation is for the Learning Community Coordinating Council to have more contact with the parents. Suggestions included having them talk with the Parent Advisory Council or sit in on a class. For parents who are enrolled in ESL classes, they would like to have more courses offered in Spanish.

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 investment planning. Continue to investigate the possibility to partner with Metropolitan Community College to support parents' career advancement.

Child Care Director Training

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The goal of the Child Care Director Training program is to work closely with community center directors to enhance their skills, provide a sustainable professional development system for staff and ultimately improve the quality of care and education for the children. The program is a relationship and strength-based approach which uses reflective practices surrounding the National Center of Quality Teaching and Learning Model.

The intensive training is also designed to support directors through the first two phases of Step Up to Quality (SU2Q), the state of Nebraska initiative, which promotes improvements in the quality of early childhood education. Participating providers can then receive additional coaching services and incentives to strengthen their businesses. All directors have enrolled in SU2Q.

The training/coaching model starts each month with a training session that includes the director of each center and the assigned coach. Onsite coaching then reinforces the content of the training. Each director identifies a teacher that the director would be responsible for coaching. This cycle of training and coaching is repeated each month. The first cohort began in spring of 2016 and concluded in the fall of 2018.

Director & coach attend training session

Director receives 1-1 coaching

Director will coach staff

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ten community child care directors participated in this project for the past two years. The directors have, on average, 18 years of experience (ranging from 2 to 38 years). Most serve infants through school age children. These 10 centers serve, on average, 94 children. The highest percentage of children served was school age children (42%) followed by preschool age children (34%).

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 *Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool Research Edition (TPOT-RE)* was used to measure the quality of the classroom instruction at two points in time. These tools were developed to measure the implementation of Pyramid Model strategies and focus on four areas of teacher practices: nurturing responsive relationships, creating supportive environments, providing targeted social-emotional supports, and utilizing individualized interventions. Practices measured in the Key Practices scale include building warm relationships with children, utilizing preventative strategies such as posting a picture schedule and structuring transitions, teaching social-emotional skills, and individualizing strategies for children with behavior challenges. Red flags measure negative practices such as chaotic transitions, children not engaged in the classroom activities, children running through open spaces, and harsh voice tone.

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

FINDINGS. Nine classrooms had pre-post assessments, evaluated by trained raters. Results found that classrooms demonstrated improvement over the course of the year. At the baseline observation, the preschool classrooms had on average 39% of Key Practices in place, which improved to 50% by spring. There was also a decrease in red flags evident in the classroom. At baseline, there were on average six red flags in place, which decreased to three in the spring.

TEACHERS INCREASED POSITIVE
PRACTICES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S
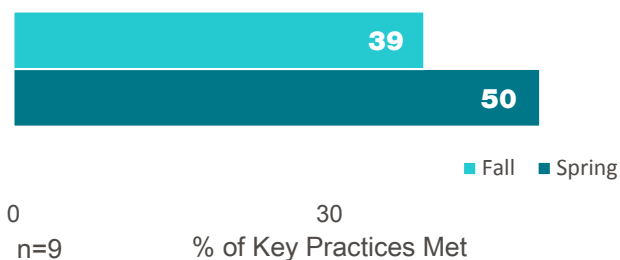
TEACHERS DECREASED THE NUMBER OF
RED FLAGS OBSERVED IN THEIR

	Fall	Spring
% of Key Practices Met	39	50

n=9

	Fall	Spring
# of Red Flags	6	3

n=9
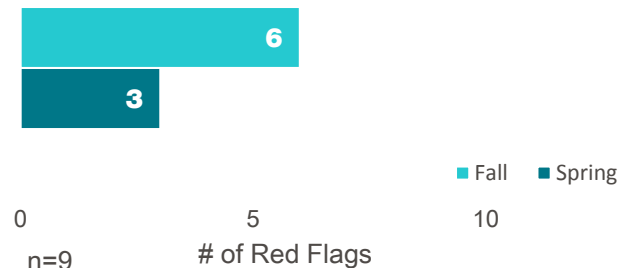
CHILD CARE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

METHOD. Staff at each childcare center were asked to complete an environmental survey that reflected the climate of their childcare center. The survey's key environmental components including: human resources (e.g., promotions, salaries); relationships (e.g., trust morale); climate (e.g., well-organized, encouraged to be creative); and infrastructure (e.g., common vision; agreement on educational objectives). This survey was completed in the fall and in the spring of this year.

FINDINGS. The results of the survey found that by the follow-up assessment, 60% of the center's staff rated the center's workplace environment positively with items occurring frequently or always. In the other centers (40%), the items were rated as occurring "somewhat regularly". Results from the pre/post survey found the ratings were similar across time. Staff described their centers as being caring, loving, and friendly. They felt it had a family atmosphere and created a culture of learning. Strengths were identified as have an environment where there was teamwork with an emphasis on creating relationships with children and supporting their learning. They felt that both the directors as their leader and teacher were valuable resources. Areas that they saw as needing improvement were to identify ways to increase parent participation, support teachers to go back to school, improve center staff communication, and have more materials and supplies available for the classrooms.
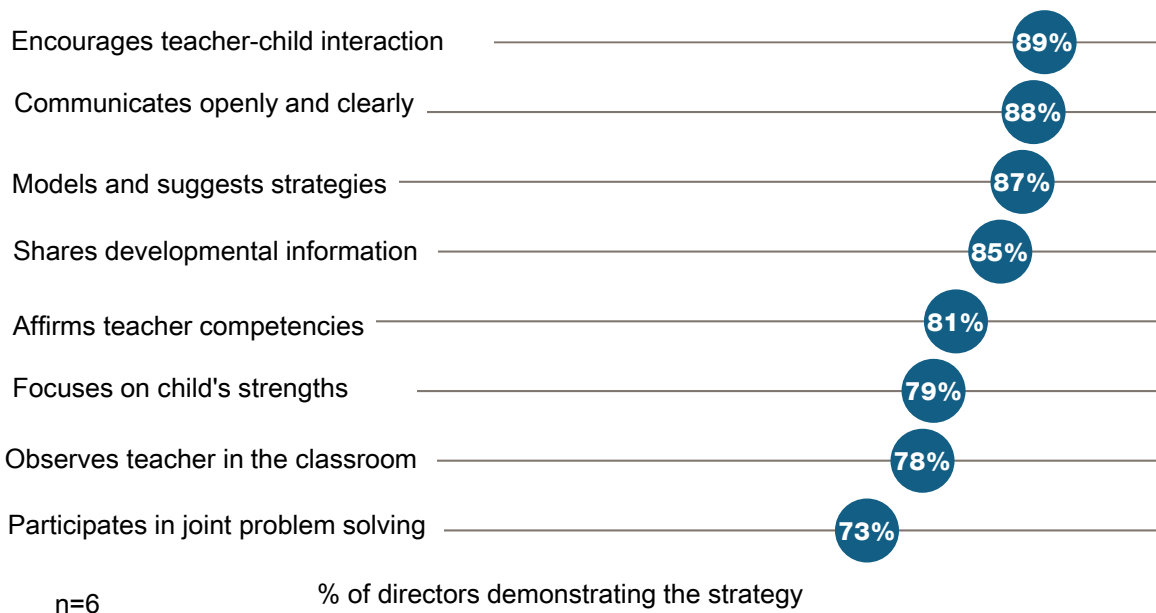
> The majority of the childcare teachers rated the workplace environment at their center positively.

DIRECTOR'S COACHING SKILLS

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 that they used with their teachers.

FINDINGS. This year the emphasis of the training and coaching strategies with the directors focused on quality classroom practices, teacher training strategies, and how to coach their staff. Videotaped baseline and follow-up data was collected to determine the efficacy of the directors' coaching of their staff. Descriptive analyses of the pre/post video clips ratings were found to be similar over time.   Directors' coaching strengths were in the areas of communicating clearly, sharing developmental information, and encouraging interactions with the children. Fewer directors use their observations of the classrooms as a point of discussion or engage in joint decision making with their staff.

DIRECTOR COACHING STRENGTHS INCLUDED CLEAR, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION, ENCOURAGING INTERACTIONS WITH THE CHILDREN, AND SHARING DEVELOPMENTAL INFORMATION WITH THEIR STAFF.

Strategy	%
Encourages teacher-child interaction	89%
Communicates openly and clearly	88%
Models and suggests strategies	87%
Shares developmental information	85%
Affirms teacher competencies	81%
Focuses on child's strengths	79%
Observes teacher in the classroom	78%
Participates in joint problem solving	73%

n=6   % of directors demonstrating the strategy

What did childcare directors and coaches think about the Childcare 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 (i.e., teachers, coaches, and directors).

THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND COACHES WERE OF HIGH QUALITY. Directors commented on the high quality and helpfulness of both the training and the coaching services they received. "The trainer's presentations were always very educational. She could really make those connections so we could easily understand them and take them back and give them to our staff, and apply them to whatever it is that we are doing." Each director mentioned the value of the support from the coaches, including the connections the coaches made both with their staff and parents.

"My coach was very motivating. Even if I got stuck, she wouldn't let me stay stuck long. She would push or she would fill in the blank."

-childcare director

COACHING MADE A DIFFERENCE AT THE CENTERS. 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. Once this foundation was set, coaches reported that the directors' confidence improved. There was greater intentionality and awareness of quality practices at the centers.   They also reported that directors were learning how to use the strengths of their teachers. 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.

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. As one director said, "…. The classes are very, very, helpful-they give you lots of tools that you can bring back and implement."

Teachers confirmed that their directors were "quick to share information after each training session." Several indicated that they had improved their ability to manage behavior issues, which resulted in less behavior problems in their classrooms.

"My director provides feedback to let me know if I'm on the right track. When she does, it's welcome, because we are all striving to improve."

-childcare teacher

DIRECTORS' TIME FOR COACHING IS LIMITED.
Directors understand the model is for them to coach and train their staff, but they find it difficult to carry out due to the multiple demands of their jobs. Many don't have regular staff meetings, so it means they have to share information with individual teachers during nap times, which is time consuming. Directors found it helpful when coaches helped to disseminate training information to their staff.

THE CHILD CARE PROJECT HAS HELPED TEACHERS IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATIONAL STATUS. Directors reported that there were education benefits to their staff by their participation in the project. "She (the coach) was very instrumental in encouraging my teachers to either do the CDA class, get enrolled in the TEACH program, take some classes at Metro….then they'll understand early childhood development and what their role is." As another director indicated, "This program has helped me to see that I need to work harder as a director to ensure the training

happens…. Three of our staff are also working on their GED and three are part of the TEACH program."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall recommendation was to increase the degree of individualized pacing and support for sites as they work to implement the training objectives and reach proficiency.   Coaches recommended a continued emphasis on basic classroom management and how to support children who exhibit problem behaviors.

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.

A partnership between MCC, the Learning Community, and Creighton University is providing an opportunity for students to obtain a cost-effective path to a teaching degree with an Early Childhood endorsement. Qualifying MCC early childhood students can enter Creighton as full-fledged juniors and graduate in two years.

DEMOGRAPHICS

During the 2017-2018 school year, MCC had a total of 326 students that were enrolled in early childhood courses. These students were enrolled in 116 courses. One MCC student has enrolled in Creighton as part of the 2+2 program that was a result of the MCC/Creighton partnership.

OUTCOMES

METHOD. Three strategies were used to evaluate this strategy including tracking graduates' short- and long-term education outcomes and an interview with a MCC graduate to discover what factors contributed to her success.

FINDINGS. A goal of the program is to increase the number of early childhood providers to address the shortage in the field. An additional goal is to provide a curriculum that supports teachers to gain skills in working with diverse populations of children and families. MCC Early Childhood program addressed this need by graduating 13 students with Early Childhood Associate's degrees and one Early Childhood Education certificate.

MCC tracks the students who graduate from the Early Childhood Associate's degree program to determine the number that continue their education at a 4-year institution. There were 21 students since graduating in 2015-2016 that have enrolled to pursue their studies in a 4-year institution.   The majority of those have enrolled at University of Nebraska at Kearney (45%), Bellevue University (25%) or University of Nebraska at Omaha (15%). Other schools have included Creighton University, Peru State College, and University of Texas at San Antonio.

The first student enrolled in the A+B program graduated from Creighton University in May 2018 with her Bachelor's degree in education with a teaching certificate and an endorsement in early childhood education.   In the fall of 2018, she was employed and is currently teaching in an early childhood classroom where she did her first practicum at MCC which was in partnership with the Learning Community. The results of an interview with her are summarized in the following section.

ONE STUDENT'S JOURNEY. Kate enrolled in MCC not sure of her career path, thinking that she would go into nursing or business management. Once she started her classes she made a list of what she wanted out of life and teaching rose to the top.   She felt "lucky" as the MCC practicum gave her "lots of hands on and real life experience….we had good examples and that really helped." Now that she is working the only area she would have liked more experience on was completing authentic assessments in the classroom, learning how to balance assessing while teaching and engaging students.   After three years at MCC, as she also worked in childcare settings, Kate graduated with her Associate's degree and was admitted to Creighton University (CU) as part of the 2+2 agreement. She expressed that her transition to CU was easy, indicating MMC had high expectations for their students.   "They (MCC) did a great job in preparing me." Kate reported that the faculty at CU were dedicated to their students, "They are intent to make sure you don't

fail…..It was a great experience." After two years Kate graduated with a degree in Elementary Education and a teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood.   As she began to apply for teaching positions, she wanted to go "where I could make the biggest difference" and "where there was cultural diversity." She took a position at Omaha Public schools in the classroom where she did her first practicum as part of her coursework at MCC. As she completed the interview, Kate remarked, "Choosing a job is a match-making process, you need to make sure the culture of the school is a match for you." She is enjoying her first year teaching experience, feeling lucky she has a coach, as well as former students and faculty at CU and MCC that you can "lean on as you need them."

RECOMMENDATIONS

MCC has implemented an innovative clinical approach for student training that was viewed favorably by their students. Long-term outcomes are needed to determine if these experiences increase the number of students who both feel more prepared to work with children in poverty, as well as, work in early childhood settings in the areas surrounding LCCNO and LCCSO. This year the first student has graduated from Creighton University and is working in the LCCNO area.

FAMILY LEARNING

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA

Child Learning Graduate

In recognition of outstanding classroom participation, successful social skills, and a positive attitude towards learning.

Family Learning Program

The Learning Community Center of South Omaha (LCCSO) is a comprehensive program based on national models and best practices from the two-generational learning approach. The center-based program originated in 2012 as a collaborative effort between the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and OneWorld Community Health Centers.

In 2015, three consecutive years of strong outcomes led to a partnership with Omaha Public Schools. The goal was to replicate the community center-based program concept into the daily routine of Gateway Elementary, the largest elementary school in the state of Nebraska.

In both locations, families participate an average of seven hours per week during the academic school year and throughout much of the summer. Families enrolled in the program participate in its six components:

ADULT EDUCATION FOR PARENTS

ENGLISH FOR PARENTS. Parents attend English for Parents classes during two half-days per week in order to improve their literacy and language levels. A primary goal is to help parents become more confident in talking to teachers and asking questions about their child's progress. An English for Parents class might show parents how to use computers to access school information, practice communication with teachers, and practice reading and learning activities that help make the home a better learning environment.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT. A parent's level of educational attainment is a strong predictor of a child's educational success. The goal of Adult Education for parents is to increase a parent's literacy in ways that will have positive effects on a family's economic well-being. This past year, the program piloted a semester-long Workforce Development course for parents in the program. This offering including computer and interview skill-building, resume development, a Certificate for Work Ethics Proficiency, and a National Career Readiness Certificate.

EDUCATIONAL NAVIGATORS & HOME VISITS. The center employs navigators who serve as personal parent advocates. They help families gain better understandings of the public school system, community resources, child development and learning strategies. Building strong relationships with participants is key. This ensures effective individualized education and support using a research-based home visiting/parenting curriculum, Growing Great Kids/Growing Great Families®.

In addition to home visits, navigators facilitate parent workshops. Topics include dialogic reading, math at home, prevention of summer learning loss and setting up routines and schedules for children.

The home visitation program is a critical link for family success. As a trusted advisor, navigators work with parents to set personal and family goals. Ideally, visits occur once every 45 days.

NAVIGATOR HOME VISITATION

- Conduct informal needs assessments

- Connect parents with resources

- Model supportive learning activities

- Coach parenting skills

- Respond to specific needs and concerns

PARENT WORKSHOPS. The program offers parenting classes and family-focused workshops to strengthen a parent's ability as the first and most important teacher for their children. Parents learn effective strategies to support child development and education. Class time is designed to strengthen the parent-child bond and promote positive interaction with offerings designed around family needs and requests.

Parent Classes and Workshops

Facilitated by Partners

- Money Management
  (First National Bank)
- Circle of Security®
  (Child Saving Institute)
- Family Strengthening
  (Latino Center of the Midlands)
- Domestic Violence Prevention
  (Women's Center for Advancement)

Facilitated by Staff

- Growing Great Kids®
- Love and Logic®
- Summer Learning Loss Prevention
- Math at Home

The parent workshop component, offered twice a month during the academic year, focuses on healthy parent/child relationships and social-emotional competence in students. Program staff collaborates with various community organizations to provide a wide variety of offerings. Courses include Common Sense Parenting®, Circle of Security®, Money Management, Domestic Violence Prevention, Love and Logic® and Cooking Matters®. All workshops teach proactive parenting skills and techniques for healthy family relationships that foster learning and well-being at home.

INTERACTIVE PARENT/CHILD ACTIVITIES. Interactive parent/child activities allow parents opportunities to practice new parenting strategies while learning together with their children. This, in turn, promotes positive parent/child interactions. Family-focused activities are planned and implemented either by program staff or partner organizations.

Some interactive parent/child activities include a field trip. Entire families might visit a museum, the state capitol, or the library. On non-school days for students, the teaching staff in the program will typically develop lesson plans for entire families on themes like STEM learning, music, art, or literacy.

Parents also participate in College Preparation for Families (offered in collaboration with the University of Nebraska at Omaha Service Learning Academy). The goal is for children and families to gain a better understanding of college systems in the United States and how families

can plan for the future. Other enrichment programs include: Prime Time Family Reading Time®, String Sprouts (Omaha Conservatory of Music), and Opera Omaha family programming.

CHILD LEARNING ACTIVITIES. While parents attend classes, the Learning Community Center of South Omaha offers year-round learning activities for young children. The focus is social skills and cognitive concepts to support school readiness in a safe environment. The child learning rooms partner with many organizations for enhanced offerings including: Littles Lab (Do Space), Story Time (Omaha Public Library and Gateway Elementary Library), nutrition classes for children (Center for Reducing Health Disparities), and gardening programming (City Sprouts and The Big Garden).

In addition to the primary components, support services are provided for families struggling with significant needs through a partnership with Lutheran Family Services. Family Liaisons offer crisis intervention and help families resolve challenges, access free or affordable community resources, and ensure that basic needs are met. They also work with families one-on-one to move forward with educational and vocational goals.

A TWO-GENERATIONAL 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 PARTNERSHIP

Since 2014, UNO has partnered with LCCSO to provide opportunities for families and for UNO students. The purpose of the college prep program is two-fold: 1) To provide families with enough information and experiences to encourage them to consider college a possibility for themselves and/or their children and 2) To provide teacher candidates from UNO with experience in working with bi-lingual and multi-cultural families. To determine the impact of the partnership with UNO's Service Learning Academy, focus groups were conducted with families who had participated in the program.

Through analysis of focus group data the following themes emerged.

PARENTS GAINED KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE IN UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESSES INVOLVED IN APPLYING FOR AND ATTENDING COLLEGE. Parents mentioned not knowing much about the college process prior to the program and talked about it "feeling impossible" and that getting into and paying for colleges was "very complicated". Many of the participants reported being unaware of all of programs, activities and facilities a college/university like UNO had to offer. After the College Prep program, parents feel more confident in the process and excited about the opportunities. They discussed how the classes motivated both themselves and their children because attending college now seems possible. Parents were particularly excited to learn about all of the financial aid programs available as many noted they had assumed college was "too expensive" to even consider for their children.

STUDENTS OF PARTICIPANTS GAINED INCREASED BELIEF THAT ATTENDING COLLEGE WAS A POSSIBILITY AND THEY NOW HAD THE TOOLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Parents reported that the UNO students helped to motivate their children into considering college. Even when children were younger, parents reported that by the end of the program they were excited about attending college. In some instances, older children reported being more motivated to attend college and some reported a change in their future plans, from going directly into the workforce after high school to now wanting to attend college. Prior to the College Prep classes, a student with a learning disability was unaware that she could attend college. Upon learning about the possibility, her parent reported that "She was so happy; it was like her world lit up!"

> "My children were amazed. I say those words because I saw their faces, their emotions, their happiness and willingness to further their education"
>
> -college prep parent

ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOCUS GROUPS RECOMMENDED PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM. Participants who had participated more than once noted that the program had improved since its inception. Participants mentioned that the UNO students involved in the program were helpful and professional. The information provided by the College Prep program was useful and had helped parents develop future education plans for their students. Parents recommended that more time be spent on the financial aid options including how to apply for scholarships.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2017-2018, the Family Learning Program served 335 families and 503 target students (birth to 6) and 394 siblings across three sites. The Learning Community Center of South Omaha had the highest number of family participants, followed by the program located at Gateway Elementary) and then Educare Omaha at Indian Hill.

27%	35%	22%	16%
0-1 Year	1-2 Years	2-3 Years	3-4 Years
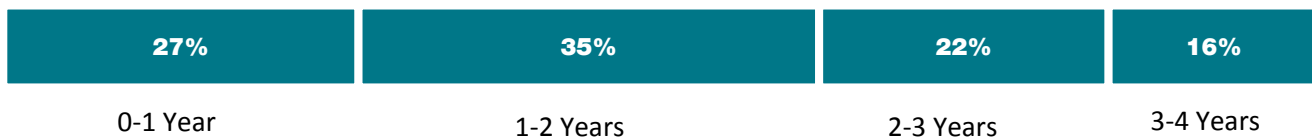
Of the families attending the Family Learning Program, 53% needed childcare to attend programming, 89% reported that their students qualified for free-reduced lunch and 38% have been attending programming for 2 years or longer.

OUTCOMES

QUALITY OF PROGRAMMING

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 September 2017 to allow participants (N=104) 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 WITH
CENTER PROGRAMMING

Program	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied
Educational Navigator		8	94
English Teachers		11	93
English Classes		14	89

n=103

■ Unsatisfied ■ Somewhat Satisfied ■ Satisfied
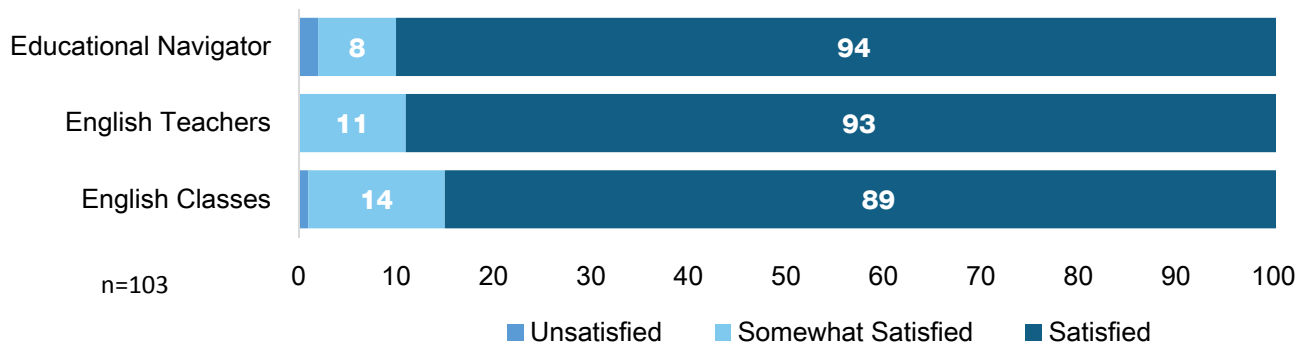
Participants reported high levels of satisfaction. All of the participants reported being at least somewhat satisfied. Less than one percent of the participants reported being unsatisfied with the services provided by an Educational Navigator and the English classes. Overall, participants are pleased with the programming offered as one remarked, "It has been helpful, because at home I was by myself, and here I interact with many people. It makes me feel more confident, and I learn from everyone and everything they offer."

English classes were viewed as necessary in learning the basics to communicate with the school and the community. Participants appreciated the supportive environment of the classes, having written materials prepared and opportunities to practice their skills in English. As far as improvements, multiple participants inquired about adding homework and/or more practice with writing. The instructors were valued by the participants as being patient, helpful, and interested in student growth.

Educational Navigators provided a valued service for families. Participants talked about positive relationships with the navigators and viewed them as a resource for guidance and as knowledgeable about other programs. Navigators are viewed as having good communication skills and working for the benefit of families, both for those families new to the country and for those who have been in the country longer. One improvement suggested was to employ more navigators to help with caseload and for families to increase the frequency of their access to their navigator.

The program continues to have impact on families at home, with their children, with school, and within the community. Many participants discussed how their child(ren) has been more prepared for school, how they, as parents, feel more confident and prepared to help and encourage school, and how the English classes have led to more communication with teachers and school in general.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

NUMBER OF PARENTS FEELING COMFORTABLE ENGAGING WITH ACADEMICS AND THE SCHOOL INCREASED AFTER ATTENDING PROGRAMMING.
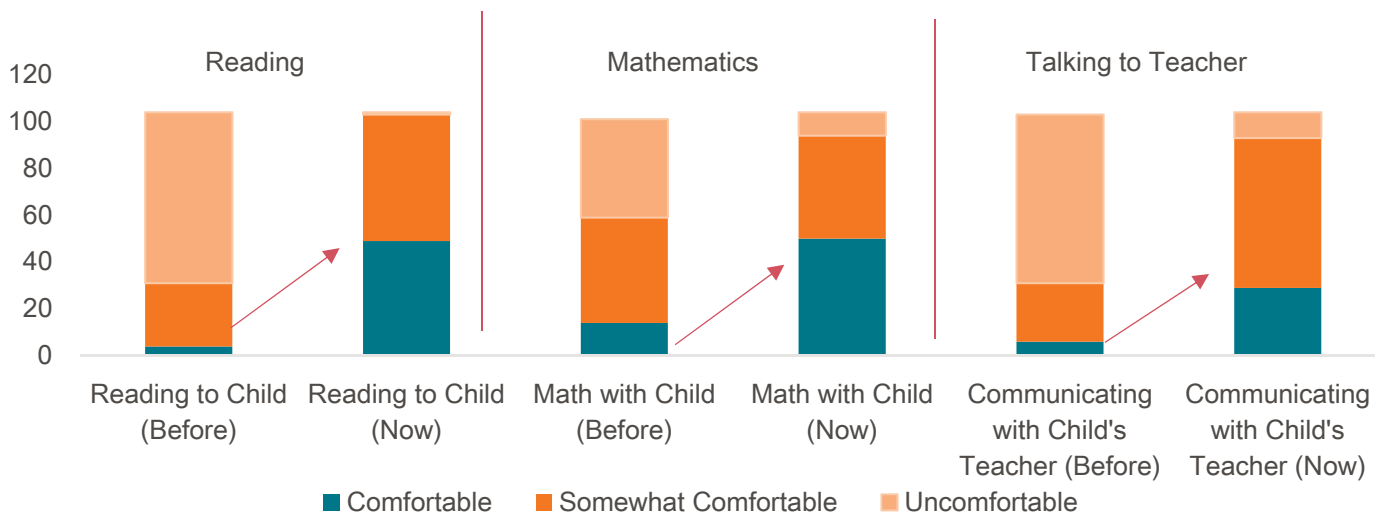
SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

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. The percent feeling comfortable increased from 4% to 49% (+45% increase) for reading and 14% to 50% (+36% increase) for math. Additionally, parents reported feeling more comfortable communicating with their child's teacher and the school, 6% comfortable to 29% comfortable (+23% increase). The results of the 2017-18 focus groups are consistent with those from 2016-17 in that families feel more comfortable and confident in multiple aspects and attribute the increased confidence and comfort levels to the programming offered at LCCSO.

> **"It has been a great impact, because I feel more confident when I go to my son's school."**

> **"I don't need a translator anymore. I feel excited that I'm able to talk with the teachers."**

> -parents at LCCSO

In addition to an increase in feeling comfortable engaging with the school, participants reported more interactions within their communities and with English-only speakers. The percentage of participants feeling comfortable talking with people who only speak English increased from 1% to 29% while the percentage of participants who felt comfortable interacting with community members increase by 44% (from 2% to 46%).

PARTICIPANTS REPORTED INCREASED LEVELS OF COMFORT WITH INTERACTION IN THE COMMUNITY.
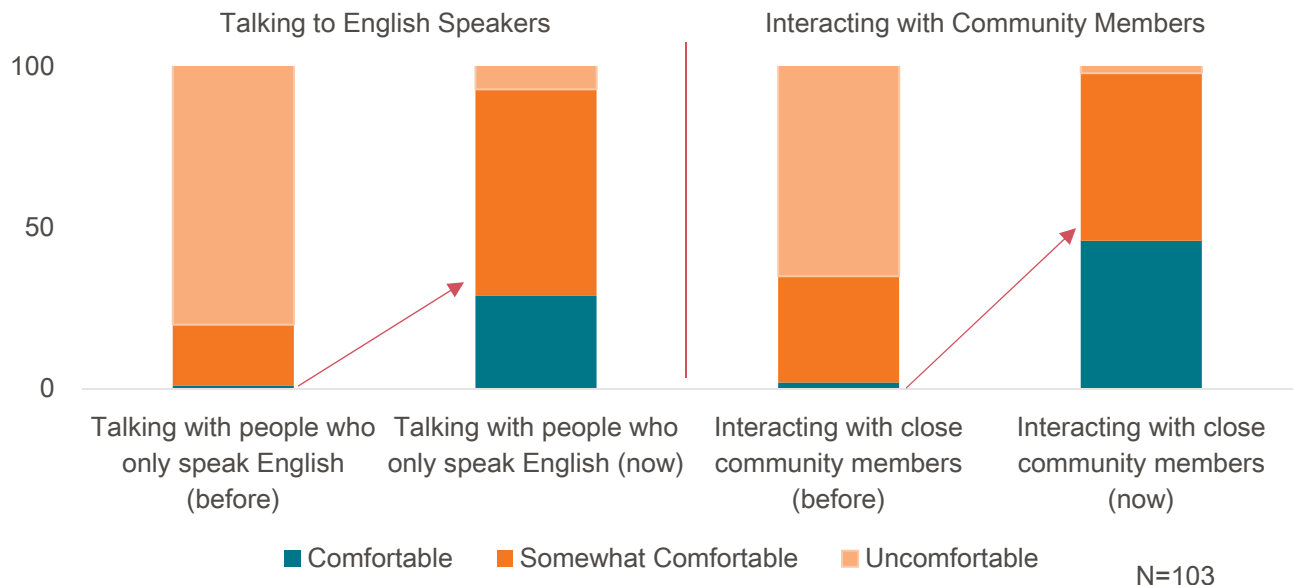
Participants also discussed the benefits of other classes attended at the center. Parenting classes continue to be well-received by the participants as they mentioned benefits of better communication with their children, learning new ideas to try at home and how to handle manage difficult behavior with less stress. Participants also mentioned the cooking/nutrition class and the financial class as providing beneficial and highly useful information.

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, Educational Navigators, 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, math classes, computer/technology classes, and additional financial literacy classes.

Participants see the need for additional Educational Navigators. Multiple participants mentioned that while the navigators did a good job in responding to questions and needs, they felt the navigators' caseloads were too high. With more navigators, families could access the services more frequently.

PARENT EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

METHOD. English acquisition was assessed using the BEST Plus. This assessment was administered by UNMC program evaluators after a specified number of hours of English instruction. Scores reported this year are of the 185 BEST Plus assessments completed by the evaluation team. For the 335 participants in the program, the average total number of ESL hours experienced in the program was 223 hours.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

PARTICIPANTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS VARIED. MORE THAN
HALF HAVE AT LEAST INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH SKILLS.
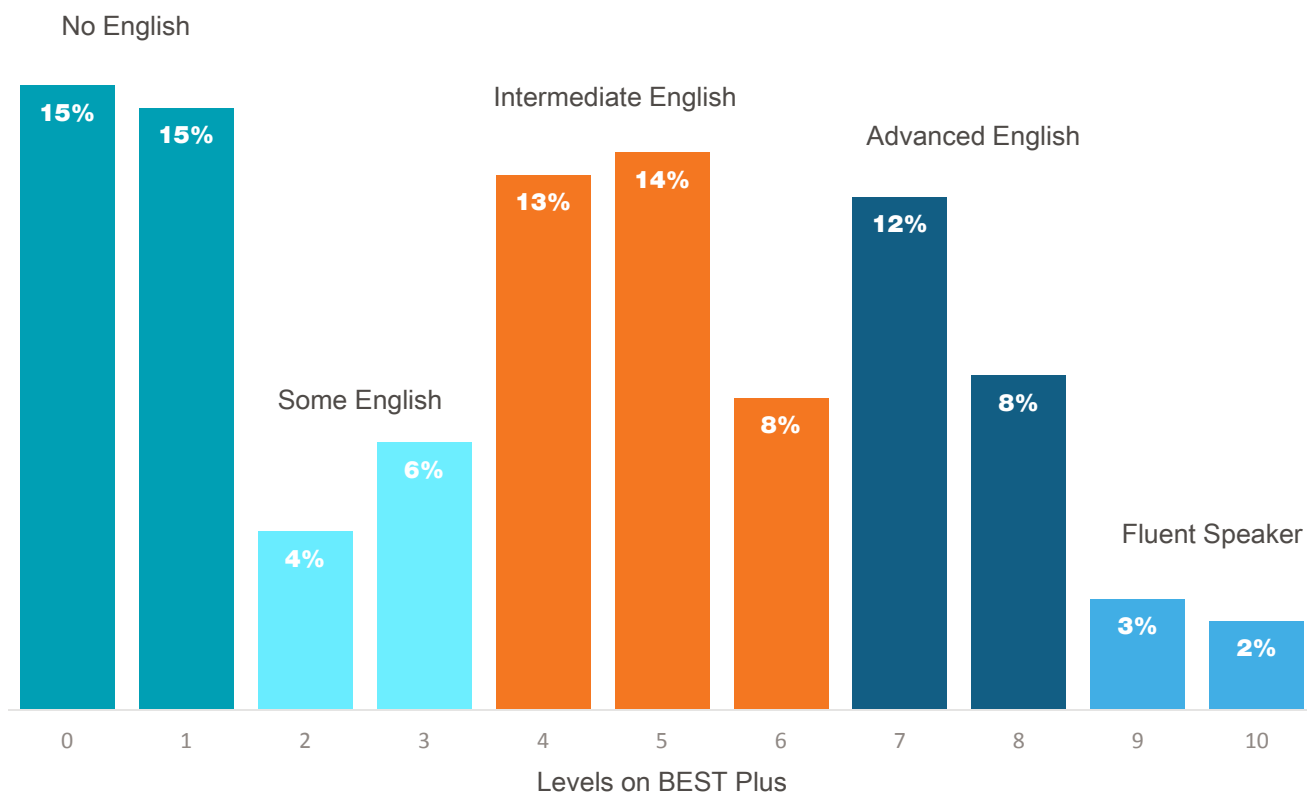
FINDINGS. On average, participants started the program knowing some basic phrases and understanding social conversations with some difficulty. At this beginning level, participants may need repetition of new vocabulary and phrasing. With the English classes provided by the program, many participants 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.

PARENTING PRACTICES

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.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION RESULTS

FINDINGS. Thirty-two participants had pre to post scores on the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scales (KIPS). 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.

It should be noted that the chart displaying pre and post KIPS reflects participants with different dosage. Some participants have more than two years of programming while others finished year one in the program. Only participants with at least two KIPS scores (pre and post) are included in the chart below. Participants with only one score (those with less than one year of programming) were not included in the analysis. In future years, as the KIPS sample with both pre and post scores increases, scores will be examined based on dosage. Most families (68%) received 1-3 home visits while 9% had home visits more frequently. Home visitation varies based on need and request of families.
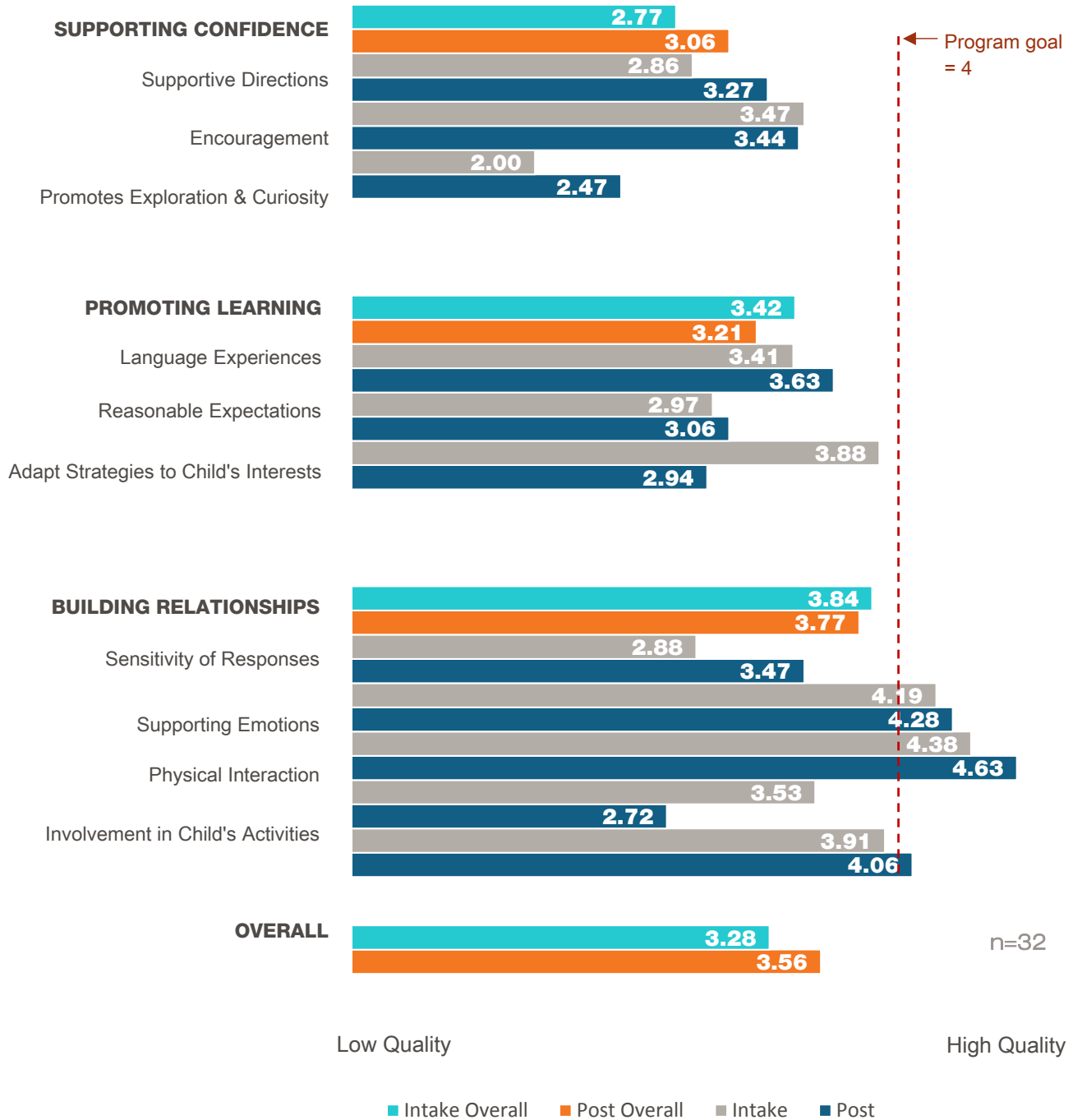
MOST FAMILIES RECEIVED 1-3 HOME VISITS DURING THE YEAR.

Legend: ■ 0   ■ 1 to 3   ■ 4 to 7
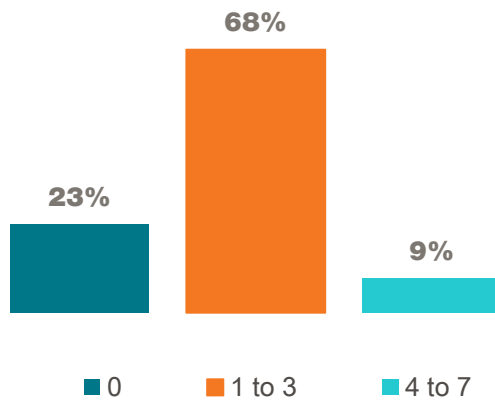
Families needing more intensive supports received home visits from more than one source, so both LCCSO and Lutheran Family Services staff may be involved. Additionally some families choose to receive visitation at a location other than their home. Finally, graduates of the program may participate in certain programming at LCCSO, but they do not receive home visitation.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED STRENGTHS IN THE AREAS OF PHYSICAL INTERACTION, INVOLVEMENT, AND SENSITIVITY WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

Parents met Program Goals in three areas.

SUPPORTING CONFIDENCE
- 2.77
- 3.06

Supportive Directions
- 2.86
- 3.27

Encouragement
- 3.47
- 3.44

Promotes Exploration & Curiosity
- 2.00
- 2.47

Program goal = 4

PROMOTING LEARNING
- 3.42
- 3.21

Language Experiences
- 3.41
- 3.63

Reasonable Expectations
- 2.97
- 3.06

Adapt Strategies to Child's Interests
- 3.88
- 2.94

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
- 3.84
- 3.77

Sensitivity of Responses
- 2.88
- 3.47

Supporting Emotions
- 4.19
- 4.28

Physical Interaction
- 4.38
- 4.63

Involvement in Child's Activities
- 3.53
- 2.72
- 3.91
- 4.06

OVERALL
- 3.28
- 3.56

n=32

Low Quality — High Quality

■ Intake Overall ■ Post Overall ■ Intake ■ Post

1   3   5

Ninety-two families had their baseline KIPS in 2017-18 while 32 families had a 2nd or 3rd KIPS in the same time frame. For the analysis, only participants with at least two scores are included. Three areas met the program goal of a score 4 or above with Supporting Emotions, Physical Interaction, and Open to Child's Agenda with all of the post mean scores showing improvement and being above a score of 4. Overall, participants scores improved from M=3.28 to M=3.56 which while not significant is trending in the direction of the program goal. Paired sample t-tests were conducted using pre-post KIPS scores (n=32). Only one area showed significant change from pre to post, Adapt Strategies to Child's Interests, decreased significantly from pre to post.

COMMON SENSE PARENTING

METHOD. Multiple participants completed the Boys Town Common Sense Parenting classes. Analyses of data showed significant gains for parents across several domains. Data from two cohorts were collected and analyzed.

PARENTING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For Cohort 1, Common Sense Parenting classes were well-attended with average attendance of 84% of sessions attended by participants. 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 (100%), helped improve child(ren)'s behavior (100%), and helped to improve parenting practices (100%).
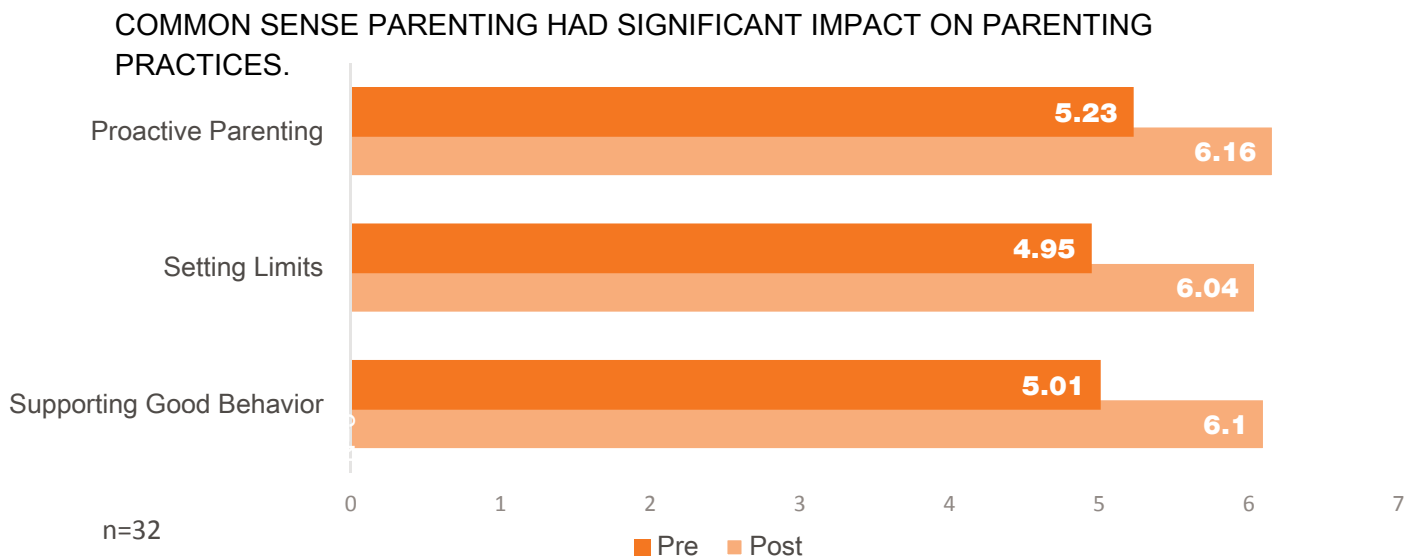
COMMON SENSE PARENTING HAD SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON PARENTING PRACTICES.

n=32

All of the subscales measured by the PARCA pre to post found **significant gains** as measured by a paired-samples t-test at the post-test. For Proactive Parenting (d=.98) and Setting Limits (d=.88) the effect sizes were in the large range. For Supporting Good Behavior domain, the effect size was in the medium range (d=0.72).

A second cohort (N=98) enrolled in Common Sense Parenting with 68% completing the program. Average attendance per session was 84%. Of those participating in the program, 61% reported an annual income of >$15,000, 70% were not employed and 97% were female.

As demonstrated in the chart below, participants made **significant gains** in each area measured by the PARCA. All of the subscales measured by the PARCA pre to post found **significant gains** as measured by a paired-samples *t*-test at the post-test. For Proactive Parenting (*d*=.96) the effect size was in the large range. For Supporting Good Behavior (*d*=.75) and Setting Limits (*d*=.77) domains, the effect sizes were in the medium range.

On the parent survey administered at the end of the programming, 100% of participants reported the series had helped improve parenting skills, reduce stress related to parenting, and would recommend the program to a friend.

COMMON SENSE PARENTING HAD SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON PARENTING PRACTICES.
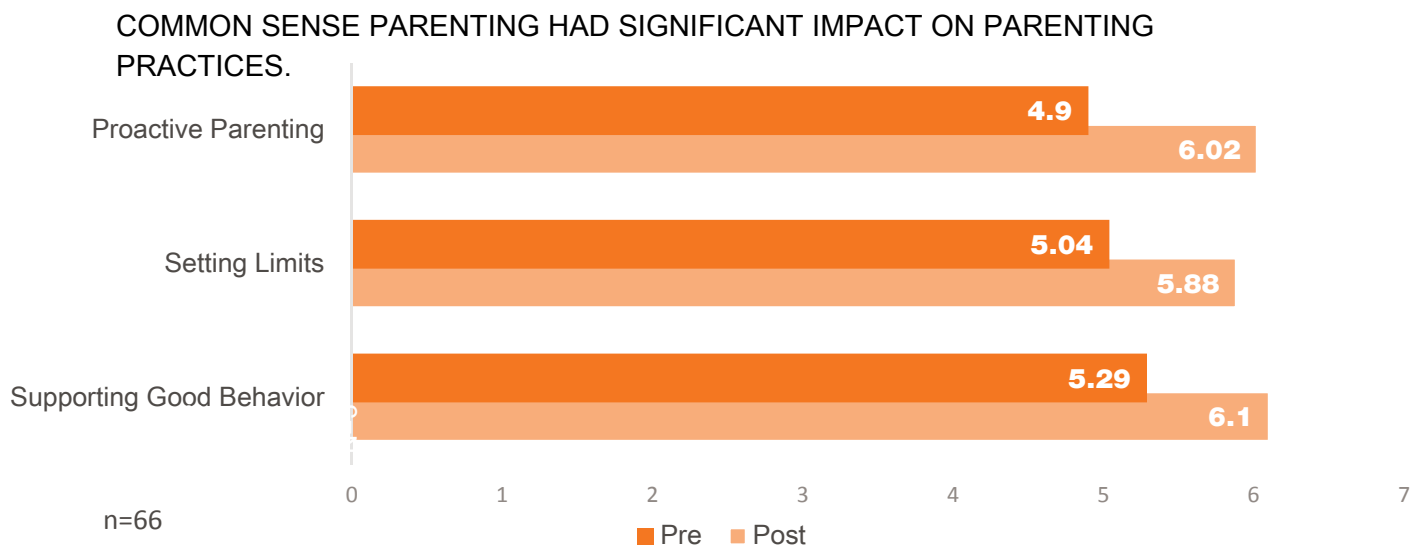
Overall, participants across both cohorts reported high levels of satisfaction with the programming and reported improvement in how they now interact with their children. Comments about no longer yelling as much, remaining calm and having more parenting tools were common in the open-ended items on the parent survey. Parents reported that they would like the classes to be longer and have the opportunity to ask about individual situations. Some wished that they could teach other parents what they had learned in the classes.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A partnership was established with Metro Community College to provide work readiness classes for participants at LCCSO. Using the curriculum, *Bring Your "A" Game*, eighteen participants completed the training modules held at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha location. Skill assessments were conducted in the areas of applied mathematics, graphic literacy and workplace documents. At the end of the program, 72% earned their work readiness certifications (National Career Readiness Certificate).

Additionally, participants were asked to take a pre-post self-assessment examining work readiness skills and confidence.

PARTICIPANTS GAINED CONFIDENCE AND WORK READINESS SKILLS. AREAS SHOWING THE MOST GROWTH
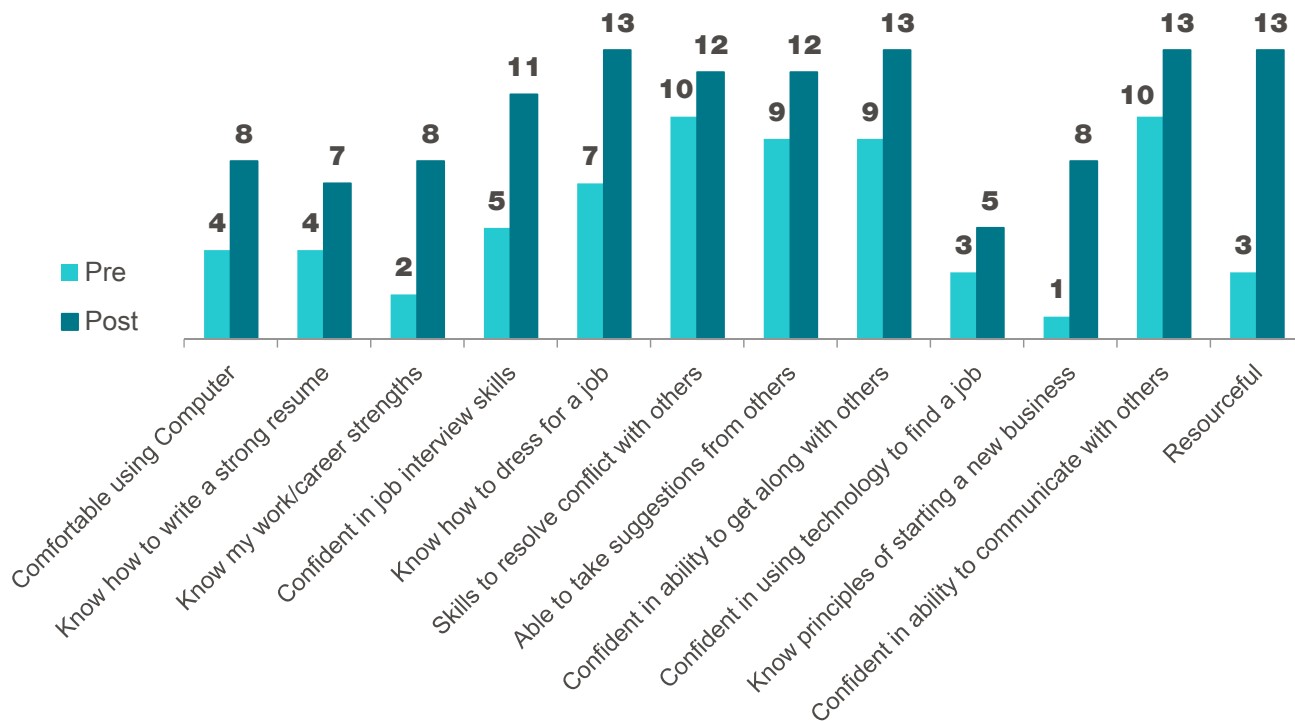
STUDENT OUTCOMES

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

Students entering kindergarten in the 2018-19 school year were given the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS) as an assessment of executive functioning skills. The MEFS is a broad indicator of self-regulation, memory, and flexibility.

MOST STUDENTS HEADING TO KINDERGARTEN SCORED IN THE AVERAGE RANGE WITH 23% SCORING AT OR ABOVE 100.

National Average=100

| 9% | 68% | 23% |

■ >84 ■ 85-99 ■ 100-115

0   5   10   15   20   25
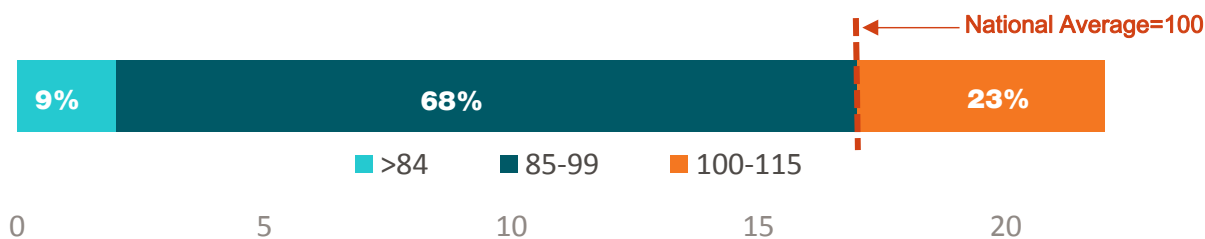
Students' scores (N=17) were promising with 91% in the average range and 23% scoring at or above a standard score of 100. Since the test can be given either in English or Spanish, the scores reflect students' executive functioning and are less influenced by the language of the assessment. The scores indicate students are heading to kindergarten with the executive functioning skills conducive to future school success.

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Student outcome data will be reported as an addendum when released from Nebraska Department of Education.

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Family Learning program continued the pattern of producing positive results across the program components offered. Continuation of a strengths-based approach for families and their children is recommended as families report feeling valued and scaffolded to be successful. Families continue to need the supports provided by the center including on-site childcare.

Continue developing and offering two generation programming as both the College Prep and work readiness program showed positive effects. Consider pursuing additional programming for parents including additional GED offerings and other workforce development classes.

Revisit the home visting component of the program. Determine what is necessary for families to continue to feel engaged, improve parenting practices, and build relationships with the navigators.

SCHOOL
DISTRICT
**PILOT
PROGRAMS**

Instructional Coaching

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 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.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

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

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 Coaches served 181 teachers and approximately 1862 students.

RALSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS. The Instructional Coach primarily serves two higher poverty buildings with academic data that showed high needs through a blend of the Jim Knight and Diane Sweeney student-centered coaching framework. The coach also assists with the mentoring program to support new elementary teachers and developing peer coaches across the district. Seventy teachers and 600 students were impacted by coaching.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Training at both the district and from Lesley University on coaching, provides the bulk of the framework for literacy facilitators in Omaha Public Schools. Coaches receive 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). Approximately 100 teachers and 2070 students were impacted in 2017-18.

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. Thirty-five teachers and 670 students were impacted by Instructional Coaching.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2017-2018, approximately 425 teachers and potentially 5,202 students were served across the four participating districts by 20 Instructional Coaches. All of the schools funded by the Learning Community for Instructional Coaching were elementary buildings.
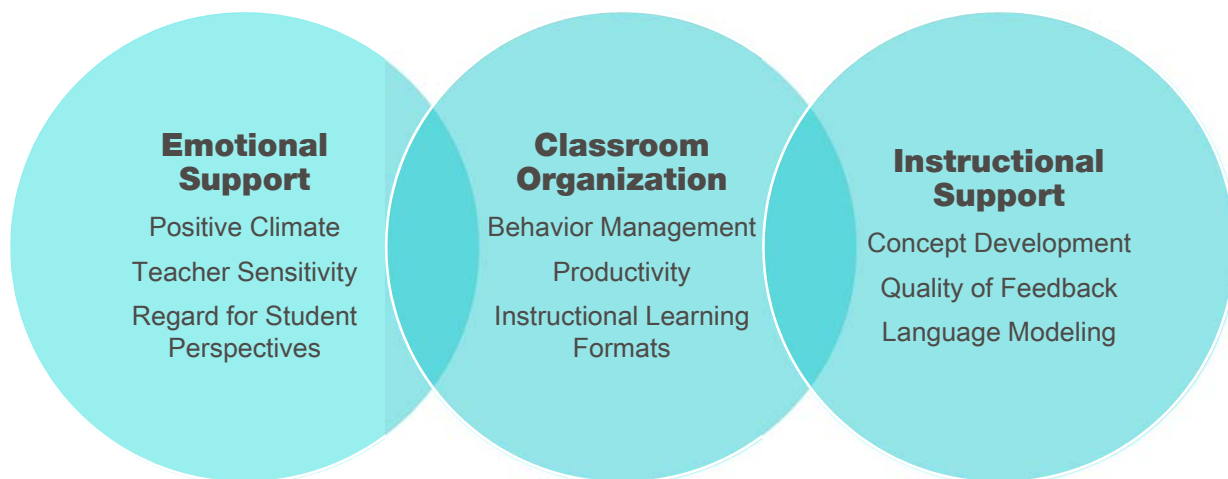
OUTCOMES

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 of selected teachers in the fall and spring for a sample of the teachers (n=74) 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 scored as a domain.

Emotional Support
Positive Climate
Teacher Sensitivity
Regard for Student Perspectives

Classroom Organization
Behavior Management
Productivity
Instructional Learning Formats

Instructional Support
Concept Development
Quality of Feedback
Language Modeling

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

Individual teacher reports were produced for fall and spring. These reports were shared with both the teacher and the instructional coach. The reports are for coaching processes and for this evaluation only. The CLASS reports were not shared with building principals or central office administrators.

TEACHERS DEMONSTRATED STRONG SKILLS IN PRODUCTIVITY AND BEAHAVIOR MANAGEMENT.

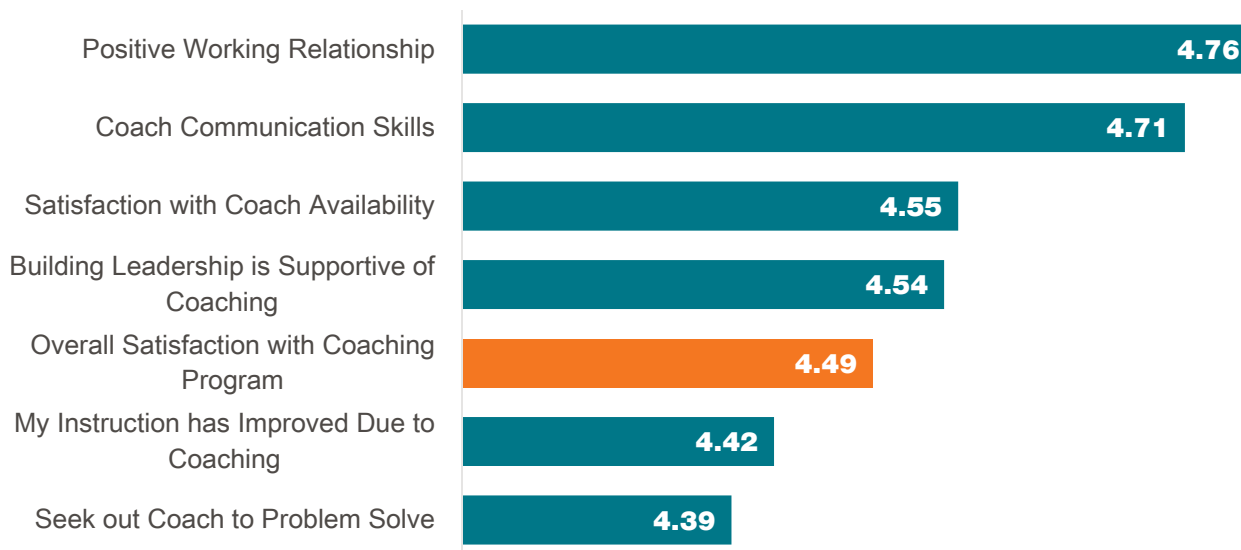Multiple areas showed significant improvement from pre to post.

	Pre	Post
Instructional Support	3.05	2.98
Language Modeling/Instructional Dialogue	3.40	3.42
Concept Development/Content	3.09	3.14
Quality of Feedback	3.06	3.08
Analysis and Inquiry	2.64	2.27
Classroom Organization	6.08	6.27
Instructional Learning Formats	5.16	5.44
Productivity	6.59	6.75
Behavior Management	6.49	6.63
Emotional Support	5.10	5.34
Regard for Student	3.40	3.53
Teacher Sensitivity	5.45	5.95
Negative Climate	5.93	5.91
Positive Climate	5.62	5.96
Student Engagement	5.90	6.01

Threshold of Quality

n=74

Teachers demonstrated skills in the high range across multiple components. Paired sample t-tests indicated that **significant improvement** was made in the following areas: 1) Positive Climate, 2) Teacher Sensitivity, and 3) Productivity.

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. Eighty-four teachers completed the teacher survey about the coaching practices within their respective districts and nine instructional coaches from three districts completed the instructional coach survey.

FINDINGS. Of the teachers completing the survey, 11% were completing their first year, 13% were in years 2 and 3, 13% years 4 and 5, 25% completing years 6-10 and 38% had been teaching more than 10 years. Eighty-five percent reported implementation on new district curricula within the last two years and forty-five percent of new teachers (years 1-3) met with their coach at least weekly during the school year.

TEACHERS AND COACHES HAVE POSITIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS.

Positive Working Relationship	4.76
Coach Communication Skills	4.71
Satisfaction with Coach Availability	4.55
Building Leadership is Supportive of Coaching	4.54
Overall Satisfaction with Coaching Program	4.49
My Instruction has Improved Due to Coaching	4.42
Seek out Coach to Problem Solve	4.39

95% of teachers in their first three years reported their instruction has improved due to working with a coach.

Teachers rated the coaching model in their respective districts very favorably as indicated by the mean survey item scores (*1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree*). All of the mean scores were above a 4.0. Teachers see coaches as someone to talk to, have a relationship with and as a collaborative partner. While there were some differences when examining the ratings of new (years 1-3) and veteran (years 4+), teachers found that coaching has improved their instructional practices.

WHILE OVERALL, TEACHERS REPORTED HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION, NEW TEACHERS RATED ALL COACHING ACTIVITIES AS MORE USEFUL THAN VETERAN STAFF.
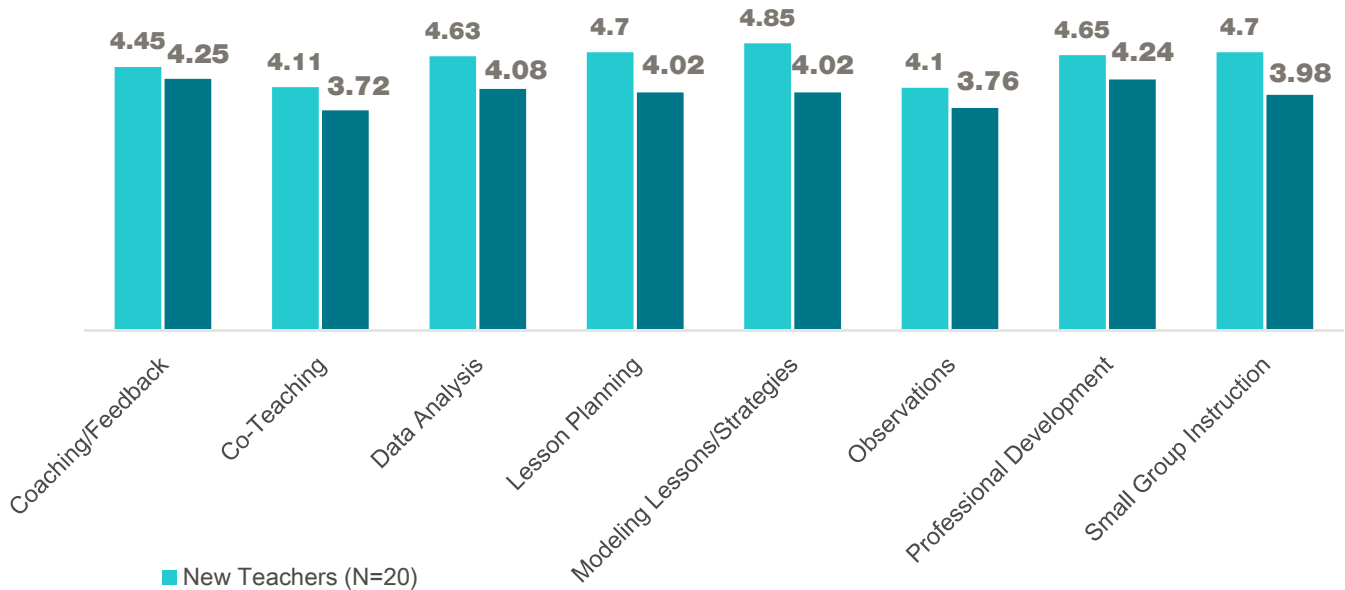
COACHES INPUT

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. Coaches reported provided coaching services to anywhere from a handful to 75 teachers across a year with the median being close to 20 teachers per year. In addition, all coaches reported having an average to excellent relationship with building leadership in regards to coaching. None of the coaches reported having a negative relationship with their building administrator.

Coaching, co-teaching, data analysis, and video feedback were all perceived to be at least moderately effective by all of the instructional coaches with co-teaching as being the most effective. Small groups instruction was viewed as less effective in helping teachers improve instruction than the other coaching components.

Coaches provided feedback on coaching successes and obstacles for the 2017-18 school year.

COACHES FOUND CO-TEACHING TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE

	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not Effective
Video Feedback	22	22	56		
Observations	22	44	22	11	
Data Analysis	33	44	22		
Small Groups	22	22	33	22	
Modeling	44	33	11	11	
Co-Teaching	63	13	25		
Coaching	33	44	22		

■ Extremely Effective   ■ Very Effective   ■ Moderately Effective   ■ Slightly Effective   ■ Not Effective
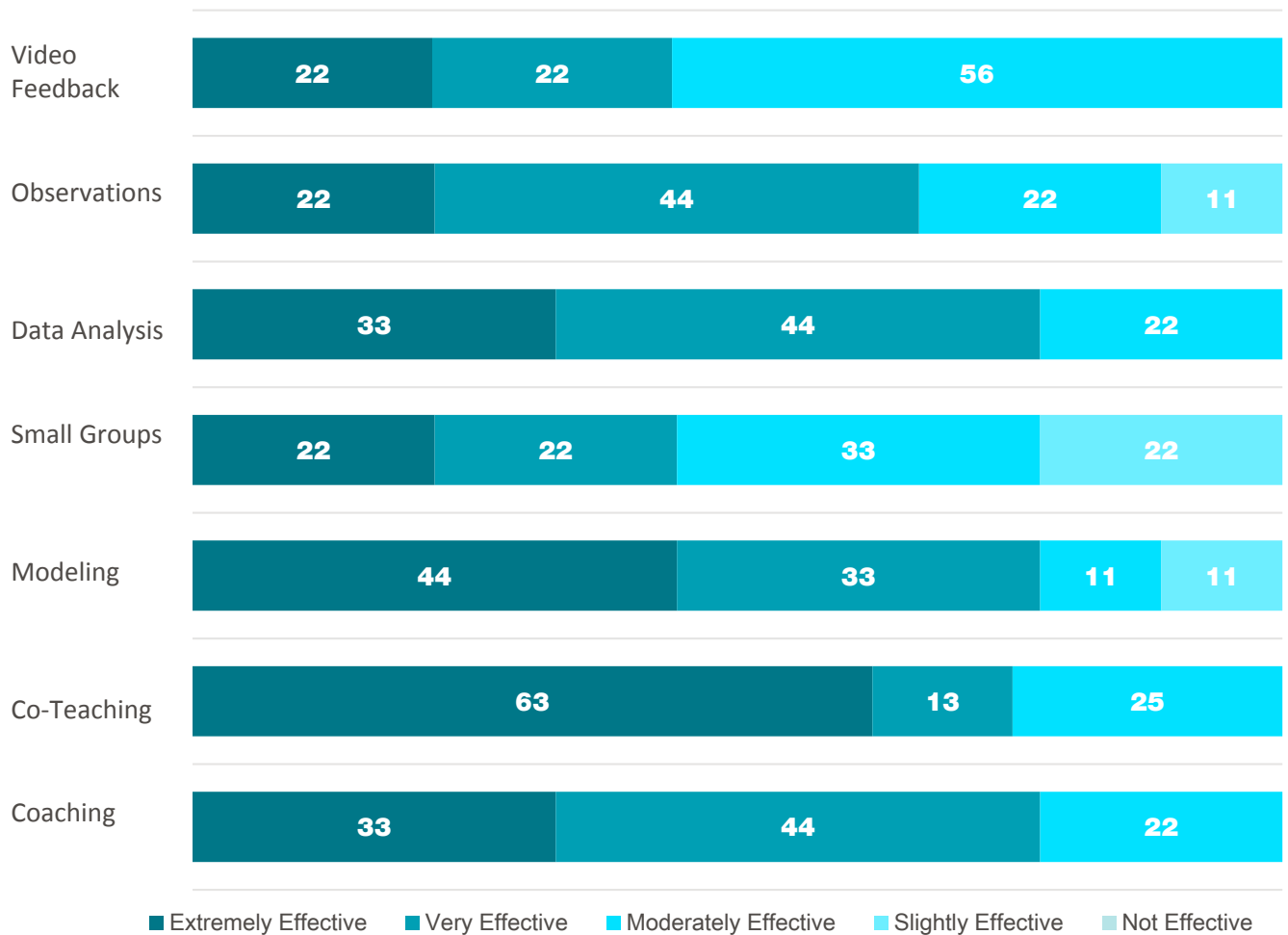
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING SUCCESSFULLY EXPANDED IN SOME BUILDINGS TO INCLUDE SPECIALISTS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS. Coaches discussed the successes of including specialists and paraprofessionals in the coaching cycles and professional development. Particularly for interventions, providing coaching for paraprofessionals improved implementation of the intervention pieces.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES PERFORM MULTIPLE ROLES INCLUDING DATA ANALYSIS, CURRICULUM TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE WITH BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT. Coaches are mentioned having to fulfill multiple roles within a school building as the coaching definition is quite broad. Districts are relying on coaches to provide training on curriculum, assist teachers and teams with data analysis and act as de facto behavior management coaches for teachers needing assistance. The roles may not typically be what is considered/perceived to be coaching but these roles are rated as having high utility by teachers.

TIME AND LACK OF BUY IN FROM TEACHERS AND ADMININSTRATORS CAN BE OBSTACLES TO SUCCESSFUL COACHING. Consistent with previous years' input, time to coach continues to be an obstacle for coaches. Coaches discussed the need to fill other building responsibilities including planning for long-term substitutes and spending extensive time on new curricula that impacted how much time they could spend coaching. In addition, coaches expressed some frustration at the lack of teacher and administrator buy-in to the coaching model.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

NWEA-MAP DATA: OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS VARIED BY DISTRICT WITH SOME STUDENTS IMPROVING SCORES FROM FALL TO SPRING AND OTHER SHOWING A DECLINE.

District	Reading PR Fall	Reading PR Spring	Math PR Fall	Math PR Spring
District A	48	49	39	44
District B	50	48	48	45
District C	40	35		
District D	48	47	47	40
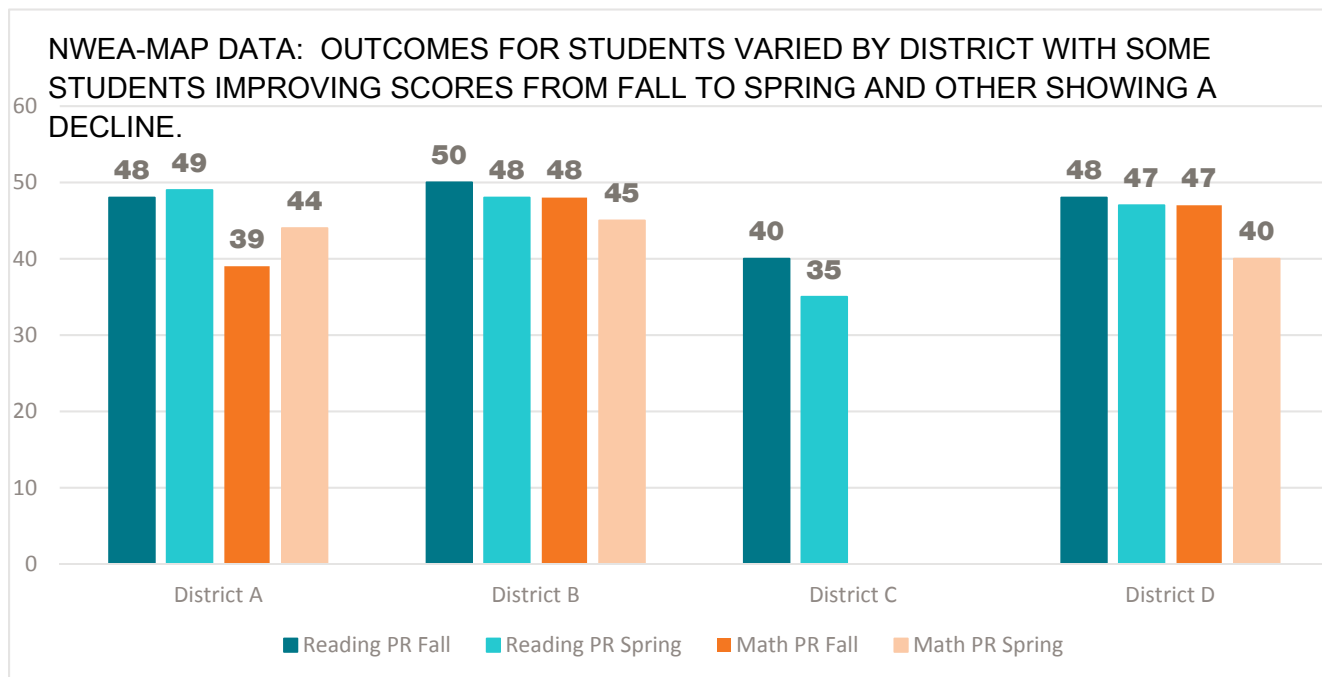
FINDINGS. As per discussion with the school districts involved, NWEA-MAP scores were provided for each student in schools receiving instructional coaching. National percentile ranks were analyzed for fall and spring. In one district, average percentile ranks improved from fall to spring while in two other districts, decreases were noted from fall to spring. Only students with both fall and spring scores were included in the analysis.

State testing data will be reported as an addendum when released from Nebraska Department of Education.

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. Data from the teacher surveys support the hypothesis that new teachers see the benefit of working with an instructional coach. One recommendation is to focus instructional coaching efforts on teachers in their first three years to maximize benefits.

Jump Start to Kindergarten

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Jump Start to Kindergarten began in 2011. Programming is designed for low-income students who have limited or no previous educational experiencee. The opportunity to participate in a kindergarten setting and daily routines prior to the first day of school is a significant contributor to school readiness.

Programming focuses 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. All programs utilize certified teachers for part or all of their staffing; the hours and days per week vary based on the needs analysis of each district.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In the summer of 2018, Jump Start to Kindergarten was implemented in three districts: Elkhorn, Millard, and Papillion La Vista. A total of 171 Kindergarten students served of which 131 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 CLASSES SERVED SOME HIGH RISK POPULATIONS OF STUDENTS.

Low-Income Households: 14%

Special Education: 13%

English: 37%

n=171
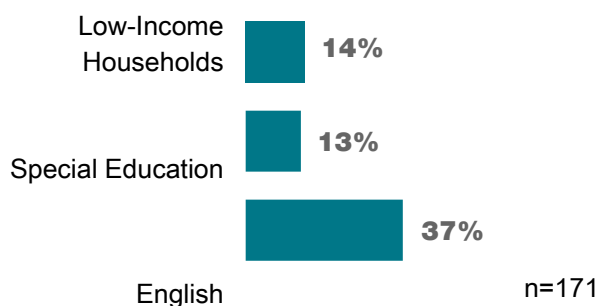
Jump Start to Kindergarten served 17 classrooms in 8 schools across the three participating districts. The program served slightly more males (61%) than females (39%). The majority of children served were five years of age.

STUDENTS SERVED REPRESENTED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSE POPULATIONS.

White 56%

Non-White 17% 12% 18% 25%

Hispanic Black Asian
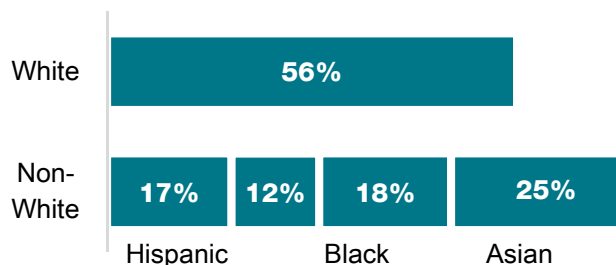
n=17

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).

FINDINGS. For the 2018 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=-8.221, $p<.001$, d=0.72) suggesting substantial, meaningful change within the zone of desired effects. While results varied throughout the programs, all three programs made significant gains

STUDENTS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OVERALL IN ALL FOUR JUMP START TO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS. EFFECT SIZE VARIED BY DISTRICT.

p<.001, d=0.72 — Overall: Pre 93, Post 97

p=.040, d=0.48 — Program 1: Pre 101, Post 103

p<.001, d=0.65 — Program 2: Pre 92, Post 95

p<.001, d=0.84 — Program 3: Pre 91, Post 97

National Average=100

85   100   115

■ Pre   ■ Post

n=131
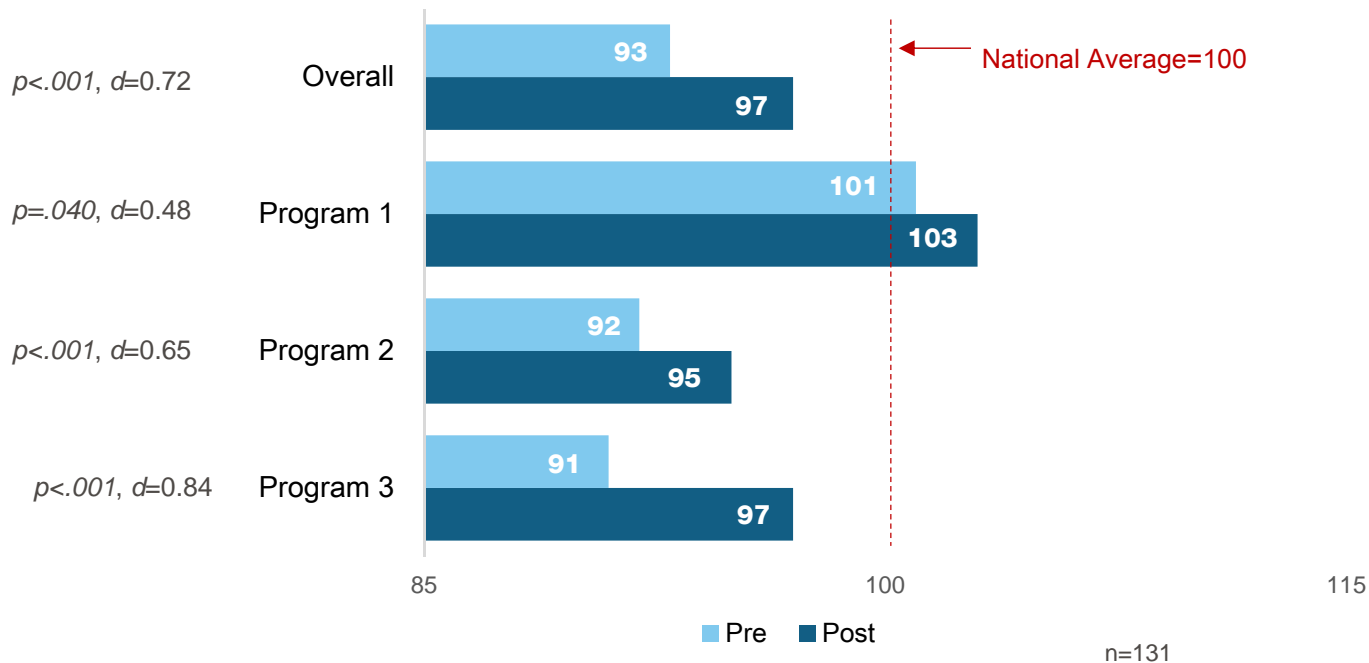
The overall mean standard scores on the Bracken increased from 93 to 97, moving them closer to the desired mean of 100. The goal each year is to move the group as close to mean scores of 100 or greater as possible.

When examining individual subtests, the percentage of mastery increased in all areas, with an overall increase of 6.01 percentage points. An area of strength for these students was color naming (98% mastery). An area for improvement would be Sizes/Comparisons (64% 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.

PARENT SATISFACTION

STUDENT PERCENT OF MASTERY INCREASED IN EACH SUBTEST.

Colors	Letters	Numbers	Size and Comparison	Shapes	Overall

Post: Colors 98%, Letters 78%, Numbers 81%, Size and Comparison 64%, Shapes 74%, Overall 77%

Pre: Colors 96%, Letters 72%, Numbers 73%, Size and Comparison 59%, Shapes 67%, Overall 71%

Pre   Post
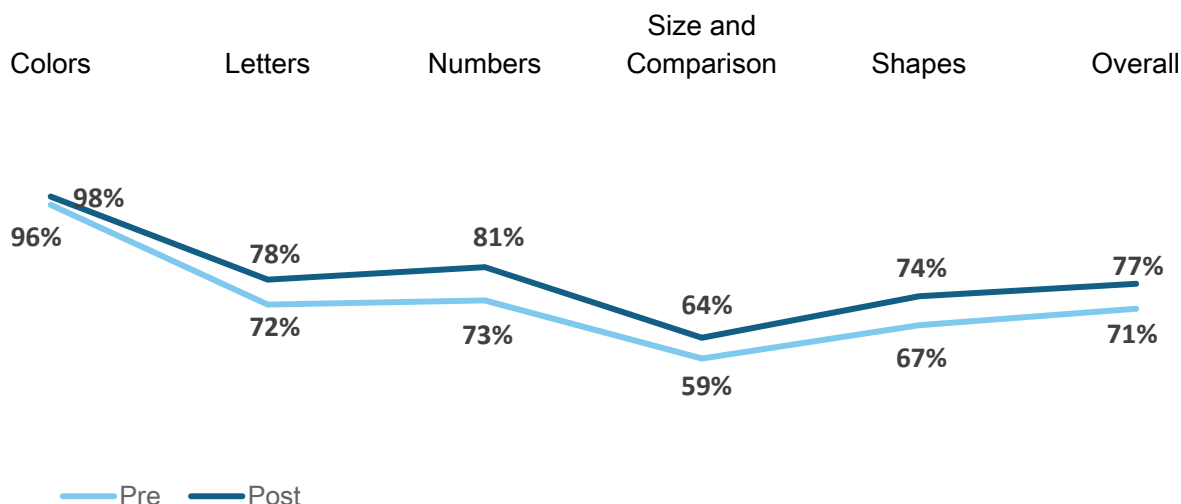
What did parents report about the Jump Start Kindergarten Programs?

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=83).

Not sure 0%
Disagree 1%
Strongly Disagree 6%

93% WERE SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRAM

n=83
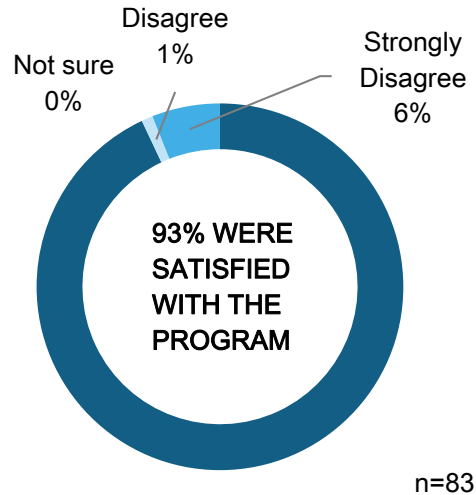
FINDINGS. Families reported high overall satisfaction in all areas, including the structure and environment of the program. They also reported high levels of satisfaction on such items as believing the program staff were excellent and feeling that their child enjoyed attending the program. The lowest level of satisfaction was for being informed about their child's progress.

PARENTS REPORTED HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN ALL AREAS.

	Rating
Satisfied with program overall	4.55
Satisfited with hours of program	4.55
Satisfied with length of program	4.53
Staff were excellent	4.64
Child enjoyed attending	4.60
Satisfied with teacher communication	4.39
Informed on child's progress	4.30
Believe that child will be more succesfull in K	4.42
Feel more prepared to be a parent	4.34
	4.45
	4.46
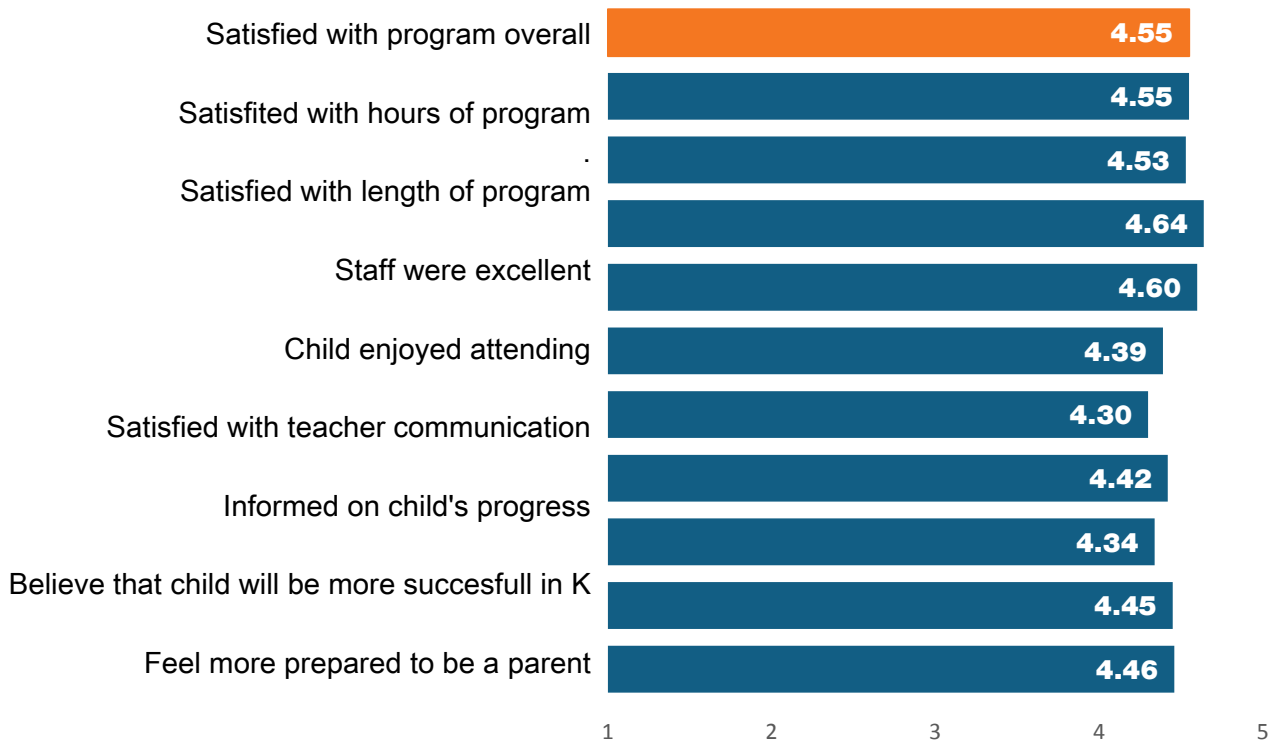
n=83

How did parents' rate their students readiness for school?

FINDINGS.   Parents were 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, knows different colors and shapes, plays well with others, and willingness to share with other children. Attentiveness during tasks had the highest percentage of "did not improve" (8%), but also showed the one of the greatest improvements (59%).

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

METHOD. In the fall of 2018, all Kindergarten teachers who had 2018 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. All three participating districts used the survey. Of the 32 teachers that completed the survey, 6 taught Jump Start to Kindergarten this year, and 30 (94%) did not.

FINDINGS. 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.

TEACHERS CONSISTENTLY REPORTED THAT JUMP START TO KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS
WERE EQUAL TO OR MORE PROFICENT THAN THEIR PEERS THAT DID NOT ATTEND THE
PROGRAM.

	Less Proficient	No Difference	More Proficient
Separating from parents/caregivers	0%	44%	51%
Following routines and procedures immediately	12%	19%	69%
Following directions	15%	41%	41%
Attending to activities	18%	41%	41%
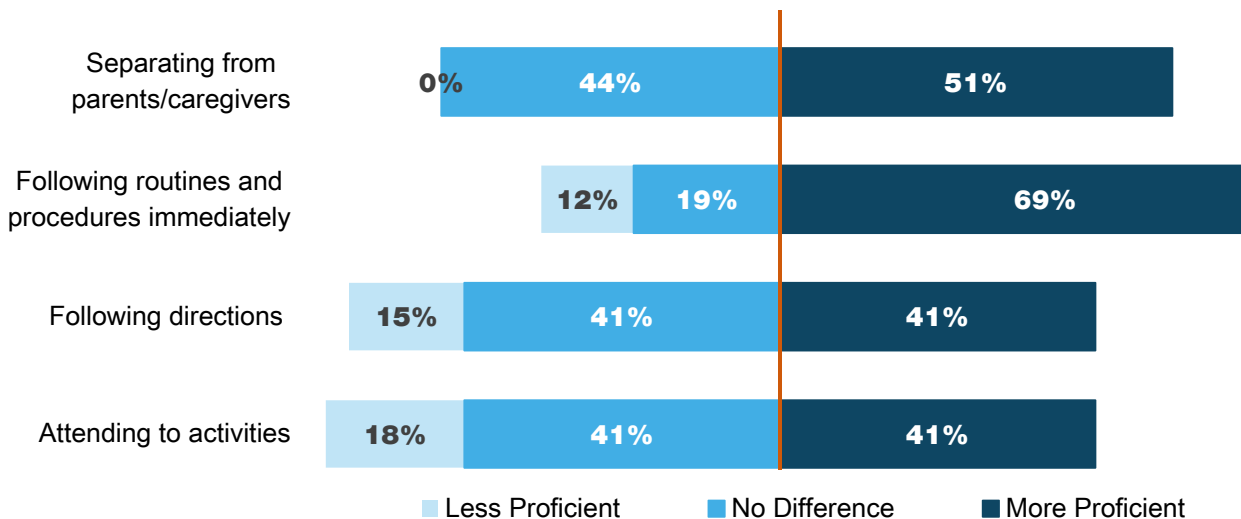
Extended Learning

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Extended Learning programs provide additional direct instruction for students with smaller teacher to student ratios and a focus on specific skills identified by spring assessments. These opportunities provide engaging interactions that can motivate young learners. Summer programming, in particular, is designed to prevent learning loss so that students are better prepared for academic success as they enter into the next school year.

DC WEST COMMUNITY SCHOOLS. Students are provided instruction in reading, writing and math during this 3-week program. Weekly newsletters and communication are sent home to parents about their child's progress along with resources and tips for parents to use as they wish. Students attend three hours per day. The goal of the program is to help students maintain their academic skills from spring to fall. Thirty-eight students participated in the program. Free-reduced lunch rate was 65.8%.

COMPLETELY KIDS. Students in this before and after school program are served at Field Club elementary. The strongest focus in the before school program is on academic enrichment (successful KIDS). Programming focuses largely on building reading and math skills through games and other activities during the before school program. In addition to the academic programming, health, safety, and family engagement activities and resources are incorporated into the programming. Ninety-five students participated in programming with 89% qualifying for free-reduced lunch.

ELKHORN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Jump Start to Reading provided students at-risk for reading failure three weeks of intense reading intervention. The goal of the program is to reduce summer reading loss. 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 is to reduce summer reading loss. A total of seventy-seven students participated with 13% qualifying for free-reduced lunch.

MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Summer programming in Millard is provided at one site for students from ten elementary buildings for three weeks. Students invited to participate in the program are those qualifying for free/reduced lunch status and those who have demonstrated being academically at-risk in math and/or reading. In addition to academic instruction, three family involvement days are held during the three weeks. The program is provided for students in grades K-3. The goal of the program was to reduce/prevent learning loss occurring from spring to fall. One hundred thirty five students participated with 55% qualifying for free-reduced lunch.

SPRINGFIELD-PLATTEVIEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS. Students targeted for this school year program receive individual/small group math instruction at two elementary buildings. Students participate one hour per week with intervention lessons that are developed as a result of

a collaborative effort between the classroom teacher and the math interventionist. The goal of the program is for at-risk students to be meeting grade level expectations in math by the end of the school year. Third grade is the level targeted for this intervention. Twelve students participated in the program with 33% qualifying for free-reduced lunch.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 357 students were served through extended learning programming across five sites. Of the students participating in the extended learning programs, the FRL% of students ranged from 13-89%.

OUTCOMES

PARENT SATISFACTION

METHOD. Sixty-three parents completed the survey across the five participating programs. The survey was provided to programs 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)*. Parents had the opportunity to provide specific comments on the successes and possible improvements for programming.

FIINDINGS. Parents reported high levels of overall satisfaction (*M*=4.63) with the extended learning programs. The item with highest level of satisfaction was parent satisfaction staff qualities (*M*=4.76) and hours of the program (*M*=4.66). One particular area of demonstrated improvement was parent satisfaction with the level of communication. This increase from a mean rate of 3.70 in 2016-17 to 4.37 in 2017-18.

PARENTS WERE HIGHLY SATISFIED STAFF AND OVERALL PROGRAMMING.
Satisfactions levels for communication improved from 2016-17.

Staff are Excellent	4.76
Satisfied with Hours	4.68
Overall Satisfaction	4.63
Child Enjoyed the Program	4.63
Satisfied with Length	4.57
My child will be more successful in school	4.51
Satisfied with level of communication	4.37
Informed about my child's progress	3.86
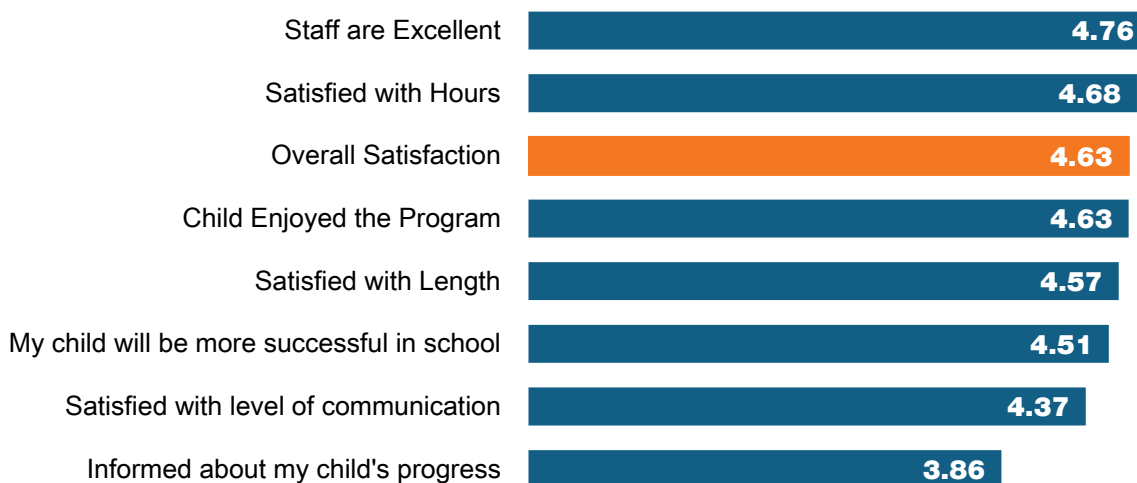
n=63

Many of the parent comments around programming reflected the quantitative findings of the survey. Parents were satisfied with the quality of the program and saw improvements in the academic skills of their children. Parents noted that their student liked attending and they appreciated the fun learning activities. Family days were mentioned frequently by parents as several parents attended at least one event. Programs that provided meals, transportation and supplies for students were recognized.

> **"Good mix of curriculum and the timing was ideal."**
>
> **"The teachers all seemed to be so engaged with the students and wanted to be there."**
>
> **"My kids learned a lot and did better in the school year than they did without the club."**
>
> **-parents of students**

As in previous years, improvements suggested by parents included more communication about student progress and/or things that could be worked on at home.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

METHOD. 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.

FINDINGS. Results found that students' performance varied across districts programs. The range maintaining or improving from math ranged from 35%-88% for Math and a similar pattern was evident for Reading which ranged from 39%-83%. These results suggest that for two programs the activities helped to maintain the majority of the skills over the summer months. Extended Learning programs are successful in minimizing summer learning loss for many students. Targeted intervention programs make a difference in reducing the skill deficit between struggling students and their peers.

PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS MAINTAINING AND/OR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS VARIED BY PROGRAM.

35% 79% 88%

MATH

39% 83% 83%

READING
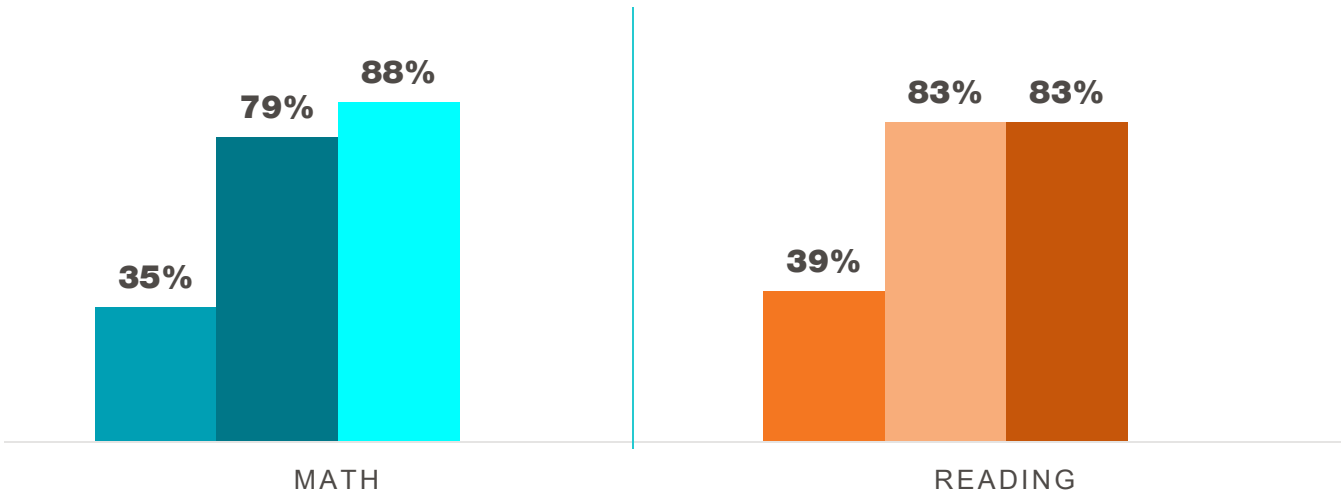
Learning Community: Lessons Learned

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

- Students who participated in the Inclusive Early Childhood Partnership out-performed their peers in Math at kindergarten entry.

- Over a third of the students in Grades K-1 in the Early Childhood Learning Partnership made greater than expected growth in Math and Reading.

- 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, increased school and community engagement, and positive child outcomes.

- Childcare directors demonstrated positive coaching skills and classroom teachers improved their strategies to support children's social emotional skills.

- Two Generational Programming partnerships with UNO and Metro Community College have had positive impacts on parent knowledge of college and work readiness skills.

- Jump Start programs produce significant student gains on a measure of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers rate the majority of students who attend Jump Start as being as/more proficient in for kindergarten readiness as peer who did not attend.

- Extended Learning programs help to minimize and reduce the summer learning loss for students.

Learning Community Annual Report Summary

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

INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- 249 preK and 255 Grade K-1 students were enrolled
- Majority are low income & represent diverse populations
- Classroom were of very high quality in Classroom Organization & Emotional support.
- PreK students demonstrated substantial meaning gains in their vocabulary and social emotional skills.
- By spring, more preK students school readiness skills were in the average.
- Over a 1/3 of the K-1 students made greater than expected scores in Math and Reading (improving national percentile rank scores.

PARENT UNIVERSITY

- 218 parents were enrolled with majority representing low income & culturally diverse populations
- Enrolled parents had 375 children of which 178 were within the targeted age range.
- Parents participated in 38 different courses sessions which focused on parenting, school success, leadership, and life skills
- Parents demonstrated substantial meaningful gains in Parent Resilience.
- Parents improved their relationships with their children, learned new parenting strategies, and lowered their parenting stress after participation in parenting classes.

FUTURE TEACHER CLINICAL TRAINING

- 326 students were enrolled in early childhood classes.
- 14 students graduated with an associate's degree this year.
- Since 2016, 20 students have enrolled in 4-year institutions to continue their education.
- An articulation agreement between Creighton University & Metropolitan College provides mechanism for student to continue their education. The first student graduated in spring 2018.

CHILDCARE DIRECTOR TRAINING

- 10 center-based directors participated in the project.
- Teachers' who were coached by their directors improved their instructional practices to support children's social-emotional skills.
- Directors demonstrated positive skills they used to coach their teachers.
- Directors reported that the training and coaching were highly valuable and resulted in changes in their practices within their childcare.

FAMILY LEARNING

FAMILY LEARNING

- 335 families were enrolled
- 503 0-6 year old children
- 394 siblings
- Two generation programming yielded positive effects for both College Prep and Workforce Development
- For the second year in a row, parents reported increased levels of school and community engagement

PARENTING OUTCOMES

- Parents across 2 cohorts in parenting practices after completing Boys Town
- Parents reported parenting classes helped to reduce parental stress, improved their child(ren)'s behavior and improved parenting practices
- Parents met program goals in multiple areas: supporting emotions, physical interaction and being open to their child's agenda

STUDENT OUTCOMES

- Majority of students (91%) entering kindergarten had executive functioning skills in the average range.

SCHOOL DISTRICT PILOT PROGRAMS

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

- 17 schools, 425 teachers, and 5202 students were served across 4 districts
- Teachers demonstrated significant gains in positive climate, teacher sensitivity and productivity.
- 95% of new teachers reported that instructional coaching had improved their teaching

JUMP START

- 171 kindergarten eligible students enrolled in Jump Start across 3 districts
- 37% qualified for FRL and 44% represented ethnically diverse populations
- Students demonstrated significant gains in school readiness skills.
- The majority of the parents (93%) were satisfied with the programs.
- Kindergarten teachers consistently reported JS students had skills equal to or more proficient than peers not attending the program.

EXTENDED LEARNING

- 357 students were enrolled in Extended Learning with 13-89% qualifying for FRL.
- 4 districts and 1 community agency participated.
- Parents were highly satisfied with the program, their children enjoyed the program and felt the experience would benefit them at school
- Parent satisfaction with level of communication improved from 2016-17 from 3.70 to 4.37.

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ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Tool	Author	Purpose
Bracken School Readiness Assessment, 3rd Ed.	Bracken, B. (2007)	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.
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), Second Edition	LeBuffe, P. & Naglieri, J. (2012).	The DECA assesses young children's social-emotional protective factors, specifically evaluating, initiative, attachment, behavior concerns, and self-control.
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.

EFFECT SIZE SUMMARY

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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http://learningcommunityds.org

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SUPERINTENDENTS'
**EARLY
CHILDHOOD
PLAN**

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation: 2017-18

BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 12, 2018

Table of Contents

FIGURES

TABLES

Executive Summary

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is a collaboration among the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, and the superintendents of the 11 school districts that make up the Learning Community. Now in its fourth year, the districts are engaged in an innovative, comprehensive approach designed to reduce income- and race-based opportunity and achievement gaps for children from birth through Grade 3. The plan was developed in response to legislation (LB 585) passed in 2013 that directed 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. It is the largest birth – Grade 3 demonstration project in the nation.

Research on brain development in the first eight years of life confirms the importance of investing in early learning and development. Fifty years of research indicates that these investments in families and learning experiences can transform the life trajectories for young children whose families live in poverty and other children at greatest risk. The design and activities of the Superintendents' Plan are based on innovative applications of research on children's development and learning, family engagement, and school effectiveness. The work involves three interconnected levels of implementation through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals are strengthening their efforts at increasing access to opportunity and achievement in the years from birth through Grade 3.

This report presents evaluation findings from the third year of implementation. It focuses on the 2017-18 school year and provides data related to each of the three levels of implementation across multiple time points.

Full Implementation: The School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3 Approach

The School as Hub approach is utilized by districts and schools engaged in full implementation. It helps schools, educators, and communities strengthen their roles in reducing educational disparities by enhancing children's opportunity and achievement. The aim of the approach is to build a continuum of supports for children's learning and family engagement, beginning at birth and extending through Grade 3 and beyond. The school serves as a center, or hub, for the continuum of engagement. The impact of School as Hub is realized through modifying how schools "do school." They start early by connecting with children and families prenatally or at birth and focus on strengthening continuity, quality, and equity across multiple levels of the educational systems over the next eight to nine years.

Principals, teachers, school staff, families, and children are participants in the program. In addition, home visitors and a family facilitator employed by each district are included in this approach in order to provide early childhood parenting supports and promote family-school-community partnerships. In the 2017-18 year the following numbers constitute the schools, children, and families served:

- 12 schools continued their implementation of School as Hub for Birth through Grade 3.
- 127 families with 156 children received home visiting services from their school.
- 3,590 children were enrolled in 183 PreK through third grade classrooms at the 12 full implementation school sites. This included approximately 670 children enrolled in 29 PreK classrooms and 2,920 children in 154 Kindergarten through Grade 3 classrooms.

School as Hub Evaluation Approach and Measures

Evaluation of the full implementation addressed two general questions about processes, outcomes, and implementation.

1. *What has been learned about the specific processes and outcomes related to program implementation and quality, family processes, and child learning and development?*
2. *What are the essential features of the Superintendents' Plan as implemented by the Buffett Institute staff?*

The evaluation of full implementation of the Superintendents' Plan in years 2015-2018 used a multiple-cohort longitudinal design to understand how processes and outcomes changed over time. Two cohorts were constructed. The **Birth – Age 3 Cohort** consists of children birth – 3 years and the **PreK – Grade 3 Cohort** consists of children ages 3 – 8. This report presents baseline and follow-up data for the Birth – Age 3 Cohort (*n* = 56 families, 60 children); the PreK – Grade 3 Cohort (*n* = 185) is presented in terms of baseline and two follow-up rounds of data collection.

Various methods were used in the current evaluation approach, including observations in schools and family homes, direct child assessments, and family and teacher surveys. Implementation staff from the Buffett Institute were also interviewed about their coaching and facilitative roles with school staff. In all evaluation processes, efforts were made to understand how schools and families create contexts that support children's learning and development and how schools can be supported in leading that engagement. Key findings related to schools' engagement with families and promoting children's learning and development are outlined below.

Schools' Engagement With Families: Summary of Findings

Home visiting that supports families with children birth – 3 years is still a new and challenging programmatic addition to the work of schools. Implementation of a new evidence-informed home visiting curriculum was initiated during the current year to help increase schools' capacity to engage in more in-depth work with families of children birth – 5 years.

Findings from the current year's evaluation include the following:

- *Engaging in Home Visiting in Schools Is Important, Complex Work*
- *Home Visiting Is Reaching Families With Greater Needs*
- *Families Are Increasing Their Access to Supports That Help Reduce Stress*
- *Higher Home Visiting Dosage Is Associated With Children's Language Development*
- *Schools Are Learning to Welcome and Engage Families in Meaningful and Inclusive Ways*

Supporting Children's Learning and Development: Summary of Findings

The quality of classroom interactions and practices in full implementation schools improved from the first to the third years showing gains across all domains. Classroom teachers use quality practices to organize and support children's learning and social development. Children are demonstrating language and achievement gains relative to standardized expectations, with particular growth for children most affected by their initial achievement gap. Ongoing coaching and collaboration will focus on supporting teachers' efforts to enhance instructional practices.

Findings from the current year's evaluation include the following:

- *Classroom Interactions and Instruction Are Improving*
- *Children in Home Visiting Show Increases in Language Development*
- *Language Development Improved for Children in PreK Through Grade 3, With Greater Gains for Low-Income and Hispanic Children*
- *Early Educational Achievement Increased Over Time, With Greater Gains for Children Who Are Black and Whose Home Language is Spanish*
- *Teachers' Ratings of Children's Executive Functioning Decreased in Higher Grades*

Program Implementation Findings

Working with schools to change how school is done is complex work. The decision to enhance meaningful family engagement and partnership while supporting quality classroom practices holds promise for supporting children's learning and development. Implementation staff with the Buffett Institute have worked to establish and leverage relationships with school staff in order to build capacity around the School as Hub approach, including home visiting, facilitating family engagement, and supporting quality classroom practices. Emerging work continues to build coaching for quality by using reflective practice, enhancing continuity for Birth to Grade 3 within schools and the community, and strengthening understanding of the equity lens that guides this work. The evaluation data related to quality practices, family processes, and child development and learning outcomes shed light on promising progress and opportunities for further refinement and growth. More information is needed to learn about how school leaders, home visitors, teachers, and other school staff are implementing School as Hub.

Customized Assistance

Customized Assistance provides Learning Community school districts with access to state and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts. These efforts are intended to affect system-wide early childhood education and services. Working with local and state partners, Customized Assistance engages districts in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities for staff by addressing key dimensions of early childhood programming, birth – Grade 3. The Buffett Institute assists with the design and evaluation of each plan. Measures are aligned with goals and expected outcomes for the specific plan and with the overall goals of the Superintendents' Plan. The customized assistance plans of three districts are highlighted below:

- *Gretna Public Schools* is engaged in work to strengthen social-emotional learning via classroom practices and environments. While all children are showing gains throughout the school year, those

children identified as "at risk" are at a lower level of proficiency. In many cases, the increased percentage of children attaining proficiency scores from fall to spring is similar for both high- and low-risk groups, indicating that the groups of children are making differential gains in skills throughout the year. The district is also piloting evidence-based instructional resources to support implementation of new curriculum standards for social-emotional learning and development. Coaches will continue to facilitate professional development, grade-level collaboration, and implementation of the Pyramid model. Program evaluation data and teacher feedback were used to refine and target the 2018-19 professional development plans.

- *Ralston Public Schools* is prioritizing instructional practices that support preschool children's language development. The overall trend for productivity scores is strong and positive, indicating robust instructional practices. Quality of feedback and language modeling scores declined over the three-year period, although it is important to acknowledge that there are contextual factors that can affect these scores, such as individual child characteristics and the classroom environment. Program evaluation data will be used to further refine the focus for 2018-19 professional development and coaching.

- *Westside Community Schools* is focused on improving professional collaborations related to children's transitions to Kindergarten. During the 2017-18 school year, groups of educators and administrators met to work toward this common goal. Site directors and school principals collaborated around child assessments and the transition process. Preschool and Kindergarten teachers shared information about social-emotional supports, academic curricula and instruction, assessments, and student transitions.

Professional Development for All

The PD for All series is offered for all school leaders, community-based program administrators, teachers, early childhood educators, and family support professionals who work with young children and families in the Omaha metro area. The Buffett Institute plans and facilitates the PD for All series. The broad goal of PD for All is to provide ongoing opportunities for participants to increase their shared knowledge of research-based practices that increase quality, continuity, and equity in birth through Grade 3 education and family engagement.

Each year the PD for All series is organized around a central theme that introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices. The connecting theme for the four institutes of the 2017-18 PD for All series focused on practices to provide content-rich learning experiences for children, birth through Grade 3. A fifth Spanish-language institute for bilingual Spanish-speaking professionals was facilitated by the Buffett Institute in collaboration with the Learning Community Center of South Omaha.

Over 200 attendees participated in each of the first four institutes. These attendees included representatives from all school districts of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and over 80 community organizations, including early care and education programs. The Spanish-language institute in May had over 30 participants. Survey findings showed that 2017-18 participants made gains in their knowledge of high-quality instructional practices and reported that they applied the practices explored through PD for All in their ongoing work with children and families.

Conclusion

School districts composing the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties continue to focus intensive efforts on reducing income- and race-based disparities in educational achievement for young children, from birth through Grade 3. In the *Full Implementation School as Hub Approach* schools are engaging in new ways of partnering with families and teachers are intensifying quality classroom practices. Programmatic efforts continue to be refined to improve the implementation of this systems-based approach at all levels. Ongoing evaluation efforts will focus more intensively on learning how schools engage in home visiting and establish deeper partnerships with families. In the coming year we will also use interviews, focus groups, and school-based data to expand our understanding of how the efforts of principals, teachers, and families are supporting children, especially those most at risk for school failure.

Customized Assistance continues to help districts with self-identified challenges and opportunities for learning to enhance quality, continuity, and equity across the Birth – Grade 3 continuum. Ongoing efforts will allow districts to refine their projects. *PD for All* will continue through the next year, enhancing learning offerings in response to evaluation feedback, and incorporating research on professional learning. The theme for 2018-19 is *Harnessing the Power of Language and Communication to Build Children's Literacy Success*. Using a new format, there will be two full-day institutes that are open to all, followed by a series of workshops or "learning labs," split between those working with children from birth to age 5 and those working with children in preschool through Grade 3.

Changing how schools "do school" is no small undertaking. Yet this evaluation of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan programs offers evidence that positive changes are occurring. In conjunction with our partners, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute continues to refine our programming and evaluation efforts to support the learning and development of children in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

Introduction

The Superintendents' Plan offers an innovative, comprehensive approach for reducing income- and race-based opportunity and achievement gaps for 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 that directed 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 Institute to partner 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 plan components was launched in summer 2015, and continues.

The goal of the Superintendents' Plan is to reduce or eliminate social, cognitive, and achievement gaps among young children living in high concentrations of poverty. Translating research into practice, the plan provides for a comprehensive systems approach that transforms learning opportunities for children at risk for school failure by the end of third grade. Because of its systemic perspective, the plan is intended to elevate the capacity of the Omaha metro school districts to serve all young children well, not just those living in high concentrations of poverty.

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 efforts targeted at reducing opportunity and achievement gaps among young children.

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

In this systems-level 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

Customized Assistance offers school districts technical assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs in birth through Grade 3 policies and programming. Customized assistance provides districts with access to expert consultation in strategic planning and improvement efforts for system-wide early childhood education and related services and support in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities to address early childhood programming, birth through Grade 3. In the past school year, Gretna, Ralston, and Westside school districts participated in customized assistance projects and related program evaluation.

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

The integrative theme for the 2017-18 PD for All series focused on practices that provide content-rich learning experiences for children, birth through Grade 3. Five institutes provided professional learning related to specific topics within this theme, including an additional Spanish-language-only session of Children as Researchers:

- *Children as Scientists: Scientific Inquiry for Every Child*
- *Children as Authors: Guiding Children on Pathways Toward Strong Writing*
- *Children as Mathematicians: Early Math That Matters the Most*
- *Children as Researchers: Reading to Learn Can Start Early*

Evaluation activities specific to each of the three interconnected levels of implementation in the Superintendents' Plan are described in the sections that follow. The sections immediately following elaborate the School as Hub (full implementation) evaluation findings related to home visiting and classroom practices, family processes and perceptions, and child learning and development. A qualitative study outlines features of implementation, including coaching, that are designed to support partnership efforts with School as Hub schools. Subsequent sections describe evaluation results for two other Superintendents' Plan efforts: Customized Assistance to Districts and Professional Development for All.

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

School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3 Approach (Full Implementation)

School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3 is an approach that helps schools, educators, and communities strengthen their roles in reducing educational disparities by enhancing opportunity and achievement. The aim is to build a continuum of supports for children's learning and family engagement beginning at birth and extending through Grade 3 and beyond. The school serves as a center, or hub, for the continuum of engagement. The impact of School as Hub is realized through modifying how schools "do school." They start early by connecting with children and families prenatally or at birth and focus on advancing continuity, quality, and equity across multiple levels of the educational systems through the end of Grade 3.

The School as Hub Theory of Change (see Figure 1) illustrates the centrality of commitments to continuity, quality, and equity and the change strategies that increase access to opportunity and achievement.

- Continuity refers to the commitment to provide children with seamless learning and educational experiences from birth through Grade 3. What children learn at one age or grade level builds upon and elaborates the learning that came before. Continuity is grounded in shared understandings about children's development. It is operationalized as aligned educational practices and content, engagement with families from children's birth, and changes in systems designed to support children and families transitioning from one program to the next, such as from home visiting to preschool, from preschool to Kindergarten, and from grade to grade in the elementary years (Stipek, Clements, Coburn, Franke, & Farran, 2017; Takanishi, 2016).
- Quality refers to the commitment to implement practices with families, children, and educators that are evidence-based, produce developmentally and educationally important outcomes, and are informed by continuous improvement. High-quality classroom and family support practices share a number of characteristics in common: They are based on two-way relationships that enhance interactions between educators, children, and families; they promote social-emotional well-being and stimulate learning and thinking; they are tailored to individual needs; and they are culturally and linguistically affirming (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; Pianta, Downer, & Hamre, 2016).
- Equity refers to the commitment that every child receives what he or she needs to succeed in school and life (Blankenstein & Noguera, 2016). A commitment to equity recognizes the responsibility to confront the underlying causes of disparities in opportunity and achievement and to create conditions whereby a child's developmental and educational well-being are not constrained by systemic inequities, socio-economic factors, and racial identity.

According to the theory of change for the School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3, quality, continuity, and equity for children are the lens through which practices and policies are shaped and evaluated at all levels of educational systems, including classrooms, elementary schools, districts, and communities. Only by addressing all levels of the system can this approach be effective in reducing or eliminating income- and race-based disparities in opportunity and achievement.

An essential feature of the School as Hub approach is the connected continuum of Change Strategies that combines educational experiences for children with opportunities for family engagement and parenting supports. The strategies emphasize change in Organizational Environments, Professional

Capacity, and Practices. School change research demonstrates that complex practice changes must be embedded within the contexts that build professional capacity and organizational environments in order to support and sustain those practices (Fullan, 2010; Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006). This complexity is captured in the Theory of Change described below. As the School as Hub approach is implemented, strategic and interdependent changes are promoted to build professional capacity through leadership and collaborative learning. Organizational environments, such as school culture and family-school partnerships, also are strengthened.

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation aims to capture the degree to which the change strategies of the School as Hub approach are being implemented and observed across a range of districts and schools. In the following sections, we describe what we are learning about efforts in the *Full Implementation*. Subsequent sections describe engagement in the *Customized Assistance* and *Professional Development for All* programs.

FIGURE 1. SCHOOL AS HUB FOR BIRTH THROUGH GRADE 3: THEORY OF CHANGE
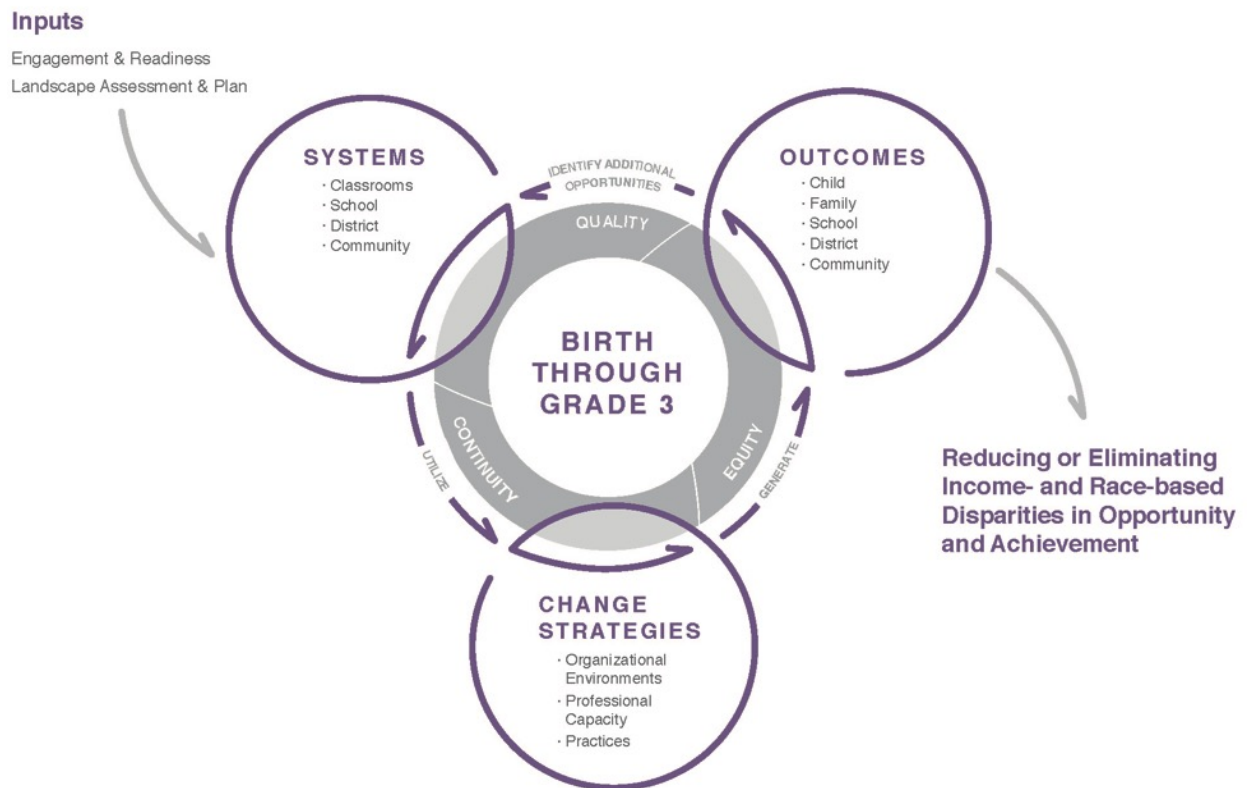
Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the School as Hub Birth – Grade 3 approach (full implementation) includes findings from four levels of the system: quality practices in home visiting and classrooms, family processes, child development and learning outcomes, and program implementation supports. For the 2017-18 school year, evaluation activities were designed to address the following question about program implementation, quality practices, family processes, and child learning and development:

What has been learned about the specific processes and outcomes related to program quality, family processes, and child learning and development?

Subquestions include the following:
1. *Are family supports and classroom practices (i.e., program quality) improving?*
2. *Do family interaction processes reflect increased support and engagement?*
3. *Is the learning and development of children improving?*

The full implementation approach is designed to bring about significant shifts in how "schools do school" over time. Teachers, principals, school staff, children, and families participate in the program. In addition to principals and teachers, school staff include a home visitor and a family facilitator employed by each school to provide early childhood parenting supports and to promote family-school-community partnerships*.* In the 2017-18 year, approximately 3,590 children were enrolled in 183 PreK through third grade classrooms at the 12 full implementation school sites. This included approximately 670 children enrolled in 29 PreK classrooms and 2,920 children in 154 Kindergarten through third grade classrooms. Table 1 describes the characteristics of children enrolled in the full implementation districts and schools.

TABLE 1. SCHOOL AND DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS: FULL IMPLEMENTATION SCHOOLS 2017-18

DISTRICT AND SCHOOLS	2017-18 STUDENT ENROLLMENT	% FREE/ REDUCED LUNCH	% MINORITY POPULATION	% AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT 3RD GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS*	% AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT 3RD GRADE MATH*
Bellevue	10,028	35	30	46	68
Belleaire	**320**	**66**	**38**	**48**	**73**
DC West	918	33	11	55	89
DC West	**401**	**38**	**10**	**55**	**89**
Millard	23,980	21	21	67	85
Cody	**319**	**54**	**44**	**68**	**88**
Sandoz	391	53	50	44	56
OPS	**52,344**	**70**	**72**	**40**	**62**
Gomez Heritage	849	82	92	38	67
Liberty	**745**	**89**	**87**	**19**	**43**
Mount View	374	81	92	20	46
Pinewood	**222**	**62**	**70**	**39**	**70**
Ralston	3,363	56	46	36	63
Karen Western	**188**	**74**	**65**	**24**	**52**
Meadows	310	49	45	35	63
Mockingbird	**402**	**73**	**68**	**36**	**60**
Westside	5,999	35	27	62	82
Westbrook	**518**	**61**	**43**	**38**	**66**

*Based on 2016-17 proficiencies; 2017-18 not yet available.

Systemic educational change, as reflected in the Superintendents' Plan, requires continuous, intensive engagement over several years. The evaluation of the Superintendents' Plan was designed to examine how components of the School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3 approach are changing over time, and how children's development and learning are progressing over time in the full implementation schools.

Evaluation Design and Methodology

Design
The full implementation of the Superintendents' Plan, years 2015-2018, used a multiple-cohort longitudinal design to learn how processes and outcomes changed over time. Two cohorts were constructed. The **Birth – Age 3 Cohort** consists of children birth – 3 years and the **PreK – Grade 3 Cohort** consists of children ages 3 – 8. This report presents baseline and follow-up data for the Birth – Age 3 Cohort; the PreK – Grade 3 Cohort includes baseline and two follow-up rounds of data collection.

Sample and Participant Characteristics
The cohort design required distinct processes of recruitment and sampling of children and families. These processes are reported by cohort, described below.

Birth – Age 3 Cohort. Leaders at each school identified criteria for recruiting families into the voluntary home visiting program, with an emphasis on including children and families with the highest needs. To

encourage early and continuous engagement with families, schools were encouraged to prioritize recruitment of families with children under one year or those expecting a child. Other priorities for recruitment included income, teen parent, low birth weight, maternal education level, and home language. When home visitors enrolled families in the program, they invited them to participate in the evaluation. Baseline data were collected in the first 60 days following family consent, and follow-up occurred approximately every eight months thereafter. Evaluation visits were scheduled during the families' home visits, lasted approximately one hour, and were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the families' preference.

The number of families enrolled in the home visiting program and evaluation have increased steadily over time. In the 2017-18 year, 127 families received home visiting services from their school (156 children). To capture the ongoing, long-term nature of the School as Hub work, only children and families for whom we had baseline and follow-up data by May 31, 2018, were included in this report, for a total of 44% of the families who volunteered to participate in the evaluation (N = 56 families and 60 children). Table 2 provides a breakdown of evaluation enrollment by district and school. Children enrolled in the evaluation of the Birth – Age 3 Cohort had slightly more males than females (52%), and ranged in age from prenatal to 24 months at baseline (M = 6 months) and 1 to 24 months at follow-up (M = 10.5 months).

As of May 31, 2018, 21 children had turned 3 years old and transitioned out of the home visiting program. Of this group, 12 children were accepted into school-based PreK/Head Start classrooms, one child will be in an early childhood special education classroom, and the remaining children will stay home or attend community programs.

TABLE 2. BIRTH – AGE 3 EVALUATION BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP DATA BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	CHILDREN (FAMILIES) IN EVALUATION WITH BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP	TOTAL CHILDREN (FAMILIES) PARTICIPATING IN HOME VISITING
Bellevue	Belleaire	7 (6)	14 (10)
DC West	DC West	10 (9)	18 (15)
Millard	Cody	3 (3)	16 (12)
	Sandoz	5 (5)	18 (13)
OPS	Gomez Heritage	10 (10)	13 (12)
	Liberty	9 (9)	22 (20)
	Mount View	1 (1)	15 (14)
	Pinewood	10 (9)	25 (20)
Ralston	Karen Western Meadows Mockingbird	1 (1)	7 (6)
Westside	Westbrook	4 (3)	8 (5)
Totals		**60 (56)**	**156 (127)**

We use the term "caregiver" in the report to refer to the family member (parent, grandparent, guardian) who served as the primary contact and participant in the evaluation. Caregivers provided demographic

and other information about their family and children. Forty-two percent of family caregivers self-identified as Hispanic, 30% white, 18% black, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander, with 2% of caregivers identifying their ethnicity as "other." One-third of caregivers reported high school as their highest achieved education, and 64% live in coupled households. Approximately 29% of caregivers report an annual income less than $17,000, 75% received public benefits, and over half of the sample indicated that they worried about a shortage of food for their family.

PreK – Grade 3 Cohort. Children were selected randomly from among those enrolled in the participating school PreK and Kindergarten classrooms during the 2015-16 school year. This sampling process resulted in 222 PreK through Kindergarten children participating in the evaluation study with parental consent. The retention rate of children in Year 1 was 95% (211 children) and in Year 2, 83% (185 children PreK – Grade 2). Table 3 provides a description of children participating in each school. To optimize the continuous and ongoing nature of this work, this report only includes children and classrooms for whom there were three data points by May 31, 2018.

The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort is 48% female and 68% receive Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL). The cohort is diverse, with 51% white, 20% black, 19% "other", 8% "multiple" races, and 2% Asian. Of those, 42% describe themselves as Hispanic; 25% report Spanish as their home language, and another 10% are dual language (Spanish and English). Approximately 13% of children were eligible for special education services.

Evaluation Methods
The quality of home visiting and classroom practices was assessed using observational measures. Family process assessments included surveys that focused on understanding the family's social support system and observations of caregiver-child interactions. Child development and learning outcomes were assessed with standardized measures and surveys in the areas of language development, educational achievement, social-emotional skills, and executive function. Brief descriptions of all measures used can be found in Appendices 1 (Birth – age 3) and 2 (PreK – Grade 3).

Birth – Age 3. Evaluation staff used direct assessment, video observations, caregiver surveys, and other information gathered by home visitors. Fifty-six caregivers and 60 children participated in baseline and follow-up data collection, with an average interval between time points of 10 months (*SD* = 1.65).

PreK – Grade 3. Evaluation staff used direct assessment of children, video observation of classroom practices, and family and teacher surveys. Baseline data (Time 1) were collected in spring 2016 for all school districts except the Omaha Public Schools (OPS), whose baseline was gathered in fall 2016. Follow-up data were collected at all schools in spring 2017 and 2018. To remain consistent with the cohorts, results are reported for three distinct groups:
1. **PreK Post-Home Visiting Group:** Children who continued in the evaluation study in fall 2017 after participating in home visiting services in the Birth – Age 3 Cohort.
2. **PreK Entry Group:** Children who enrolled in the evaluation study in PreK in 2015.
3. **Kindergarten Entry Group:** Children who enrolled in the evaluation study in Kindergarten in 2015.

TABLE 3. PREK – GRADE 3 EVALUATION ENROLLMENT BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL IN 2017-18

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	PREK CLASSROOMS	K – 3 CLASSROOMS	PREK CHILDREN POST HOME VISITING*	PREK CHILDREN	K – 2 CHILDREN
Bellevue	Belleaire	1	8	1		8
DC West	DC West	2	14			23
Millard	Cody	4	8	1		14
	Sandoz	3	12	2		17
Omaha	Gomez Heritage	3	34		3	25
	Liberty	4	23	1	4	26
	Mount View	3	8	2	3	7
	Pinewood	2	7	4	3	12
Ralston	Karen Western	1	7			8
	Meadows	1	8			10
	Mockingbird	1	12			10
Westside	Westbrook	4	13			12
Total		**29**	**154**	**11**	**13**	**172**

*Eleven 3-year-olds were added to the PreK evaluation study this year after transitioning from the home visiting program in the Birth – Age 3 Cohort.

In this report, findings are summarized descriptively. When possible, and for the PreK entry and Kindergarten groups only, findings are reported for groups based on income, home language status, and race and ethnicity. (The PreK Post-Home Visiting group was too small for a subgroup analysis.) When possible and consistent with the assessment tool, findings are reported using a visual display across percentile ranks in five ranges: below average, low average, mid-average, high average and high. For assessments that use a clinical "cut-off" score, results are reported as frequencies of typical and non-typical ranges, and are indicated by **. For assessments using standard scores, means are reported.

Program Quality: Home Visiting and Classroom Practices

Birth – Age 3: Home Visiting

Engaging in Home Visiting in Schools Is Important, Complex Work

School-based, voluntary home visiting is a key program component of the School as Hub Birth to Grade 3 approach. Consistent, high-quality home visiting in the first three years has been shown to increase children's outcomes over time by: (1) increasing caregivers' capacity to support their child's learning and development (Caldera et al., 2007) and (2) enhancing families' relationships and engagement with their child's school (Wessels, 2013). The home visiting program includes three one-hour visits per month with each participating family, throughout the school year and summer months.

The quality of home visiting practices was assessed using the *Home Visiting Rating Scales* (HOVRS; Roggman et al., 2014). The HOVRS is a videotaped observation containing seven items and two subscales. Items are scored using anchors that indicate the quality of the interaction (1 = needs training, 3 = adequate, 5 = good, and 7 = excellent), and each scale is assigned an overall score (1 –7). *Process Quality* refers to the home visitor's practices, including responsiveness; relationship-building; facilitating parent-child interactions; and non-intrusion. *Effectiveness* refers to how the home visitor's efforts are observed in the parent and child interaction.

Evaluation data collectors accompanied the home visitors on a typical home visit. For each home visitor, up to three randomly selected families consented and were observed in the first year, and up to four in the second year. Rigorous coding protocols were used. To examine program quality over time, this report includes observations for eight home visitors with HOVRS observations in both years 1 and 2. For year 1, observations from 18 home visits (1 – 3 families per home visitor), and for year 2, observations from 23 home visits (1 – 4 families per home visitor) were included.

Findings. From baseline to follow-up, home visit process quality and effectiveness were slightly above the mid-range. Mean process quality was 4.4 at baseline and 3.7 at follow-up. Mean home visiting effectiveness was 4.8 at baseline and 4.6 at follow-up.

What We Are Learning About Home Visiting

Home visiting that supports families in their capacity to promote children's learning and healthy development is still a new and challenging programmatic addition to the work of schools in the Omaha metropolitan area. An extensive body of research describes how difficult home visiting is to do well, and yet how important it is for children's academic and social readiness for Kindergarten (Duffee, Mendelsohn, Kuo, Legano, & Earls, 2017). In spring 2018, the former home visiting curriculum was replaced with *Growing Great Kids* (Elliot, Flanagan, Belza, & Dew, 2012) and was adopted in the Superintendents' Plan full implementation schools to support an intensive focus on practices and supports with families. This transition in curriculum involved intensive training and support, which may explain scores remaining in the mid-range during this year. However, gains in home visiting quality are expected as a result of the curriculum and increased focus on practices and family support.

Using *Growing Great Kids*, regular coaching and performance feedback provide support for home visitors' continuous improvement related to process quality and effectiveness. The HOVRS observation is one tool being used to provide helpful feedback for home visitors' ongoing learning. It will be employed more frequently and across all home visitors and families in the upcoming program and evaluation year.

More frequent use of the HOVRS will provide the necessary ongoing feedback to support home visitors in their professional learning, in addition to reflecting progress in program quality.

In addition to observing home visiting quality, caregivers provided information at both baseline and follow-up that is helpful for learning about how home visitors provide ongoing support for families:

- Caregivers reported average levels of parenting stress, though families whose home language was Spanish reported slightly elevated levels of parenting stress in comparison to English-speaking families. This information can be helpful for home visitors who may want to explore effective strategies to support Spanish home-language families to identify and reduce their experiences of stress in the parenting role.
- Over time, more caregivers enrolled in home visiting reported accessing a regular pediatric health care provider for their child. Increases from 90% at baseline to 98% at follow-up reflect improvements in families' identification of medical and other community resources, which is an ongoing goal of home visiting.
- Caregivers reporting depressive symptoms over time decreased from 17.9% at baseline to 16% at follow-up. While an improvement, this level of depression is higher than the Nebraska average for depressive symptoms in the postpartum period at 12.8% (Centers for Disease Control, 2015). Connecting family caregivers with supports, including mental health services, is an ongoing purpose of home visiting.

PreK – Grade 3: Classroom Teaching Practices
Classroom Interactions and Instruction Are Improving

Because the quality of teachers' practices and interactions in the classroom is associated with higher academic and social interactions throughout the elementary school years (Hamre & Pianta, 2003), supporting teachers' quality classroom practices is a key component for the Superintendents' Plan. Educational facilitators provide coaching and professional learning opportunities for PreK – Grade 3 teachers on a regular basis and work with all school staff to promote school climates that support evidence-based strategies to support children's optimal learning and development.
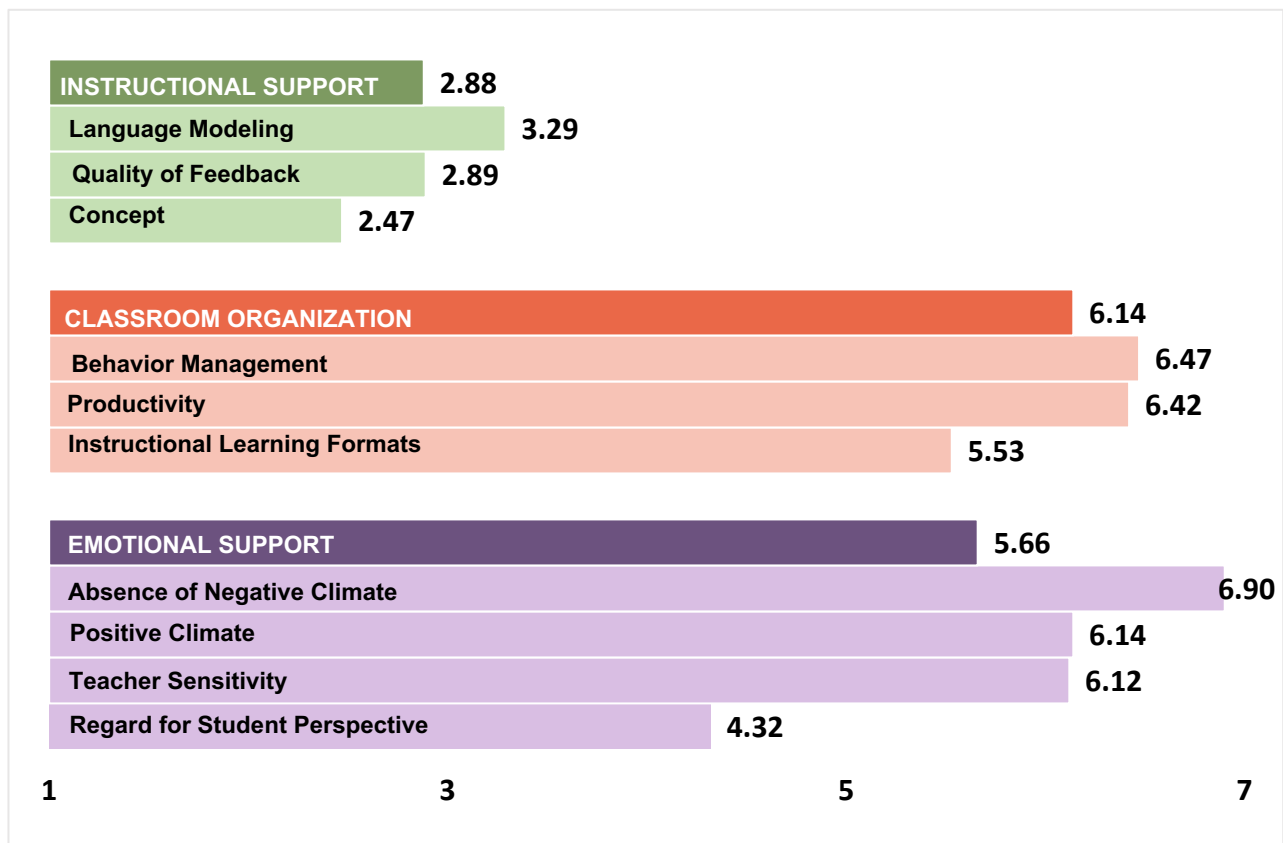
The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) was used to assess the quality of classrooms in full implementation schools. CLASS quality is defined in three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support, with three dimensions for each domain (see Figure 2). *Emotional Support* refers to teachers' practices that support positive relationships in the classroom, identify children's needs for support, and recognize and respond to children's emotions, ideas, and interests. *Classroom Organization* refers to teachers' practices that support effective management of time and guidance of children's behavior, setting expectations, routines, and guidelines for the class. *Instructional Support* (IS) refers to the practices teachers use to help children solve problems, deepen skills and knowledge, and develop more complex language skills. The CLASS tool uses a common metric that articulates features of classroom quality in the early childhood and elementary grades. It is an observational tool measuring classroom interactions which enhance student learning. Samples of classroom interactions were video-recorded and evaluators rated dimensions. Ratings are based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating highest quality.

FIGURE 2. DOMAINS AND DIMENSIONS OF THE *CLASS* RATING SCALE
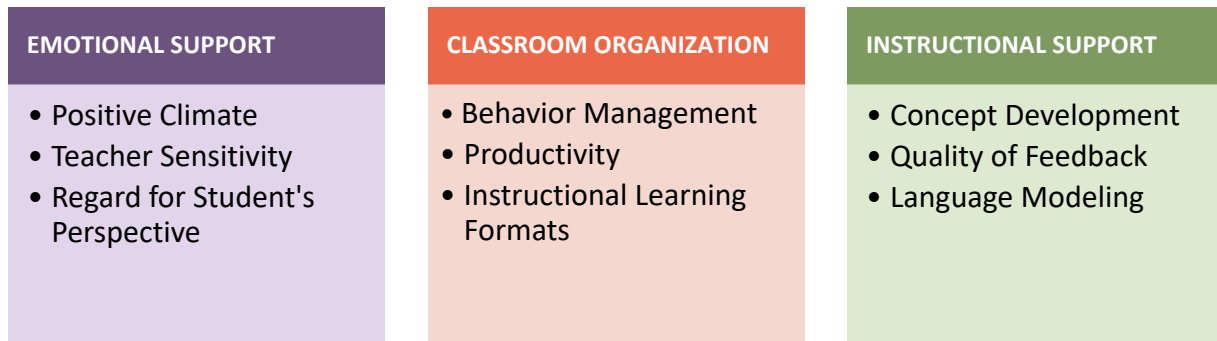
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT
• Positive Climate • Teacher Sensitivity • Regard for Student's Perspective	• Behavior Management • Productivity • Instructional Learning Formats	• Concept Development • Quality of Feedback • Language Modeling

Findings. The quality of classroom interactions and practices in full implementation schools improved from the first to the third year and also improved across all domains. CLASS scores for 146 PreK and K – 3 classrooms across three time points are reported for three program years (2016, 2017, 2018) in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3. PREK AND K – 3 CLASS DOMAIN AND DIMENSIONS SCORES IN 2018, N = 146

	Score
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	2.88
Language Modeling	3.29
Quality of Feedback	2.89
Concept	2.47
CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	6.14
Behavior Management	6.47
Productivity	6.42
Instructional Learning Formats	5.53
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	5.66
Absence of Negative Climate	6.90
Positive Climate	6.14
Teacher Sensitivity	6.12
Regard for Student Perspective	4.32

Scale: 1   3   5   7

To highlight areas of classroom quality, strengths, and challenges, a breakdown of the dimensions in each of the domains follows (Figure 4). Scores above six are considered in the "high" range. Emotional Support ratings approached the "high" range, reflecting a generally positive climate, and lower ratings

for regarding students' perspectives. Classroom Organization (CS) ratings were the highest, with lower ratings for practices related to instructional learning formats. Instructional support reflected the lowest scores of the three domains, with language modeling the highest and concept development the lowest of all the dimension ratings. Recommendations for each of the domains are below.

FIGURE 4. PREK AND K – 3 CLASS DOMAIN SCORES, TIMES 1, 2, AND 3, N = 146
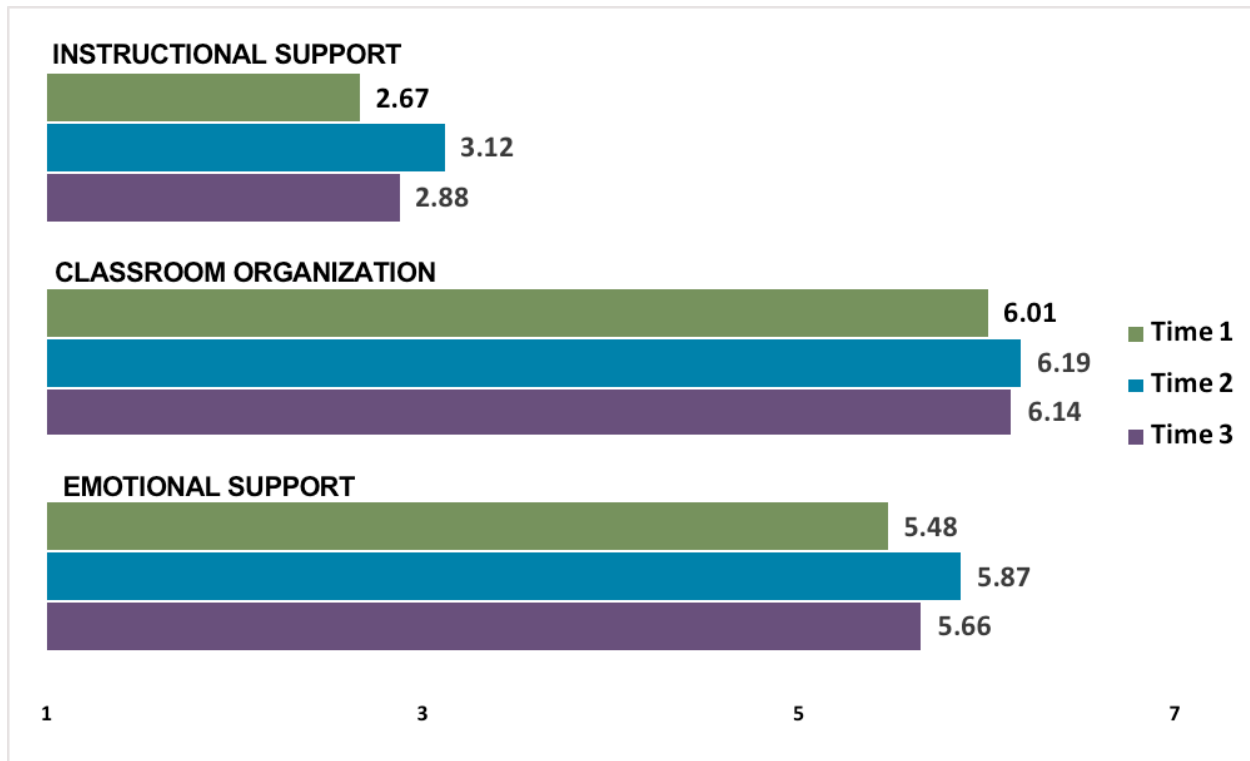
What We Are Learning About Classroom Practices

Teaching in PreK – Grade 3 classrooms is a complex challenge that requires meeting the learning needs of young children in the context of ongoing developmental needs. Children younger than age 8 are very active, have less self-regulation than their older elementary peers, and are still learning how to engage in social relationships—all while learning to read and write and gain general knowledge about the world (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). In sum, early childhood and elementary teachers spend much time teaching children to be competent learners. While classroom quality results shown here mirror national trends that suggest teachers demonstrate greater strengths in classroom organization and emotional support, efforts are underway to target strategies for supporting teachers' growth in instructional practices. Educational facilitators have engaged in professional learning and reflective supervision to implement a more focused coaching approach, while integrating and aligning their work with school improvement plans. Specific areas for targeting coaching supports include:

- Although *Instructional Support* in classroom practice is improving over time, it remains the domain of greatest programmatic need in PreK – Grade 3 classrooms. In national studies, Instructional Support tends to reflect the lowest scores and presents the most opportunity for improvement as it challenges teachers to extend children's language, model advanced language, and promote higher-order thinking skills (Pianta et al., 2008).

20

- *Classroom Organization* was in the high range, and a relative strength of the PreK – Grade 3 classrooms. Nonetheless, opportunities exist to support teachers in their use of Instructional Learning Formats, including effective questioning, creative opportunities for hands-on exploration, and providing clear learning objectives.
- To enhance *Emotional Support* in the classroom, coaching can support teachers in their Regard for Student Perspective. This means education facilitators can partner with teachers to enhance their flexibility with incorporating children's individual differences and interests, developing relationships, connecting with home assets, building on child background and strengths, and ensuring that instructional materials are representative and positive.

Family Processes

The Superintendents' Plan works with schools to re-examine and address how to support families of young children, birth – Grade 3. Schools can support families by helping caregivers connect with other school families and identify helpful community resources (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). Through home visiting and parent-child interaction groups, schools can provide information about child development and learning and promote healthy relationships. By learning from caregivers and identifying how families can be more meaningfully engaged, schools can shift their practices related to partnering with families, communication, school culture, and trust. To learn about family processes in the Superintendents' Plan, we examined families' perceptions related to supports, observed caregiver-child relationships, and surveyed PreK – Grade 3 families about school-family engagement.

Family Processes: Family Support

Families Are Increasing Their Access to Supports That Help Reduce Stress;
Home Visiting Is Reaching Families With Greater Needs

A key aim of School as Hub is to help families identify and obtain supports that enhance their children's development and learning. To consider how home visiting and family facilitation might be reflected in families' perceptions, caregivers of children in the Birth – Age 3 and PreK – Grade 3 cohorts completed the *FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey* (PFS; FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2011). This survey tool is designed for use with caregivers receiving such services as home visiting, parent education, and family support. It provides information about strengths and opportunities that may serve as protective factors for families in the context of stress. Two subscales were used: (1) *Social Support* refers to caregivers' perceived informal support from family, friends, and neighbors that helps provide for emotional needs, and (2) *Concrete Support* refers to caregivers' perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.

Birth – Age 3
Fifty-six caregivers in the home visiting program completed the survey at baseline and follow-up (see Figure 5).

Findings. Caregivers reported relatively high levels of social support but very low levels of perceived concrete supports. Both levels of support increased over time and at follow-up no caregivers report "low support."

**FIGURE 5.** CHANGE IN FAMILY SUPPORTS OVER TIME: BIRTH – AGE 3, N = 56
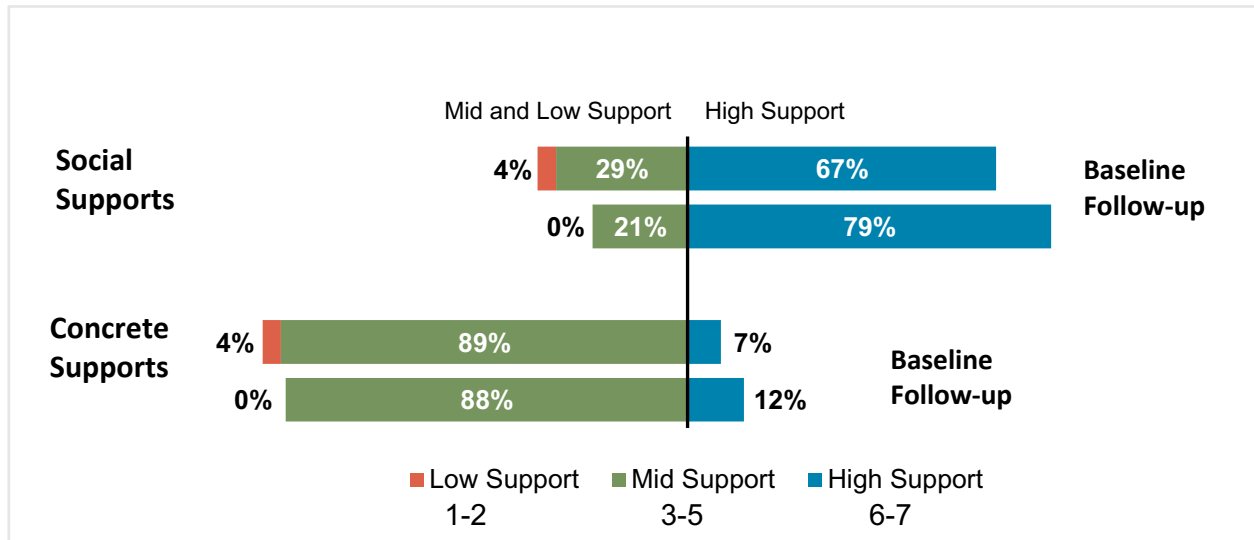
PreK – Grade 3
A total of 174 caregivers of children in PreK – Grade 3 classrooms completed the survey at three time points (see Figure 6). These results were aggregated for all children who entered at PreK or Kindergarten.

Findings. Caregivers reported relatively high access to social supports and mid-level, yet increasing access to concrete supports. Perceptions of access for both types of support increased over time.

FIGURE 6. CHANGE IN FAMILY SUPPORTS OVER TIME: PREK – GRADE 2 FAMILIES, N = 174

23
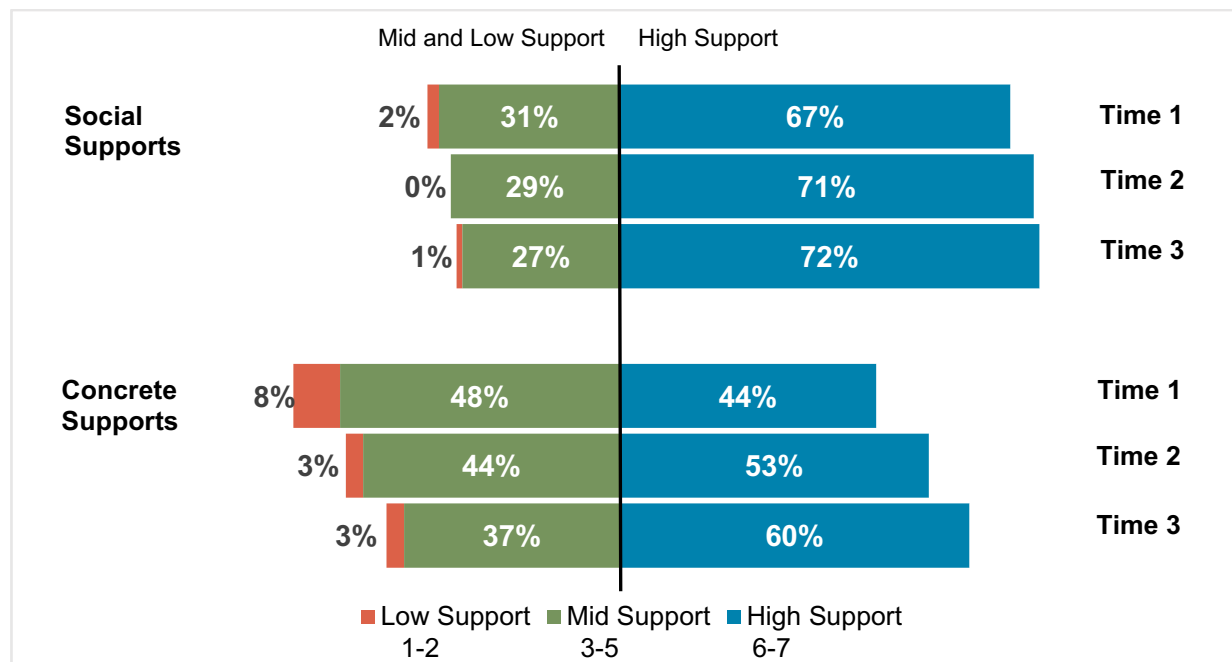
What We Are Learning About Increasing Family Supports
Families are more effective and confident in their parenting when they perceive that they have access to social and concrete supports (Dunst & Dempsey, 2007). One purpose of home visiting is to help families identify and acquire supports, and over time families participating in home visiting and PreK – Grade 3 reported having increased access to both social and concrete supports. But there were some notable differences between types of support and between families in home visiting and those in school-based programs.

Home visiting in the School as Hub approach is reaching families with greater needs. Caregivers of children Birth – Grade 3 reported higher social supports than concrete ones. Caregivers in Birth – age 3 home visiting reported fewer concrete supports than caregivers of PreK – Grade 3 families. Because families enrolled in the home visiting program have higher rates of poverty than the general school district population it is not surprising that they experienced greater needs related to concrete, tangible supports. Over time, families may become able to access supports in the early elementary years through school engagement, family and community networks, or some combination. Helping families access supports, especially tangible goods and services, should continue to be an area of focus for home visiting. Full implementation schools are engaging with families in parent-child interaction groups, which may support families' networking and identify ways families can access social and concrete supports.

Family Processes: Caregiver-Child Relationships

Strengthening Caregivers' Support for Development and Learning

Birth – Age 3
The caregiver-child relationship contributes in essential ways to young children's development and learning (Richter, Griesel, & Manegold, 2004). A primary goal of home visiting is to help the caregiver develop and maintain a positive relationship with their child (Sama-Miller et al., 2017). *The Keys to Interactive Parenting* (KIPS; Comfort & Gordon, 2006) was used to assess and support caregiver-child interaction. The KIPS includes 12 items nested in three scales. Items in the *Building Relationships* scale consider how caregivers react to the child in ways that promote trust and acceptance; the *Promoting Learning* scale considers caregivers' scaffolding of child learning; and *Supporting Confidence* considers how parents encourage the child's self-confidence. Each scale is assessed using a 5-point scale (1 = rarely, 3 = usually, and 5 = consistently). Figure 7 highlights the quality of caregiver-child interaction at baseline and follow-up.

Findings. Mean levels of caregiver-child interaction were in the mid-range and remained relatively stable over time.

FIGURE 7. CAREGIVER-CHILD INTERACTION: 0 – 3, N = 46
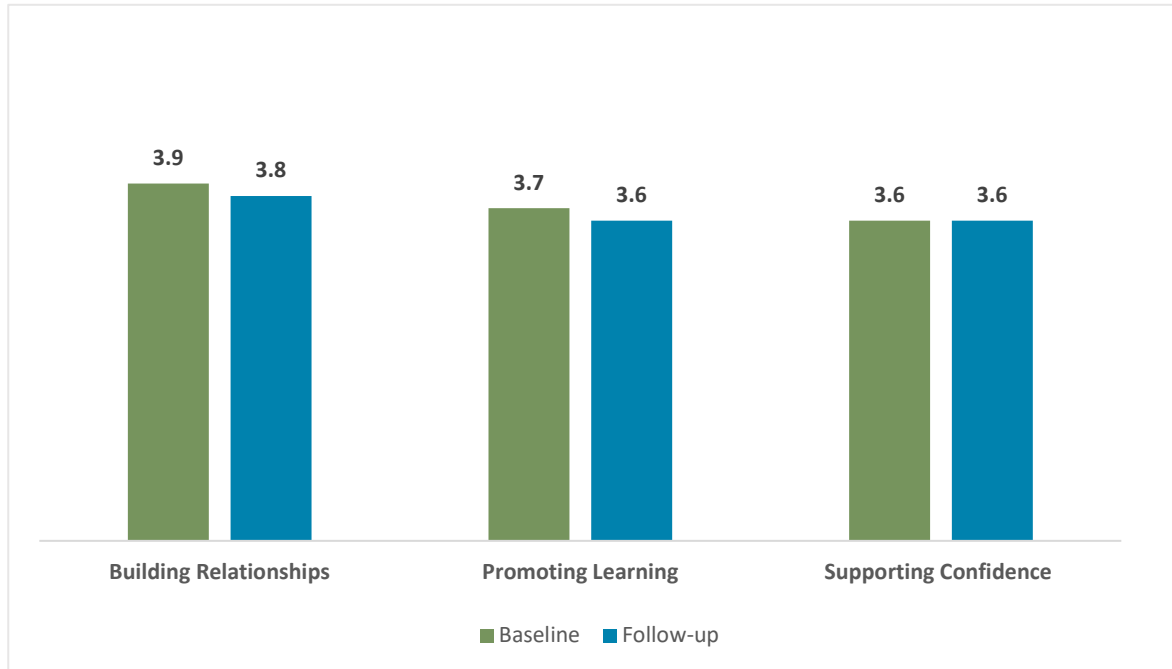
PreK – Grade 3
Parents completed surveys concerning their relationships with their child, indicating their perceptions about their relational closeness and conflict, using the *Child-Parent Relationship Scale* (CPRS; Pianta, 1992). The scales range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more closeness and more conflict in their relationship with their child.

Findings. Parents of participating children (*n* = 171) in PreK – Grade 3 reported high levels of closeness (*M* = 4.79; range 3.71 – 5) and low levels of conflict (*M* = 1.99, 1 – 4.38) that remained stable over time.

What We Are Learning About Supporting Caregiver-Child Relationships
The foundation for children's relationships with their caregivers develops in the child's first three years (Thompson, 2001). Home visitation can serve as a support for building caregivers' relationships with their children. However, caregivers may experience varying challenges at different stages of child development. For example, parenting may become more challenging as children find opportunities to practice independence and autonomy (e.g., the "terrible twos"). Home visiting can provide parents with coaching around interacting with their child and match coaching to the child's developmental level. Implementation of the *Growing Great Kids* curriculum provides extensive information for home visitors and parents at each stage of child development. As many families benefit from ongoing support with parenting, schools can leverage home visiting, personal visits with families, and parent-child interaction groups to continue to support close caregiver-child relationships.

Family Processes: Family-School Engagement

Schools Are Learning More Ways to Welcome and Engage Families Meaningfully

When schools engage meaningfully with families, children demonstrate better educational achievement and social outcomes (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004). The *Road Map Family Engagement Survey* (Ishimaru & Lott, 2015) helped us learn about families' perceptions about collaboration among families, communities, and schools. There are six primary domain areas in this scale: Parent/Family Knowledge and Confidence, Welcoming and Culturally Responsive School Climate, Parent/Family Influence and Decision-Making, Family-Educator Trust, Family-Educator Communication, and Principal Leadership for Engagement. Caregivers rank items on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

PreK – Grade 3
Caregivers of children in PreK – Grade 3 (n = 174) completed the survey in the spring of each school year.

Findings. In general, caregivers rated their engagement with their school positively: domain means ranged from 5.19 to 6.68 and there was little change across the three years. Caregivers identified school strengths as creating a welcoming environment and building a culture of trust. Principals contributed to this in their efforts to make parents feel welcome in the school and seek their ideas and suggestions to improve the school. At the item level, a few important family perceptions did change over time. Over time, caregivers' perceptions increased related to how they felt their home culture and language being valued by the school (.33 change). They also reported increasing their knowledge of community resources to help their child (.11 change). Families perceived small decreases over time in how often the child's teacher or staff had positive communication with families about their child's behavior (.15 change) or academic progress (.14 change).

What We Are Learning About Family Engagement
Families' perceptions were largely positive concerning their child's school, which reflects the research nationally (Perkins, 2008). To tease apart some issues related to family engagement, evaluators examined how parents' perceptions of school engagement were related to different groups of children's academic and vocabulary skills. They found that the caregivers of children in PreK to Grade 3 who were Hispanic and/or Spanish home-language, and whose children demonstrated positive gains in vocabulary and academic skills, acknowledged improvements in the school environment related to positive cultural climate. Full implementation schools are increasing their engagement with Hispanic and/or Spanish home-language families and support of families' access to cultural resources. Family-based processes will continue to be supported and strengthened in the Superintendents' Plan.

Child Development and Learning Outcomes

Over time we expect a focus on continuity, quality, and equity to be manifested in improved development and learning for all children and reduced disparities based on race and income. Children's development (language and social-emotional) and educational achievement were assessed annually to investigate changes in learning and in disparities over time.

Language Development

Spanish-Speaking Children Show Increases in Language Development;
Higher Home Visiting Dosage Is Associated With Higher Language Development

Children's language develops rapidly in the first three years of life and continues to predict academic achievement through the school years (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000). Receptive language skills develop first and are demonstrated in children's ability to understand language and use it to reason and solve problems. Expressive language skills develop next and are reflected in children's ability to use gestural and verbal, and eventually written language, to communicate with others and demonstrate understanding. Language serves as a linchpin for ongoing learning. When children struggle with language learning or are not exposed to language-rich environments, they often struggle with social development and academic achievement as well (Scarborough, 2009).

Birth – Age 3

Children's language development was assessed in the home using the *Preschool Language Scale-5* (PLS-5; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2011). The assessor interacts with the child using standardized materials, examining receptive (comprehension) and expressive (spoken) language skills. A combined score yields a Total Score. The assessment was completed in Spanish for children whose families reported it as their home language. For the children with baseline and follow-up data (n = 51), their average age at baseline was 14.12 months (4 – 33 months) and average age at follow-up was 22.8 months (11 – 40 months).

Findings. Scores for this measure are norm-referenced and usually reported as below average (< 85), average (85-115), and above average (> 115). Figures 8 – 10 display the distribution of children's language development across quintile percentage rankings at baseline and follow-up. Children experienced a slight decline in receptive and expressive language skills between baseline and follow-up, with fewer children in the high range and more in the low range. However, a greater percentage of children scored in the average ranges.

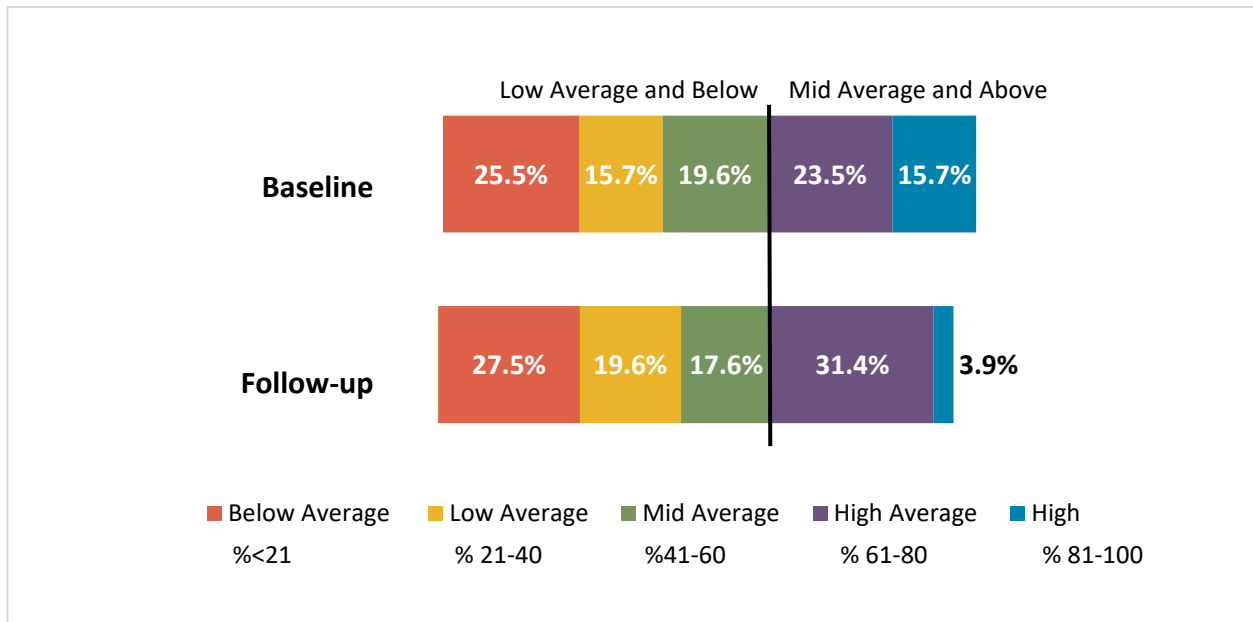**FIGURE 8.** RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR CHILDREN IN HOME VISITING, N = 51

FIGURE 9. EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN IN HOME VISITING, N = 51
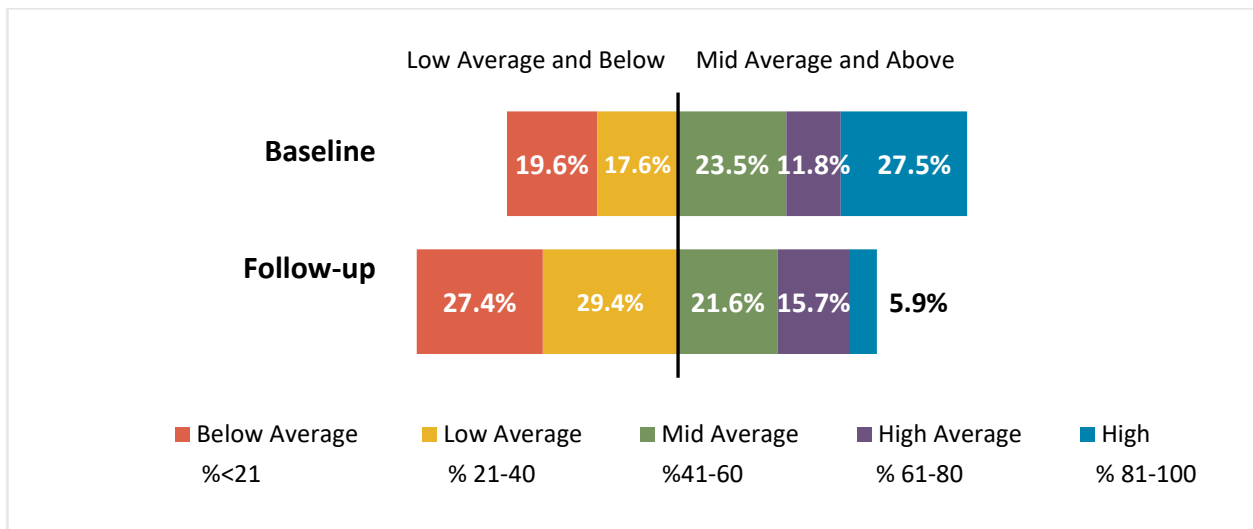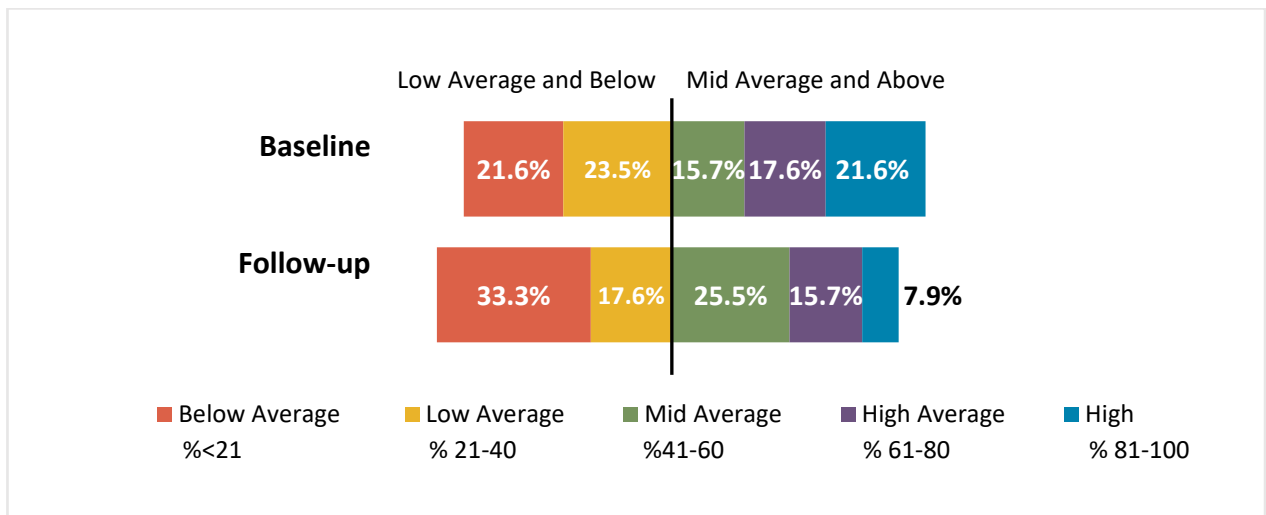
FIGURE 10. TOTAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN IN HOME VISITING

We wanted to investigate how language development might vary by home language. Children in Spanish-speaking homes experienced gains in receptive and total language skills from baseline to follow-up, compared to English-only children who did not show these gains (see Figure 11). Because we anticipate that home visiting will support children's language development over time, we examined associations of children's developing language and home visiting. Children whose families received more home visits over time demonstrated higher levels of expressive (r = .22) and total language scores (r = .22) at follow-up.

FIGURE 11. CHANGE IN INFANT-TODDLERS' LANGUAGE SKILLS BY HOME LANGUAGE, N = 51
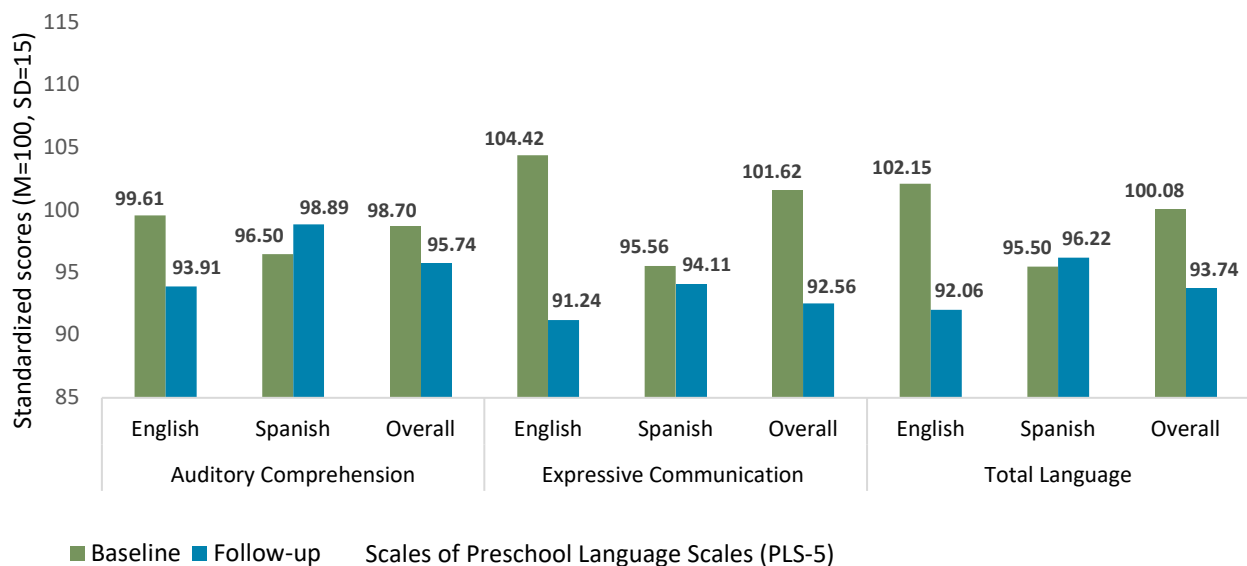
Language: PreK – Grade 3

Language Development Improved for All, With Greater Gains for Low-Income and Hispanic Children

Children's receptive vocabulary (comprehension) was assessed using the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*, *Fourth Edition* (PPVT-4; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) and was administered in school to 192 children. A standardized assessment, the PPVT-4 has been validated with a national sample of children 2.5 – 6 years, and yields a standard score with an average range of 100 (range 85 – 115). The assessment was administered in English.

Findings. Scores for this measure are norm-referenced and usually reported as below average (< 85) , average (85-115), and above average (> 115). Figure 12 displays the distribution of children's language development across quintile percentage rankings at baseline and follow-up, for the PreK – Grade 3 cohort.

PreK Post-Home Visiting Group. The children who transitioned from the Birth – Age 3 home visiting (*n* = 11) scored within the average range (*M* = 94.5) in the spring of their first year of PreK in the area of receptive vocabulary skills.

PreK Entry Group. Time 1 consists of children who entered PreK at 3 or 4 years old; Time 2 reflects the same children one year later (PreK or K); and Time 3 reflects the child two years after the Time 1 baseline (in either K or first grade). Children's receptive vocabulary skills in the PreK entry group increased over time, with more children scoring in the above and high average ranges, and fewer in the below average range.

FIGURE 12. PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY FOR CHILDREN IN THE PREK ENTRY GROUP, N = 67

*Some OPS PreK children entered the study at age 3 in fall 2017 and had data collected at baseline and in the spring of their first and second year of PreK.
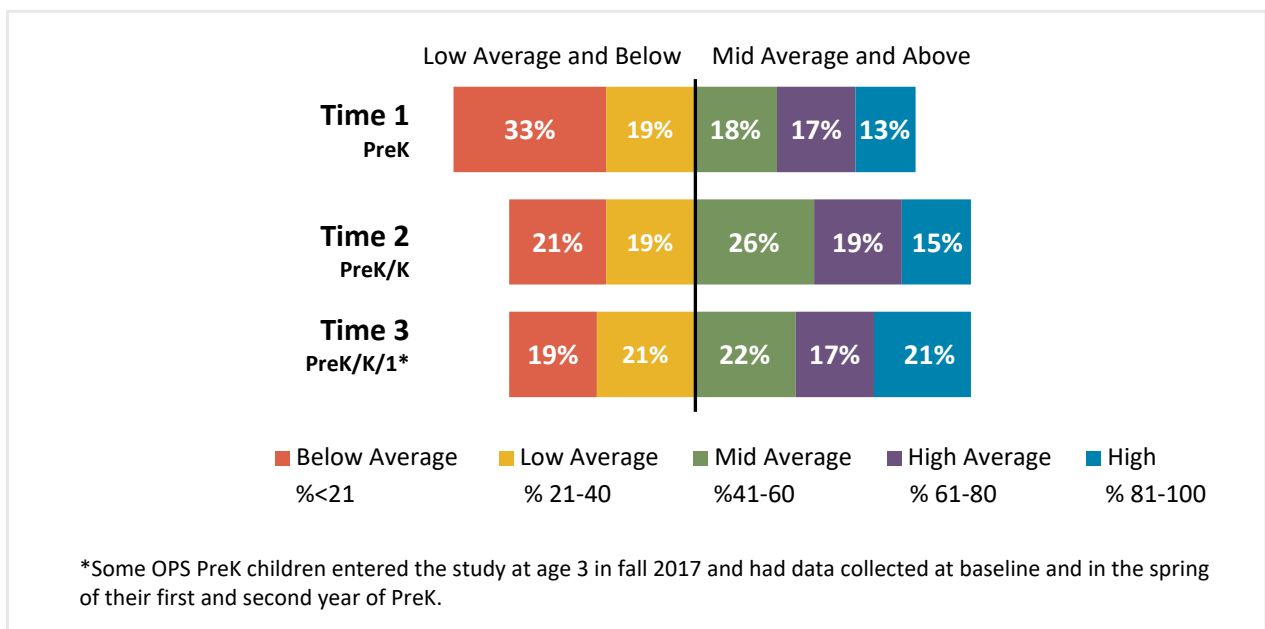
Because we are interested in learning how disparities among groups are changing, we analyzed children's language development by groups. All groups of children who entered the evaluation at PreK demonstrated improvement in language development (Figure 13). While children with paid lunch, had English as their home language, and/or white had the highest standard scores overall, Hispanic and/or Spanish home-language families showed the greatest language gains over time.

FIGURE 13. CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT BY GROUP FOR CHILDREN IN THE PREK ENTRY GROUP, OVERALL N = 67
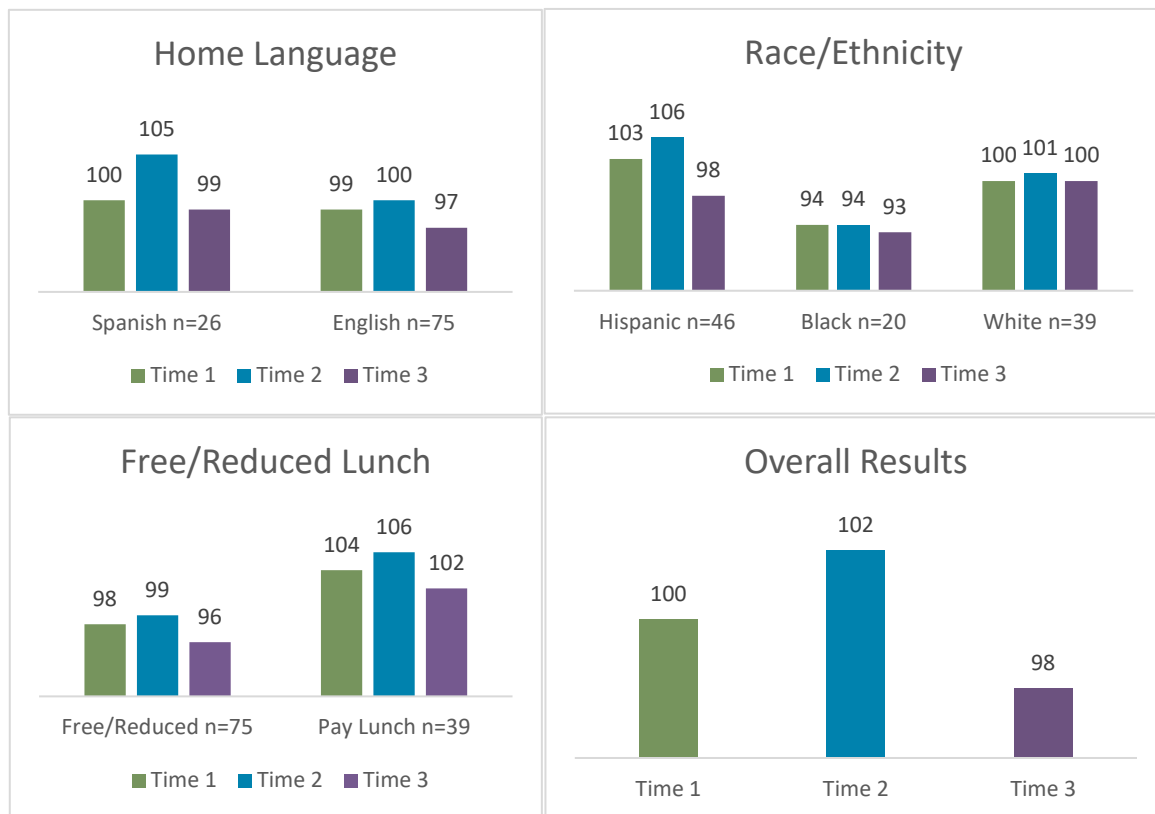
Kindergarten Entry Group. Children's receptive vocabulary skills in the Kindergarten entry group improved with time, with more children scoring in the high-average ranges, and fewer in the below-average range (Figure 14). We again analyzed children's language development by demographic groups. All groups of children who entered the study at Kindergarten demonstrated improvement in language development relative to the standardized norms (Figure 15). Black children showed small declines over time;Hispanic and/or Spanish-speaking children showed the greatest receptive language gains over time.

FIGURE 14. CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, N = 114
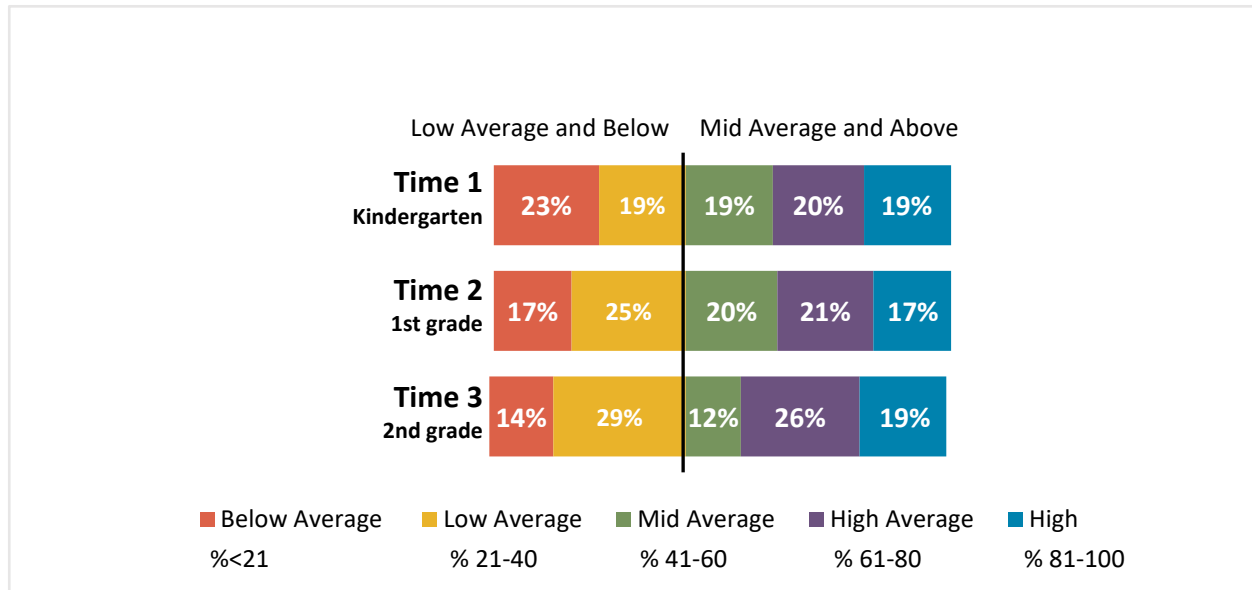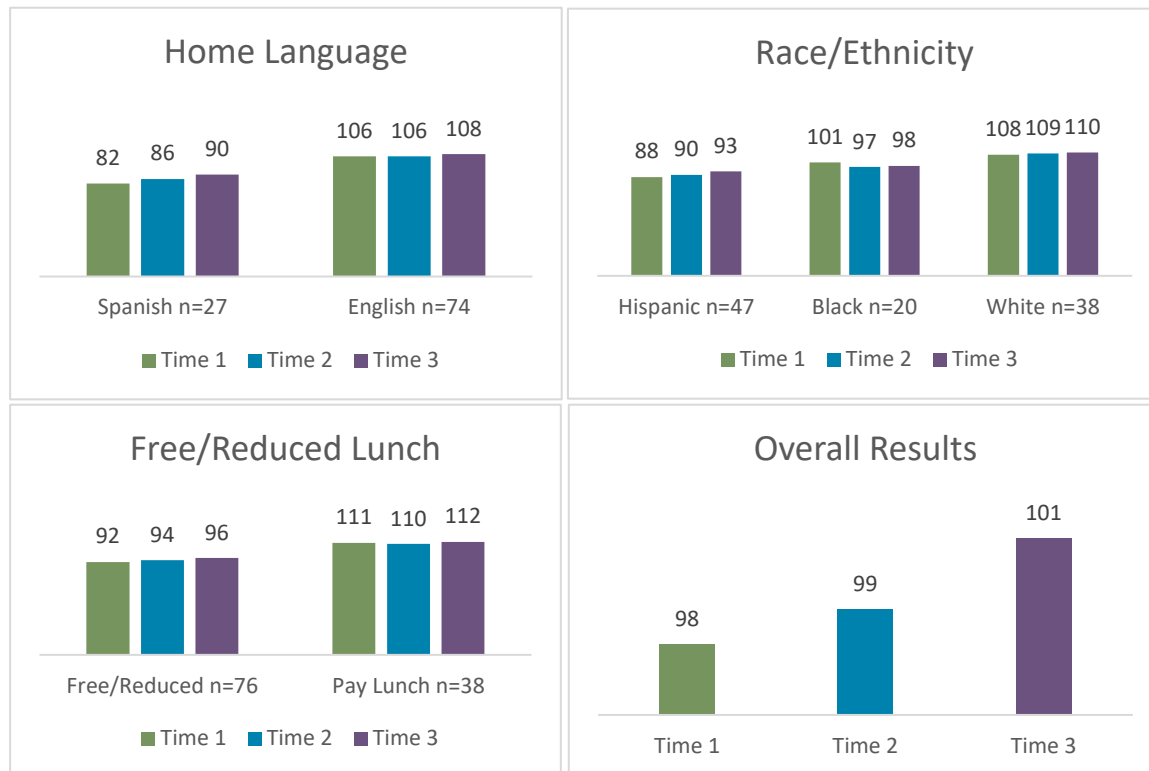

FIGURE 15. ANALYSES OF CHILDREN'S RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY BY GROUP CHARACTERISTICS FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, OVERALL N = 114

What We Are Learning About Children's Language Development

Individual differences in language exposure and early signs of developmental delay often emerge in the third year of life (Roberts & Kaiser, 2015). It is common to identify previously undetected language delays when children are between 2 and 3 years old. Furthermore, the performance of infants and toddlers on formal assessment is subject to cultural and environmental variation (Meisels, Wen, & Beachy-Quick, 2010). The decrease observed in children's language skills in the toddler years may reflect emerging language delays and/or environmental differences in children's language exposure. Therefore, it is important to screen for language development regularly to identify children who may benefit from additional supports. The Superintendents' Plan has used the ASQ screening tool to support program planning and referrals; it may be valuable to use it in the future for tracking children's progress over time as well. Furthermore, it will continue to be important for home visiting to emphasize supporting caregivers' practices to increase language learning in the birth – age 3 period.

It is promising that Hispanic/Spanish home-language children in home visiting realized greater language development gains and that home visiting dosage was positively associated with children's language development. These findings emphasize that ongoing work with families in home visiting, family facilitation, and parent-child interaction groups has potential to positively influence children's language development.

That children in the PreK – Grade 3 cohort experienced relative gains in receptive language is also promising. Language development remains an area of focus, as children begin to use more complex sentences, tell stories, and understand more complex ideas. While learning two languages simultaneously is considered a benefit for cognitive development (Barac & Bialystok, 2012), it is also difficult. Targeted efforts in home visiting and classroom practices may especially benefit children whose home language is Spanish. We should also consider that the decreases in language skills among black children during Kindergarten may signal a necessity to focus on representative instructional materials, responsive instructional methods, and building positive relationships to support vocabulary and language development among black children, and at younger ages.

Educational Achievement

Early Educational Achievement Risk Decreased Over Time – Spanish-Speaking and Black Children Realized Greater Gains

An indicator of children's early academic achievement is their ability to understand written language and acquire fundamental math concepts. In the Superintendents' Plan, educational facilitators work with classroom teachers to support academic instruction in PreK – Grade 3 classrooms.

PreK – Grade 3 Cohort

Children's academic achievement was assessed using the *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 3rd Edition Brief Form* (KTEA-3 Brief; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2015), and was administered to 172 children in PreK – Grade 3. The KTEA-3 Brief is a norm-referenced screening tool for students older than age 4 and provides a general estimate of academic achievement. The KTEA-3 Brief yields a composite (total) score and three subscale scores in the areas of reading, math, and spelling. It was administered in English in schools. The KTEA has been validated with a national sample and yields a standard score with an average range of 100 (range 85 – 115). Assessment results are provided by group.

Findings

PreK Post-Home Visiting Group. The children in this group were 3 years old and were too young for this assessment.
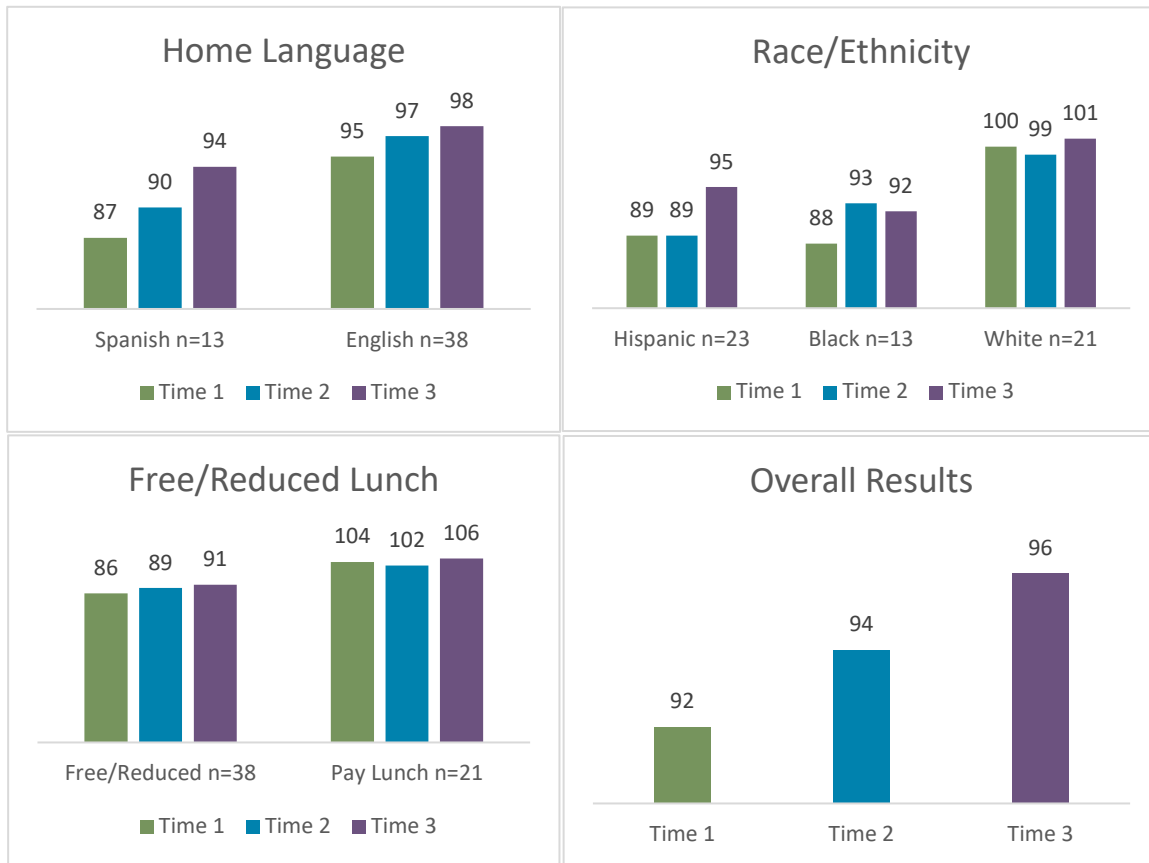
PreK Entry Group. The number of children demonstrating below average skills (word/letter identification) decreased over time, and the percentage of children in the above average range increased.

**FIGURE 16.** CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANK OVER TIME: LETTER/WORD ACHIEVEMENT FOR CHILDREN IN THE PREK ENTRY GROUP, N = 59
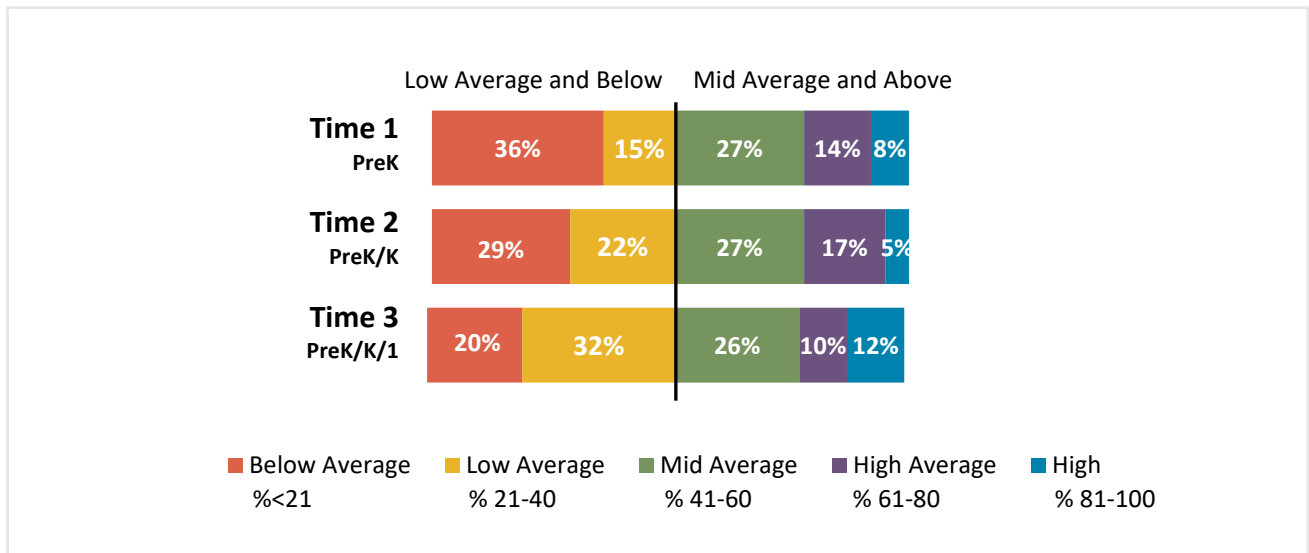
We analyzed children's achievement by demographic groups. Children in the PreK entry group who were Hispanic, black, eligible for free/reduced lunch, and/or spoke Spanish had an average gain of 5.5, higher than the average gain for children with paid lunch, English-speaking home language and/or white (2.0).

FIGURE 17. CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: LETTER/WORD ACHIEVEMENT FOR CHILDREN IN THE PREK ENTRY GROUP, N = 59

Kindergarten Entry Group. Children's educational achievement improved over time. The number of children scoring in the below average range decreased, while the number of children scoring in the high average and above ranges increased.

FIGURE 18. CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT-BA3 COMPOSITE FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, N = 113
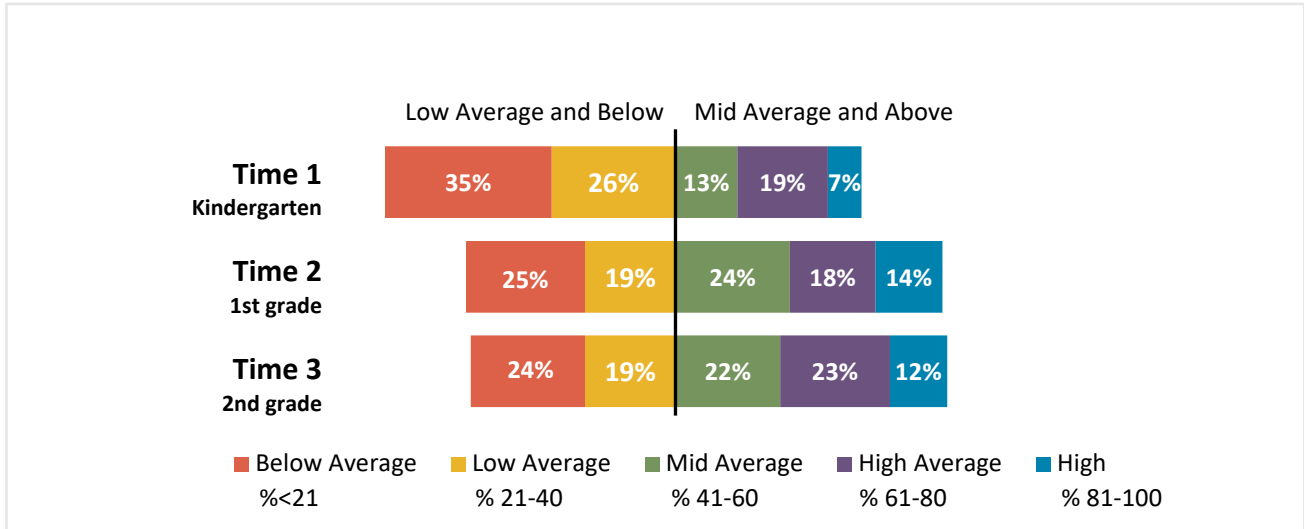
Although all groups increased their scores in educational achievement over time, black children showed the greatest gains. Children who were Hispanic, black, eligible for free/reduced lunch, and/or had Spanish as their home language had an average gain of 7.8, compared with paid lunch, white and home-English-speaking children (average gain of 5.7). Children whose home language was Spanish and/or were Hispanic had the lowest scores across all time points, yet demonstrated improvement over time.

FIGURE 19. CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, N = 113

What We Are Learning About Early Educational Achievement
Disparities in educational achievement are manifest in the early school years, and magnify over the course of schooling (Halle et al., 2009). Children sampled in full implementation schools realized gains in educational achievement, with greater growth realized for children who were low-income, black, and Hispanic and/or whose home language is Spanish. However, children who qualify for free/reduced lunch, are non-white, and are from Spanish-speaking homes scored lower across all time points. Ongoing efforts in the Superintendents' Plan will target efforts to enhance instructional methodology, curricular materials, and data-informed interventions with students to address gaps in academic achievement.

Social-Emotional Development
Social-emotional development in early childhood is strongly associated with children's academic progress through the school years. Learning to express and regulate emotions in order to effectively engage in warm, productive social relationships is a key achievement during early childhood (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). In the Superintendents' Plan, caregiver and teacher reports were used to assess children's developing social and emotional skills.

Birth to Age 3

To assess the social and emotional skills of children who were at least 12 months old in the home visiting program, caregivers completed the *Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment* (ITSEA; Briggs-Gowan & Carter, 2006) (*n* = 29). The ITSEA identifies potential social-emotional competencies and problems and has two domains with subscales: (1) *Competence*, composed of Attention, Mastery, Motivation, Imitation/Play, Empathy, and Prosocial Peer Relations; and (2) *Dysregulation*, composed of Negative Emotionality, Sleep Problems, Eating Problems, and Sensory Sensitivity. Caregivers rate each behavior item (0 = not true/rarely, 1 = somewhat true/sometimes, 2 = very true/always). Scores are assigned a clinical rating, based on the deviation from the mean T score (*M* = 50). For the Competence domain, a score below 35 is considered of concern and a score higher than 65 considered above normal. For Dysregulation, a score of 65 and higher is considered of concern*.* Of concern scores reflect children being at risk of a deficit or delay relative to their peers in their development of social-emotional competencies and their development of behavioral and emotional regulation.

Findings. Most children in the home visiting evaluation were in the normal and above ranges at baseline (89%) and follow-up (90%). The percentage of children scoring in the concern range for dysregulation decreased from baseline (14%) to follow-up (10%).

PreK – Grade 3

Teachers completed the *Behavioral and Emotional Screening System, Third Edition* (BASC-3 BESS; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015) for 194 children. The BASC-3 BESS is a screening tool assessing behavioral and emotional strengths and weaknesses, and consists of 20 items. Scores are reported in the *typical*, *elevated* or *extremely elevated* ranges of adaptive skills.

Findings
PreK Post-Home Visiting Group. Teachers rated all of the children who transitioned from the Birth – Age 3 Cohort (*n* = 11) in the *typical* range.
PreK Entry Group (see Figure 20). The percentage of children who teachers rated as demonstrating elevated risk in their adaptive and social-emotional risk fluctuated over time. As the PreK entry group aged, teachers rated more children in the *high elevated* range, though fewer in the *elevated risk* range.

FIGURE 20. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS FOR CHILDREN IN THE PREK ENTRY GROUP, N = 67
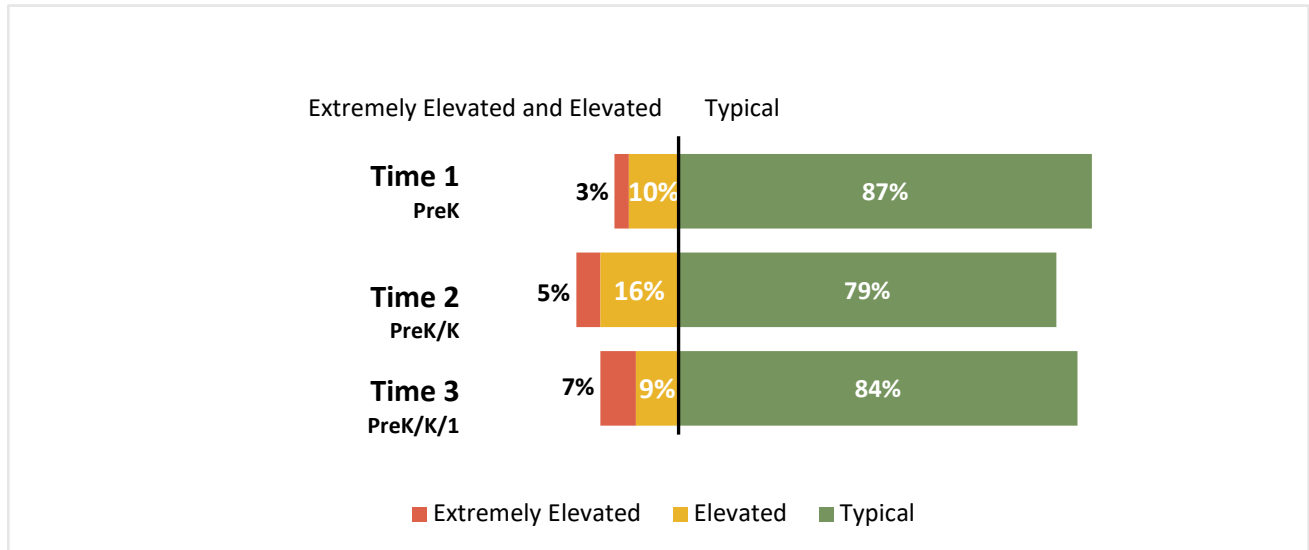
Findings

Kindergarten Entry Group. Teachers' ratings of children's social-emotional skills in the Kindergarten entry group declined over time, such that second grade teachers rated more children in the *elevated* or *extremely elevated* risk categories than Kindergarten and first grade teachers (Figure 21). More children in second grade were rated within the *elevated* or *extremely elevated* range than they were in Kindergarten.

FIGURE 21. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, N = 116
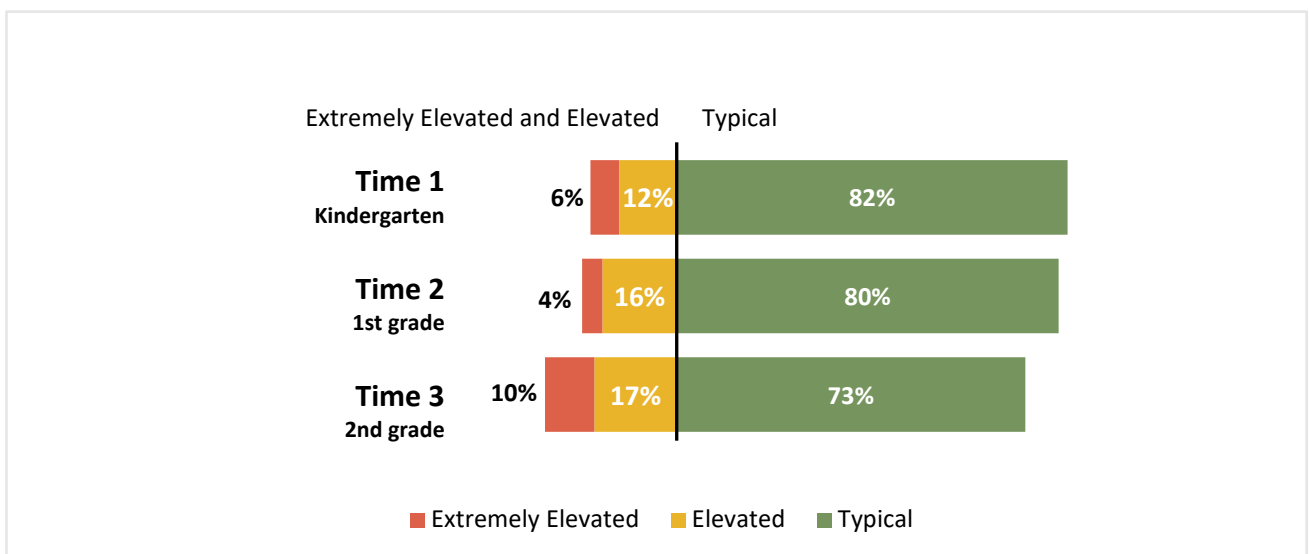
Executive Functioning

Executive functioning refers to the ability to manage one's emotions and behaviors in order to achieve a goal. These skills develop rapidly in early childhood and are seen in young children's ability to control inappropriate behaviors or responses, to move easily from one task or activity to another, and to make use of short-term memory. Children's executive functioning has been found to be related to social-emotional and academic functioning and learning (Obradović, Potilla & Boyce, 2012).

Findings

Birth – Age 3

Executive functioning was not assessed in the home visiting Birth – Age 3 children.

PreK – Grade 3

For children in the PreK and entry groups (*n* = 38), teachers completed the *Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool Version* (BRIEF-P; Gioia, Espy, & Isquith, 2003). The BRIEF-P is a standardized rating scale to assess executive function behaviors in students age 2 to 5 years. The BRIEF-P consists of a single rating form that contains 63 items in five non-overlapping scales: Inhibit, Shift, Emotional Control, Working Memory, and Plan/Organize. These scales yield an overall composite score, the *Global Executive Composite*. Scores are reported in two categories: *Typical* and *At-Risk (see Figure 22).*

PreK Post-Home Visiting Group (N = 11). Most (64%) children who transitioned from the home visit Birth – Age 3 group were rated in the *typical* range at Time 1, and ratings increased markedly over time (82% at Time 3).

PreK Entry Group (N = 38). Although the majority of PreK children were within the typical range for executive function skills, the children rated by their teacher as *at risk* increased from Time 1 to Time 2.

FIGURE 22. EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING FOR CHILDREN IN THE PREK ENTRY GROUP, N = 38
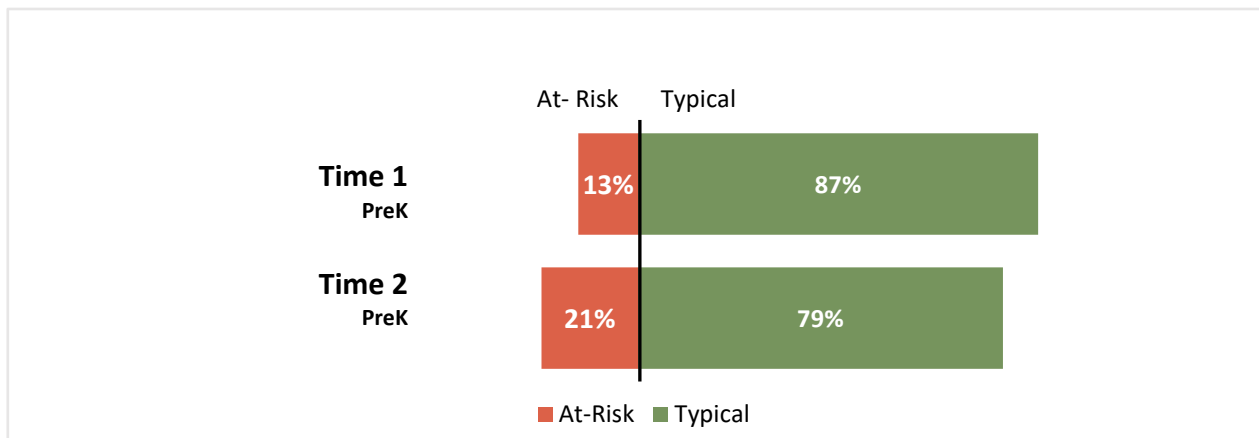
Kindergarten Entry Group. For children in the Kindergarten entry group, teachers completed the *Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory* (CEFI; Naglieri & Goldstein, 2012) for 114 children in Kindergarten through second grade (Figure 23). The CEFI is a behavior rating scale that evaluates executive function skills in the areas of attention, emotion regulation, flexibility, inhibitory control, initiation, organization, planning, self-monitoring, and working memory for youths ages 5 to 18. The CEFI is a standardized assessment that has been validated with a national sample of children. The average score range is from 85 – 115, with a national average of 100. Teachers' ratings of executive function skills declined slightly over time. By Time 3, 6% more children were rated within the *low average and below* range and 5% fewer children were rated in the *mid average or above* range*.*

FIGURE 23. EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, N = 114
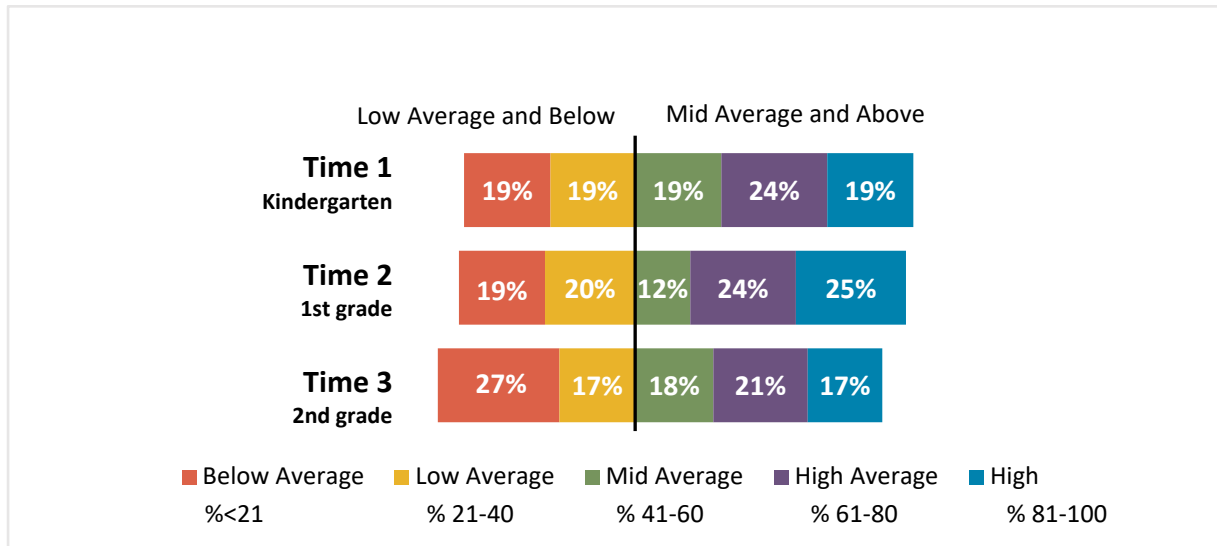
Executive function scores for children in the Kindergarten entry group were analyzed by demographic subgroup (Figure 24). Black children received the lowest ratings from teachers at every time point.

FIGURE 24. EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING FOR CHILDREN IN THE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY GROUP, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS, N = 114
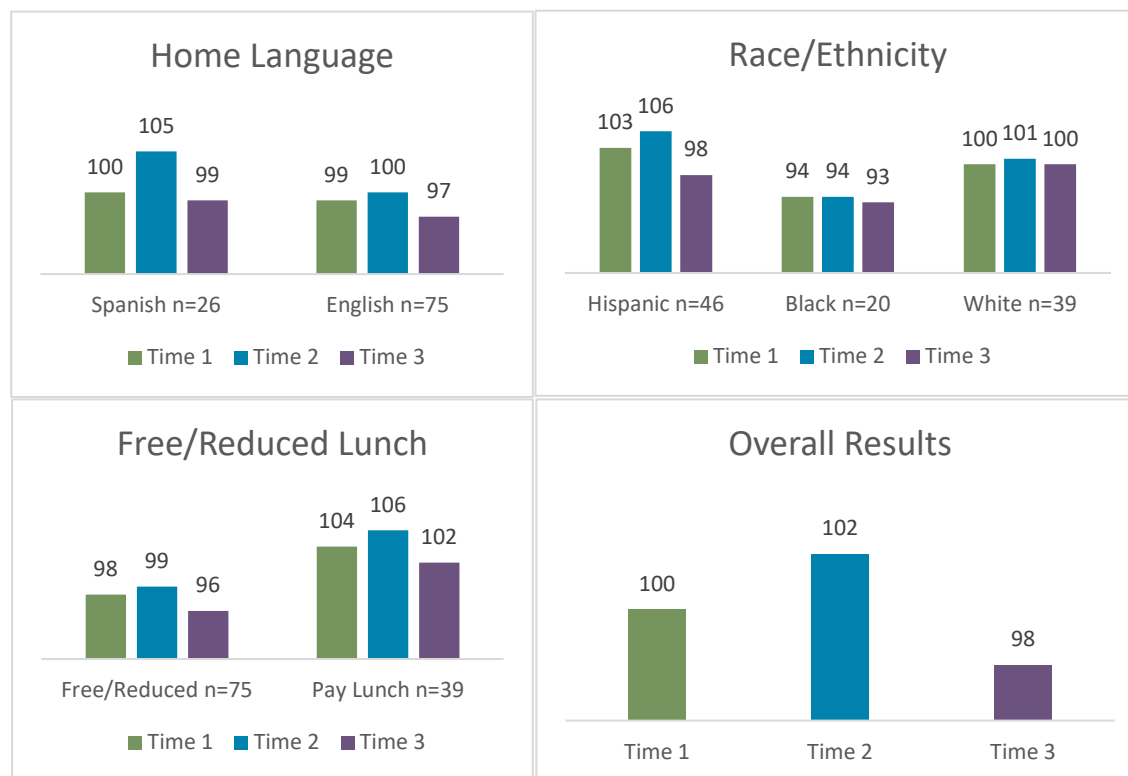
What We Are Learning About Social-Emotional Development and Executive Functioning

Teachers Rate Greater Percentages of Children at Risk in Higher Grades
Caregivers reported few behavioral concerns for their children birth – 3 years old, and their concerns regarding their children's dysregulation decreased over time.

Teachers' perceptions of children's social-emotional development and executive functioning were high for children who started in PreK and decreased over early primary grades. For the Kindergarten Entry group, teachers rated the executive functioning of black children lowest among the subgroups at all time points. Children's family income is also associated with teachers' ratings of executive functioning, such that teachers rated children with free/reduced lunch lower in their skills.

Children often need environmental supports for developing executive functioning in early elementary classrooms. Therefore, teachers may benefit from supports related to their expectations for children's behavior and how to create learning environments to benefit all children. Teachers' perceptions of children's capacities are important and are associated with children's academic and social success in the classroom (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). However, it is possible that teachers bring

unintentional bias to their assessments of children's capacities matched with the classroom needs. Alternatively, classroom expectations for behavior may be mismatched with children's capacity to regulate. At the minimum, it appears as though PreK and early elementary teachers may vary in their perceptions of social-emotional and executive functioning that are necessary for school success. In all likelihood, these ratings reflect a combination of unintended bias and changing expectations. Targeted coaching and professional learning opportunities in the Superintendents' Plan are designed to provide such supports for teachers.

Overall, we are observing growth in children, family caregivers and teachers participating in Superintendents' Plan School as Hub. We are also witnessing learning, as schools take on the challenge of building capacities to partner with and engage families, and address children's instructional needs, with a focus on increasing access and opportunity for families with the least access. Partnering in the work with schools is a team of implementation specialists at the Buffett Institute who collaborate with and coach school staff. Understanding the processes of partnering, and how it works, is essential to continuing to support schools in their innovative efforts. In the next section, we describe what we are learning about the processes of coaching and facilitation with the Buffett Institute implementation staff.

Implementation Insights: Change Strategies at Work

In the spring of 2018, Buffett Institute research staff conducted an implementation study to examine the processes involved in partnering with schools in the Superintendents' Plan (School as Hub). The following questions were the focus of the study:

How is the Superintendents' Plan being implemented by the Buffett Institute?

1. *How do implementation staff perceive their work with schools?*
2. *How are the School as Hub Commitments (quality, continuity, and equity) and Change Strategies manifest in the implementation work with schools?*
3. *What areas for growth and improvement can be identified?*

Methods

Interviews were conducted with Buffett Institute implementation staff: educational facilitators (n = 5), program specialists (n = 2), and the program administrator (n = 1). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded, using a case study design (Stake, 1995). Implementation staff described their activities, perceptions, and learning associated with their roles in the Superintendents' Plan. Findings, represented in aggregate, are presented below.

How do implementation staff perceive their work with schools?

Superintendents' Plan implementation staff shared their activities and perspectives related to their work with the School as Hub Birth – Grade 3 approach. They described their roles, how they developed relationships across their varied settings and partners, the interactive and shared practices such as in their coaching functions, and professional development employed with their school-based staff.

In the Superintendents' Plan, implementation staff work with schools to implement the School as Hub approach. Educational facilitators coach and support PreK – Grade 3 teachers. Program specialists coach and support school-based home visitors and family facilitators. The program administrator provides coaching and supervision to the educational facilitators and program specialists, and works with each of the school principals. Implementation staff work in a variety of school-related settings, including school staff meetings, professional learning communities, parent-child groups, home visits, and one-on-one conferences. They collaborate with principals and teachers, home visitors, and family facilitators (see Figure 25), described in this report as "school staff." Implementation staff also engage with a variety of stakeholders, including community members, district staff, families, instructional coaches, literacy/reading coordinators, math coaches, paraprofessionals, counselors, school psychologists, and school support liaisons. In this report, we summarize some ways in which the implementation staff observe their partnership work with schools, and how it is aligned with the School as Hub Change Strategies.

Relationship Building: Overarching Core of the Implementation Work

All Superintendents' Plan work is accomplished through a network of relationships. Implementation staff reported relationship building as a central and primary aim in their work with schools. Through informal conversations and resource sharing, implementation staff initiated their partnerships by learning and listening to school staff. They offered constructive recommendations to enhance instructional practices and educational spaces. They experienced some struggles in establishing partnerships with some school staff and had the most meaningful successes when trust was established and school staff shared their deepest practice-related questions and struggles. In the context of trusting

relationships, implementation staff reported that they could do effective work, such as using reflective feedback while coaching. Implementation staff reported that their partnerships with school staff enabled them to gradually see shifts in thinking and practice.

FIGURE 25. BUFFETT INSTITUTE IMPLEMENTATION STAFF (PURPLE) AND THE PRIMARY SUPERINTENDENTS' PLAN STAKEHOLDERS WITH WHOM THEY ENGAGE (GREY)
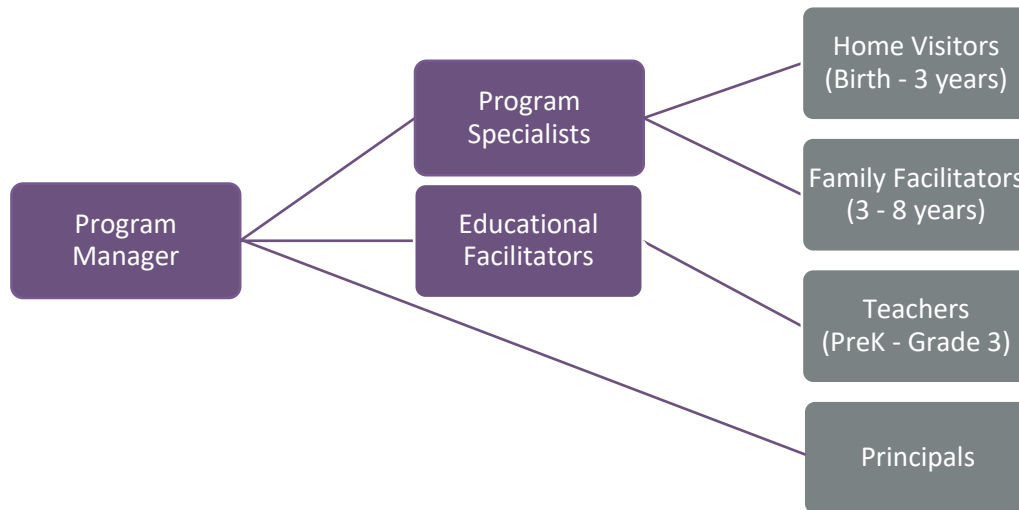
How are the School as Hub Commitments and Change Strategies manifest in the implementation work with schools?

Working toward a School as Hub approach necessitates partnering with schools in the commitment to continuity, quality, and equity. Realizing these commitments requires intentional implementation of specific change strategies. These strategies, designed to decrease disparities in educational opportunities and achievement, center on **organizational environments,** supporting high-quality **practices,** and building **professional capacity**.

Organizational Environments

Implementation staff described how professional learning engagements and collaboration have supported some changes in how schools engage and partner with families. In one school, a morning coffee cart welcomes parents into the school; while in other schools, entire classrooms are dedicated to welcoming and engaging families. In the words of one implementation staff member, "There's a climate of, 'We all make each other better.'"

Practices

Implementation staff described the many ways they coached and partnered with school staff to support practice. They partnered with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to think about supporting children's social-emotional development and engaged in challenging conversations around the intersection of race and the achievement gap. Implementation staff planned professional development with their schools and brought current research to thinking about curriculum, instruction, and assessment. For home and personal visits with families, implementation staff worked with school staff to implement a new curriculum with families. *Growing Great Kids* supports interactions and partnering with families to build caregivers' capacity to support their child's development.

Professional Capacity
To realize the commitments of quality, continuity, and equity in the School as Hub, implementation staff partner with schools to build capacity in such areas as leadership, professional learning, and collaboration. Building relationships with and supporting school leadership is a priority of their work, and implementation staff partner with school teams to explore how School as Hub commitments can be reflected in school site plans. Collaborative reflection, in the context of intense professional learning and day-to-day interactions is ongoing and central to supporting change for how schools "do school."

What are some perceived areas for growth and improvement?
Implementation staff described several areas of progress with schools, recognizing that there is much work to be done in their own learning to further their work with schools. They note the following opportunities for growth: engaging school staff in reflection and conversation about decreasing income- and race-based disparities; consistency and stability in the overarching school change framework message; and strengthening support of school capacity to implement the School as Hub approach.

Acknowledging and Addressing Disparities
Implicit biases exist in nearly all educational environments, as they do in every large social system. Implementation staff engage with school staff in reflective discussions related to diversity and systemic bias. These dialogues emerged in book clubs, staff meetings, and communities of practice. School staff have reflected and examined their practices and beliefs with implementation staff and begun to work toward reducing bias while increasing expectations and support within their instructional practice. Implementation staff are aware that challenging and thought-provoking conversations must be continued and refined to reduce and prevent further disparities. Implementation and school staff are increasing their use of an asset-based perspective, acknowledging strengths and understanding differences, and continuing to learn how to confront gaps and disparities in quality, continuity, and equity.

Message Clarity
Implementation staff expressed growing and evolving understanding of the School as Hub approach and a strong desire for greater clarity and focus related to aims and strategies. Refining and clarifying the approach, staff roles, and implementation focus are areas for continued work and development. They noted that schools and families can also benefit from greater clarity to allow a robust message to be shared across stakeholders. With this large and complex educational initiative, consistent communication across stakeholders in all settings is critical. A programmatic school reform message tying the overarching theoretical framework to the concrete, specific ways individual districts and schools approach this plan is essential. This work holds the potential to continue disseminating the message of school change and equalize knowledge among school staff members, extending the program efforts into the community in order to expand the opportunity for greater leadership and cross-collaborative partnerships.

Capacity Building
Capacity building refers to a school's ability to implement an approach with its own leadership and resources rather than consultants or external staff. Implementation staff partner with school staff and systems to cultivate a shared awareness and readiness about reflective practice and leadership among all school staff. Implementation staff continue to build coaching and collaboration skills, recognizing that job-embedded coaching and collaboration with principals, teacher leaders, and school staff are keys to building capacity and sustainability. It is clear that relationship building is at the core and creates the foundation for school improvement.

What We Are Learning in the School as Hub Birth to Grade 3 Approach Evaluation

Doing the Work: Implementing the School as Hub Approach

Implementation staff have worked to establish and leverage relationships with school staff to build capacity around the School as Hub approach. Specifically, implementation staff shared how they have been building coaching relationships with school staff and reflectively using data and collaboration to share what all children need to be successful in the Birth to Grade 3 continuum. Emerging work is focusing on building coaching for quality by using reflective practice, enhancing continuity within schools and with the community, and strengthening understandings of an equity lens that guides this work. The evaluation data related to quality practices, family processes, and child development and learning outcomes shed light on promising progress and opportunities for further refinement and growth. Greater inquiry is needed to learn more about how school leaders, home visitors, teachers, and other school staff are implementing School as Hub.

Quality Practices

Home Visiting

Installing a home visiting program in the context of a public school is one of the innovations in the School as Hub approach, and one that challenges the typical way of work in an elementary school. While facilitation of quality home visit processes remains an area for growth among the home visitors and their coach, some notable progress has taken place. Families in home visiting reported increasing social and concrete support over time. Furthermore, we are learning that dosage matters. When Hispanic families received more frequent home visits, their children exhibited higher levels of language development. Years of research document that home visiting works to support families and their educational efforts with children. By making home visiting part of the school culture, families and school staff have opportunities to build their relationships and influence earlier. In the spring of 2018, program specialists, implementation staff, home visitors, and family facilitators were trained in and piloted *Growing Great Kids*, an evidence-informed and well-developed home visiting curriculum, and increased monitoring and coaching are underway.

Classroom Practices

Classroom practices related to organization and emotional support are strong and improving over time. Teachers are interacting with children warmly and are sensitive to their individual needs. Classroom routines and strategies for guiding children's positive behavior are strong. However, processes related to enhancing quality instructional practices, including providing quality feedback and supporting concept development, remain an opportunity for growth. In the coming year, educational facilitators will increase their use of targeted coaching, focused on reflective practice, and will devote themselves to supporting all school staff in their ongoing efforts to enhance instructional quality for children most impacted by the achievement gap. Increasing instructional quality over time is expected to continue to enhance children's language skills and academic achievement over time. It is important to note that children's language development improved in PreK, and more so for children who receive free/reduced lunch, are Hispanic, and/or speak Spanish at home.

Family Processes

In School as Hub, schools offer targeted supports for families of the youngest children, including

identifying concrete resources, enhancing social connections, and supporting caregivers' interactions and relationships with their children. Home visiting is a key investment for supporting ongoing learning and development. While families in the home visiting program have increased their perceptions of support over time, families with children under age 3 still struggle to provide their families with daily concrete needs. School-based home visitors can help families to identify their needs and local resources to provide those needs and help families feel confident in their ability to care for their children. Caregivers will benefit from the relatively newly implemented curriculum, *Growing Great Kids*, with home visiting focused on supporting their children in each developmental stage.

For children enrolled in PreK through Grade 3, families rated their engagement with schools positively, perceiving a welcoming environment and growing support of family culture and background. Opportunities for enhancing families' experiences may be found in school-initiated communication related to children's social and learning progress. School as Hub supports will continue to focus on supporting, connecting, and engaging families in meaningful ways.

Child Development and Learning Outcomes

Language and Literacy Achievement
Children's measured language development declined in the first three years of life. This decline in the second and third year is not uncommon, as the expectations for children's language use increase dramatically and slight delays in language are identified at this time. However, language development increased consistently in the PreK – Grade 3 children, with the greatest gains shown during PreK. PreK is a period of rapid language growth, and children benefit most from a language-rich environment in the preschool years (ages 3 – 5). Early literacy achievement reflected gains as well. Notably, infants and toddlers who experienced higher numbers of home visits exhibited the highest language gains. Full implementation schools have an excellent opportunity to enhance children's early language and literacy by supporting consistent participation in quality home visitation and high-quality PreK.

Social-Emotional Development
Few children from 12 months through Grade 3 showed elevated risk in their social-emotional development, and executive functioning (as reported by teachers) was in the average range for children PreK to Grade 3. However, primary grade teachers reported higher percentages of "elevated risk" for children. It is possible that challenging behavior becomes more prevalent in the years beyond PreK; alternatively, teachers may have higher expectations for regulated behavior. It may be helpful to consider how teachers' expectations and learning environments are matched to the social-emotional developmental needs of young primary students, and how teachers can be supported in this regard.

Customized Assistance to Districts

Customized 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. Distinct evaluation plans are necessary for each customized assistance plan. Measures are aligned with goals and expected outcomes for the specific plan and with the overall goals of the Superintendents' Plan. The customized assistance plans of three districts will be highlighted: Gretna Public Schools, Ralston Public Schools, and Westside Community Schools.

### Strengthening Classroom Practices and Environments: Gretna Public Schools

The Gretna Public Schools' plan emphasizes strengthening teacher practices and classroom environments through customized professional development to better support students' social and emotional development. The district uses the *Pyramid Model* to help teachers increase their support of social competence in students, while also preventing challenging behaviors. The plan extends into all of the elementary buildings and includes counselors, resource specialists, and Kindergarten through Grade 3 students. Implementation began in Kindergarten classrooms in the 2015-16 school year; first grade followed in 2016-17 and second grade in 2017-18, with third grade to follow in 2018-19. In addition, new teachers in PreK through the grade level added each year are included in the professional development activities.

In 2017-18, a total of 362 students were assessed in grades Kindergarten through Grade 2 as part of this evaluation. At least two students in each classroom were selected by teachers as having particular social and emotional risks. Additional children were chosen at random from each classroom to bring the total number of children selected from each classroom to six. Educational Service Unit 3 used a stratified random selection process to select these additional students. In the 2017-18 school year, 80 students were identified as having social and emotional risks and 282 students were randomly selected. A total of 120 Kindergartners (identified = 19, random = 101), 121 first graders (identified = 17, random = 104), and 121 second graders (identified = 44, random = 77) were assessed. The focus of the current evaluation was on teachers' fidelity to the *Pyramid Model* and differences in social development between the identified and randomly selected groups of students.

What was the fidelity to the Pyramid Model for program-wide implementation?
For the purposes of this evaluation, a modified version of the TPOT (see Appendix 3 for description) was administered in fall and spring by trained, objective professionals in Kindergarten and first grade in both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, and in second grade in the 2017-18 school year. Educators have reached and maintained fidelity on the TPOT measure.

FIGURE 26. MODIFIED TPOT INDICATORS OF FIDELITY
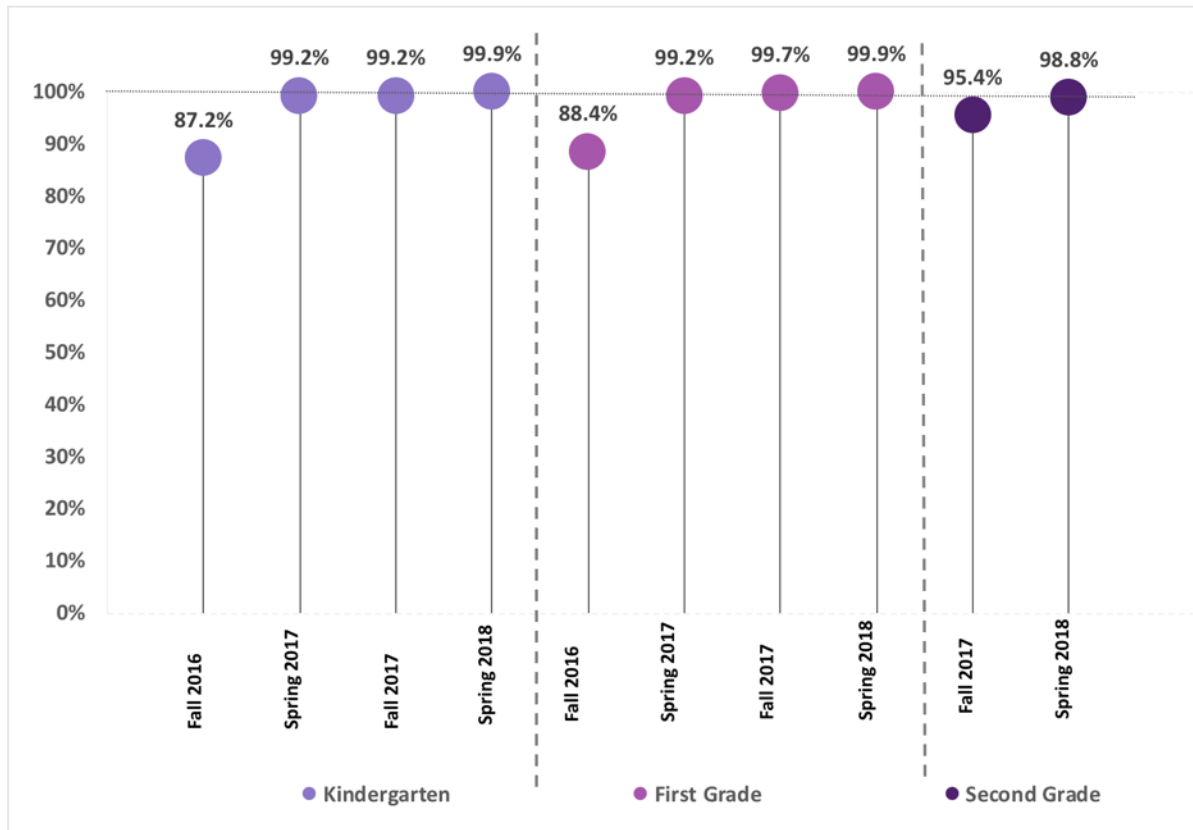
Are those students identified as at risk doing better, the same, or worse than a randomly selected sample of students from the same classrooms?
The *Work Sampling System* (see Appendix 3 for description) results for Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students assessed in the 2017-18 school year are displayed in the graphs below. Overall, there are lower percentages of children reaching proficiency among those children identified as at risk. However, all of the children are showing gains throughout the school year. In many cases, the increased percentage of children attaining proficiency scores from fall to spring is similar for both groups, indicating that both groups of children are making similar gains in skills throughout the year.

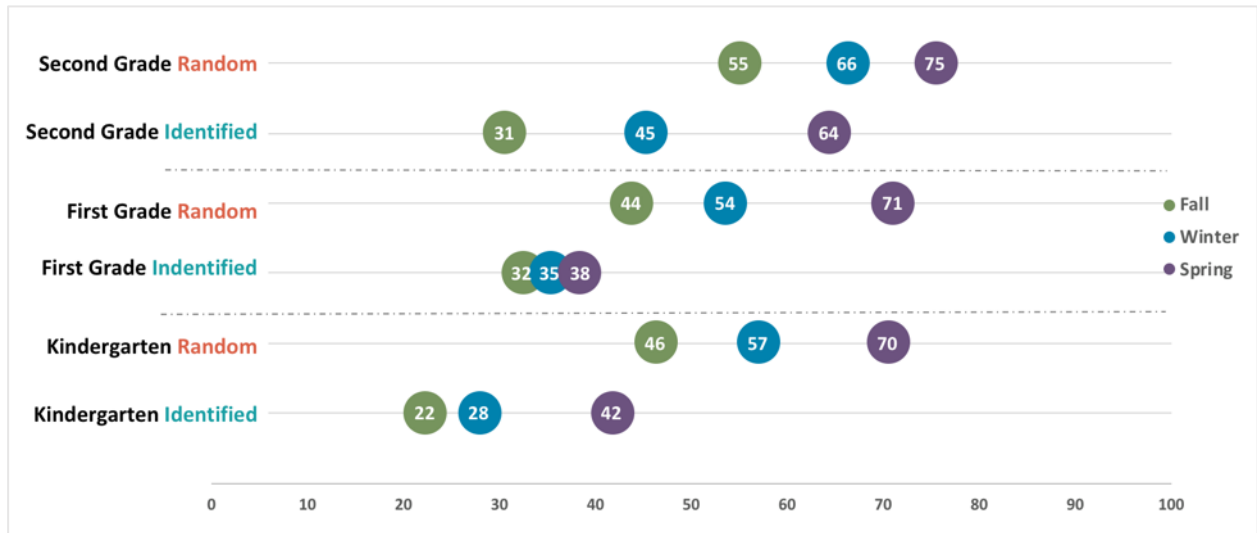**FIGURE 27.** SELF-CONCEPT: PERCENT PROFICIENT FOR IDENTIFIED AND RANDOMLY SELECTED STUDENTS IN 2017-18

FIGURE 28. SELF-CONTROL: PERCENT PROFICIENT FOR IDENTIFIED AND RANDOMLY SELECTED STUDENTS IN 2017-18
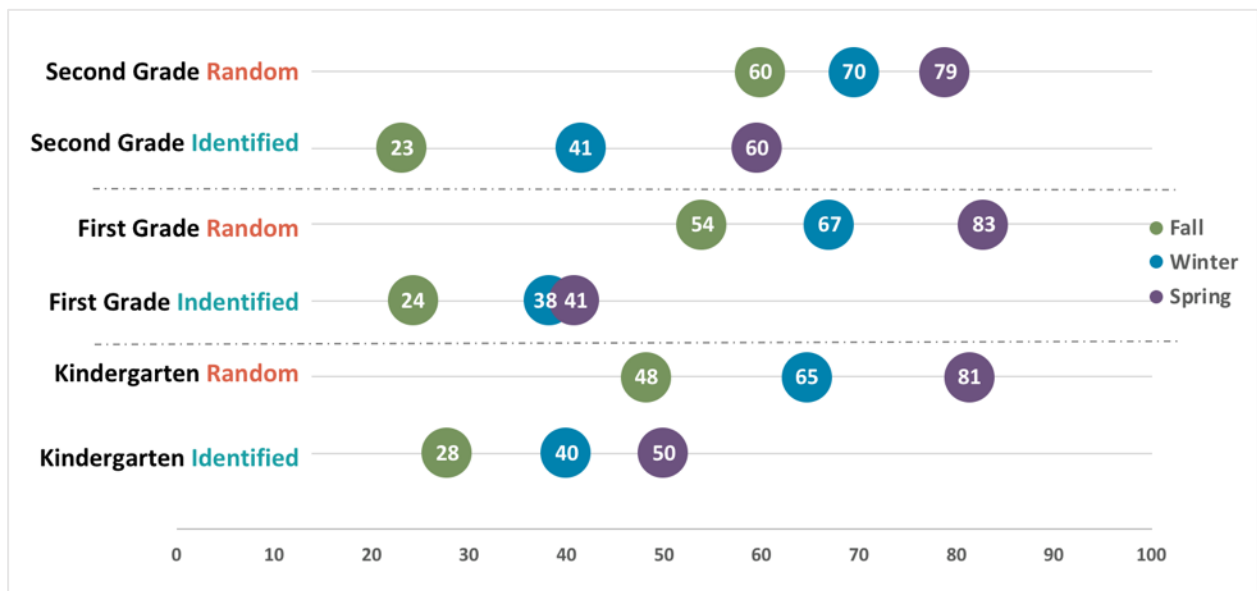
FIGURE 29. APPROACHES TO LEARNING: PERCENT PROFICIENT FOR IDENTIFIED AND RANDOMLY SELECTED STUDENTS IN 2017-18
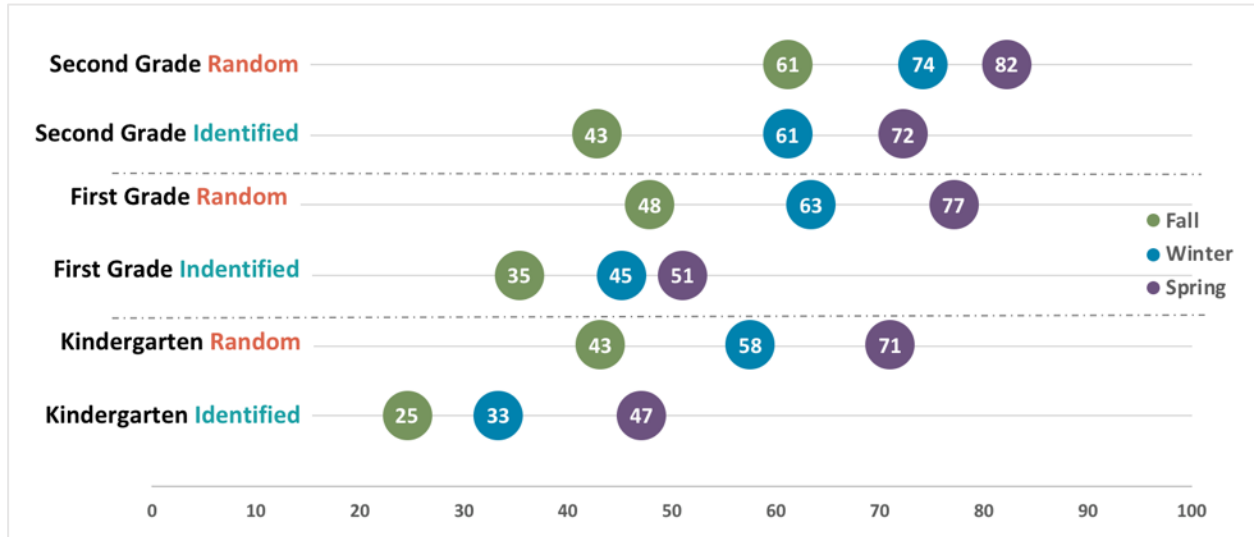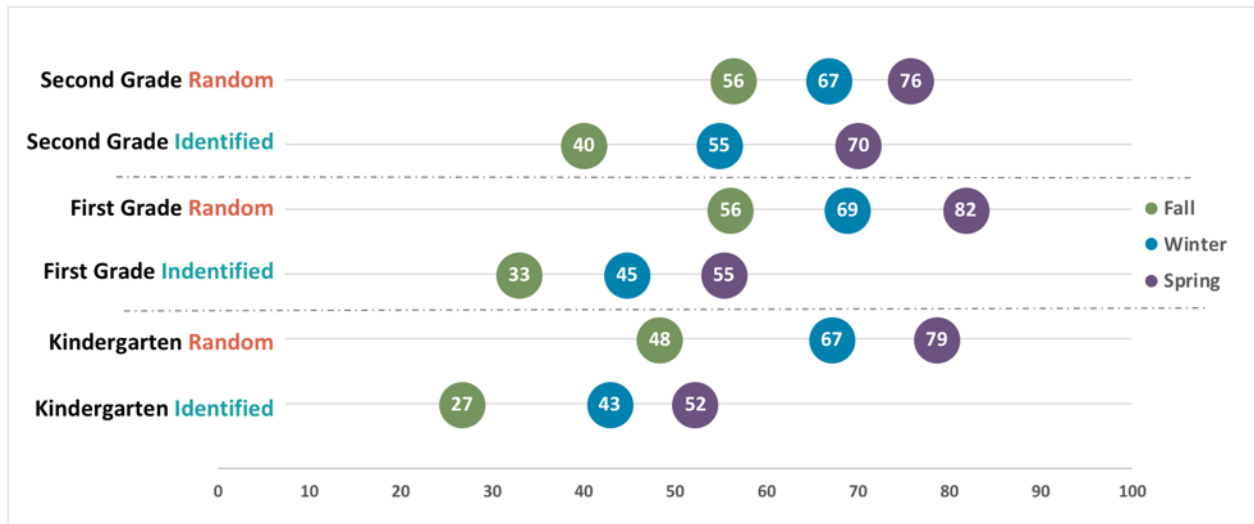

FIGURE 30. INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS: PERCENT PROFICIENT FOR IDENTIFIED AND RANDOMLY SELECTED STUDENTS IN 2017-18

During summer 2018, a Gretna Public Schools curriculum committee developed social-emotional learning curriculum standards aligned with CASEL and CSEFEL national standards. The district is also piloting evidence-based instructional resources to support implementation of the new curriculum standards for social-emotional learning and development. Pyramid coaches will continue to facilitate professional development, grade-level collaboration and coaching. Program evaluation data and teacher feedback have been used to refine and target the 2018-19 professional development plans. Third grade classrooms will be added to the professional development and program evaluation plan. Additional modifications of the TPOT for third grade have been completed by representatives of second and third grade teachers, Pyramid coaches, Buffett Institute staff, and district administrators.

Supporting Language Development and Instructional Practices: Ralston Public Schools

During the 2015-16 school year, the Ralston Public Schools' district leadership team prioritized quality language development practices for customized professional development. In the 2016-17 school year, a leadership team composed of Ralston Public Schools personnel and Buffett Institute staff compiled the research on effective preschool practices and synthesized them into the *Ralston Indicators of Preschool Quality.* These indicators were used to assess educators in order to improve language interactions and promote child development. During the 2017-18 school year, teachers were provided with cycles of classroom observations, coaching, and feedback that were combined with ongoing customized professional development. The purpose of the current evaluation was to assess the impact of the professional development and coaching on teachers (using the CLASS assessment) and students (using Teaching Strategies GOLD).

What were the outcomes for teachers, as indicated by the results of the CLASS assessments for the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years?

The figure below shows the results of the CLASS assessments (see Appendix 3 for description) for 2016, 2017, and 2018. The overall trend for productivity scores is strong and positive, indicating robust productivity practices. Quality of feedback and language modeling scores declined over the three-year period. It is important to acknowledge that while this trend is moving downward, there are contextual factors that can impact CLASS scores, such as individual child characteristics, the classroom environment, and seasonal effects (Buell, Han, & Vukelich, 2017). Ralston Public Schools administrators and teachers are extending beyond comfortable spaces to implement new practices suggested by professional development and coaching interactions. Declines in scores may reflect the destabilization associated with these systems change efforts.

FIGURE 31. CLASS SCORES
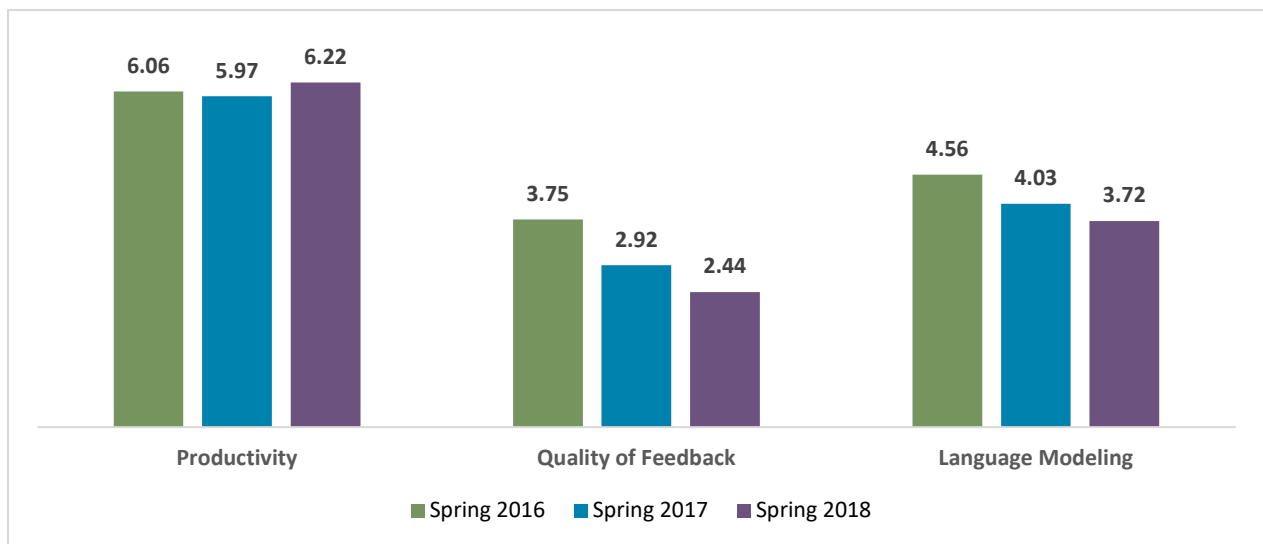
What were the outcomes for students, as indicated by the results of the GOLD assessments for the 2017-18 school year?

- Child learning outcomes were measured using a subset of objectives selected from Teaching Strategies GOLD, Birth through K "Objectives for Development and Learning" (Burts et al., 2016). Outcomes selected for the evaluation were Objective 8 (language: listens to and understands increasingly complex language) and Objective 12 (cognitive: remembers and connects experiences).
- Objective 8 Language: listens to and understands increasingly complex language
  - For item 8a (comprehends language), 69.3 percent of students met (n = 112) or exceeded (n = 3) state standards in fall 2017. By spring 2018, that number increased to 89.3 percent meeting (n = 111) or exceeding (n = 31) standards.
  - For item 8b (follows directions), 65.1 percent of students (n = 108) met state standards in fall 2017. By spring 2018, 95 percent of students (n = 151) met the standards, demonstrating a dramatic increase during the same academic year.
- Objective 12 Cognitive: remembers and connects experiences
  - On item 12a (recognizes and recalls), 43.4 percent of children met (n = 71) or exceeded (n = 1) state standards in fall 2017. By spring 2018, that number increased to 95.6 percent meeting (n = 150) or exceeding (n = 2) standards. The movement of students meeting proficiency from fall to spring was remarkable.
  - On item 12b (makes connections), 60.8 percent of children met (n = 100) or exceeded (n = 1) state standards in fall 2017. By spring 2018, this figure had risen to 94.3 percent of students meeting (n = 137) or exceeding (n = 13) standards. Once again, sizable gains were found among those students moving from below standards and into proficiency, indicating progress.

Program evaluation data will be used to further refine the focus for 2018-19 professional development and coaching. Increased participation by principals and paraprofessionals, who are key members of the classroom instructional team, should also strengthen professional development, classroom practices and support of the targeted child outcomes in language and cognitive development.

Improving Professional Collaboration: Westside Community Schools

With the aim of improving professional collaboration, aligning programming and enhancing the transition process for young children, the Westside Community Schools plan brought preschool and Kindergarten teachers, early childhood site directors, and elementary school principals into dialogue with one another. During the 2017-18 school year, feeder program groups of educators and administrators met to work toward this common goal. Site directors and school principals collaborated around child assessments and the transition process. Preschool and Kindergarten educators discussed various topics regarding the preschool to Kindergarten transition activities, logistics, a crosswalk of the Pyramid Model and PBiS, social-emotional, literacy and math teaching strategies, assessments, and planning for student transitions.

To evaluate the impact of the collaboration meetings and to plan for future collaborations, the educators and administrators who participated in the meetings were asked to answer survey questions regarding their experiences and offer ideas for further discussion. See Appendix 3 for a detailed description of the survey process.

What portion of participants worked in preschool settings, and what portion worked in elementary settings?

Twelve educators (38.7%) and seven administrators (63.6%) indicated they worked in a preschool or early childhood setting. Nineteen educators (61.3%) and four administrators (36.4%) indicated they worked in an elementary setting.

What were the barriers to attending the collaborative meetings?

Fifteen educators and two administrators responded to the survey question concerning barriers to attendance. The number of meetings, travel time to and/or from the meetings, and time of the meeting were the most frequently cited barriers.

How did educators rank the meeting topics based on the usefulness to their particular school or site?

Thirty educators ranked the meeting topics according to their usefulness for school site. Over 60 percent of the respondents (*n* = 19) ranked the grouping of topics including getting to know one another, learning environments, logistics, and classroom visits as the most important. Social-emotional learning strategies and student transition received the next most votes, with a third of the participants selecting this choice.

How did administrators rank the meeting topics based on the usefulness to their particular school or site?

Twelve administrators responded to the survey question asking them to rank the meeting topics according to their usefulness to the administrators' particular school site. Over 80 percent (*n* = 10) of respondents ranked the preschool to Kindergarten transitions topic as the most important, while 50 percent (*n* = 6) ranked the preschool and Kindergarten assessment topics as least important.

FIGURE 32. ADMINISTRATORS' RANKINGS OF MEETING TOPIC USEFULNESS
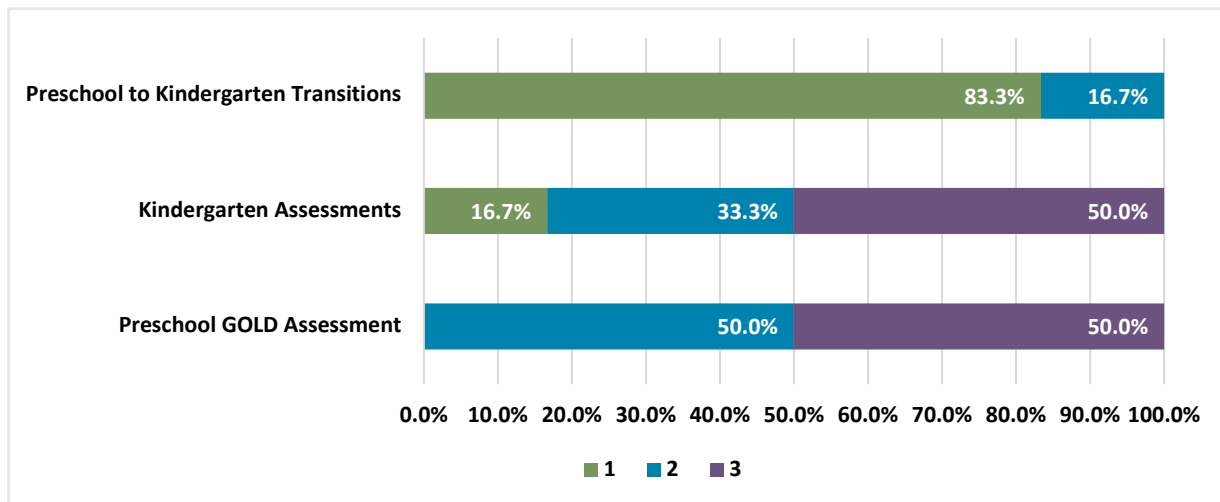
How satisfied were educators and administrators with the collaboration and alignment meeting process?

Thirty-two educators responded to this survey question. Over 60 percent (*n* = 20) were extremely or moderately satisfied with the meeting process. Twelve administrators responded. Over 80 percent (*n* = 10) were extremely or moderately satisfied with the process, and none were dissatisfied.

How effective did administrators find the collaboration and alignment meeting process in helping them to lead their staff to consider transitions between preschool and Kindergarten?
Twelve administrators responded. Just over 58 percent (*n* = 7) indicated that the meetings were extremely or very effective in helping them, with all participants agreeing that meetings were at least moderately effective.

The planning committee of principals, early childhood site directors, and teachers, used the survey results and the survey respondents' suggestions for future topics to plan for 2018-19 collaboration meetings. These plans are being finalized with district administration. Topic suggestions included sharing content area instructional practices, classroom management strategies, and further development of materials and activities to support families and children in the transition from preschool to Kindergarten. Suggestions for changes in the collaboration meeting format included holding some meetings via video conferencing, opportunities for classroom observations, and sharing student work samples.

Professional Development for All

The Superintendents' Plan offers a Professional Development for All (PD for All) series for school leaders, community-based program administrators, teachers, early childhood educators and family support professionals who work with children from birth through Grade 3 and families in the Omaha metro area. The Buffett Institute facilitates the PD for All series, drawing upon the expertise of nationally recognized and local leaders in birth through Grade 3. The broad goal of PD for All is to provide ongoing opportunities for participants to increase their shared knowledge of research-based practices that increase quality, continuity, and equity in birth through Grade 3 education and family engagement. As part of this goal, a central intent is to support ongoing opportunities for PD for All participants who work in different settings and with children of different ages to learn with and from each other.

Each year the PD for All series is organized around a central theme that introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices. The connecting theme for the 2017-18 PD for All series focused on practices to provide content-rich learning experiences for children, birth through Grade 3. Four institutes provided professional learning related to specific topics within this theme. These topics included:
- "Children as Scientists: Scientific Inquiry for Every Child" on Oct. 5 or 7, 2017
- "Children as Authors: Guiding Children on Pathways Toward Strong Writing" on Nov. 30, 2017
- "Children as Mathematicians: Early Math That Matters the Most" on Jan. 25 or 27, 2018; and
- "Children as Researchers: Reading to Learn Can Start Early" on March 1 or 3, 2018.

A fifth Spanish-language institute for bilingual Spanish-speaking professionals entitled "Los Niños como Investigadores: Leer para Aprender Puede Comenzar Temprano/Children as Researchers: Reading to Learn can Start Early" was held on May 30 and 31, 2018. The Spanish-language PD for All institute was facilitated by the Buffett Institute in collaboration with the Learning Community Center of South Omaha.

Over 200 attendees participated in each of the first four institutes. These attendees included representation from all school districts of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and over 80 community organizations, including early care and education programs. The Spanish-language institute in May had just over 30 participants.

Methods
The evaluation of PD for All series addressed three questions:
1. Do attendees who participate in two or more PD for All institutes demonstrate increased knowledge of effective educational practices?
2. Do attendees who participate in two or more PD for All institutes apply the knowledge and skills that they gained in their professional work?
3. Do PD for All attendees share the knowledge and skills they gained with work colleagues?

Evaluation data were collected using surveys. Beginning with the Nov. 30 "Children as Authors" institute, PD for All participants completed a survey (Time 1) of their knowledge and skills related to teaching practices explored through the PD for All series. The surveys were offered in both English and Spanish. At the conclusion of the 2017-18 PD for All series, all attendees who completed a survey in English were invited via email to complete an evaluation survey (Time 2) using the online survey research platform Qualtrics. Participants who preferred to complete Spanish-language surveys or who attended PD for All sessions in Spanish received an email invitation to complete a Spanish version of the Qualtrics Time 2

survey in July 2018. The items in the Spanish Time 2 survey were identical to the English survey.

Survey Findings
A total of 254 surveys were completed before first enrollment in PD for All, with 122 surveys completed in July.

TABLE 4. PD FOR ALL SURVEY RESULTS

Total Time 1 Surveys Completed	254
Total Time 2 Surveys Completed	**122**

The majority of the survey participants at both time points worked primarily with preschool-age children. The next largest subset of survey participants were individuals working with children in Kindergarten through third grade. Those whose work focused on families were the least represented in this survey. In terms of job title, the majority of survey participants identified themselves as teachers at both time points. Beyond teacher, respondents' identified job categories in rank order from most to least were "other," assistant teacher, family facilitator, child care center owner or director, home visitor, and principal. Anecdotal evidence suggests that professionals from community-based early care and education programs comprised many of these participants who selected "other."

Most survey participants worked in school-based programs. This included elementary schools, PreK within elementary schools and Head Start or Educare within elementary schools. As mentioned, many participants were from community-based programs, which included child care centers or preschools not located in elementary schools, religious-based child care centers, or the North and South Omaha Learning Community Centers.

The surveys measured participants' self-reported knowledge about the cross-cutting content of the PD for All series before and after attending the institutes. Respondents were asked to rate their knowledge levels on various teaching skills and practices. The self-rating categories were on a Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 4 with the following options: Beginning Knowledge (1), Developing Knowledge (2), Refining Knowledge (3), or Mastery Knowledge (4). The teaching knowledge and practices that respondents were asked to rate themselves on were:

1. Intentionally modeling and using vocabulary words associated with content-area topics in science, math, and literacy, and talking with children about the words throughout the day and week.
2. Guiding high-quality conversations with children to encourage them to talk about the ideas they are learning about in content areas (e.g., science discoveries, math concepts, and topics for drawing and writing).
3. Intentionally connecting the topics of children's content-area learning experiences to children's cultures, life experiences, and interests.
4. Purposefully preparing the classroom environment and selecting materials that promote children's learning of content knowledge through exploration and application (e.g., artifacts for scientific observations and investigations, manipulative materials for mathematical problem-solving, and tools to write for authentic purposes).
5. Integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening into content-area learning experiences (science, math, etc.).

6. Motivating young children's learning in the content areas by setting meaningful purposes for the children's work and play (e.g., children do scientific investigations and solve real-life mathematical problems, not just learn about science and math; children write for purposes that are meaningful to them).
7. Closely observing children's learning in the content areas (e.g., science, math) and using what they observe to provide differentiated questions and prompts that help advance each child's knowledge and thinking.
8. Understanding the key concepts and big ideas in each content area and using this knowledge to go beyond teaching children lower-level factual information and skills.
9. Using higher-order questions to help children extend their understanding of the key concepts and big ideas in the content areas.
10. Intentionally planning units of study that address goals for children's learning in each of the content areas (science, math, literacy).

Using the scale above, the average Time 1 knowledge for survey participants across the 10 items was 2.69. The average knowledge for the Time 2 survey participants across the 10 items was 2.89, indicating a modest gain in self-reported knowledge and skills for participants at Time 2 compared to participants at Time 1. Also, participants at Time 1 reported modest gains in knowledge and skills, reflected in in each of the 10 survey items, compared to participants at Time 2 (see Figure 33).

FIGURE 33. KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHING SKILLS AND PRACTICES
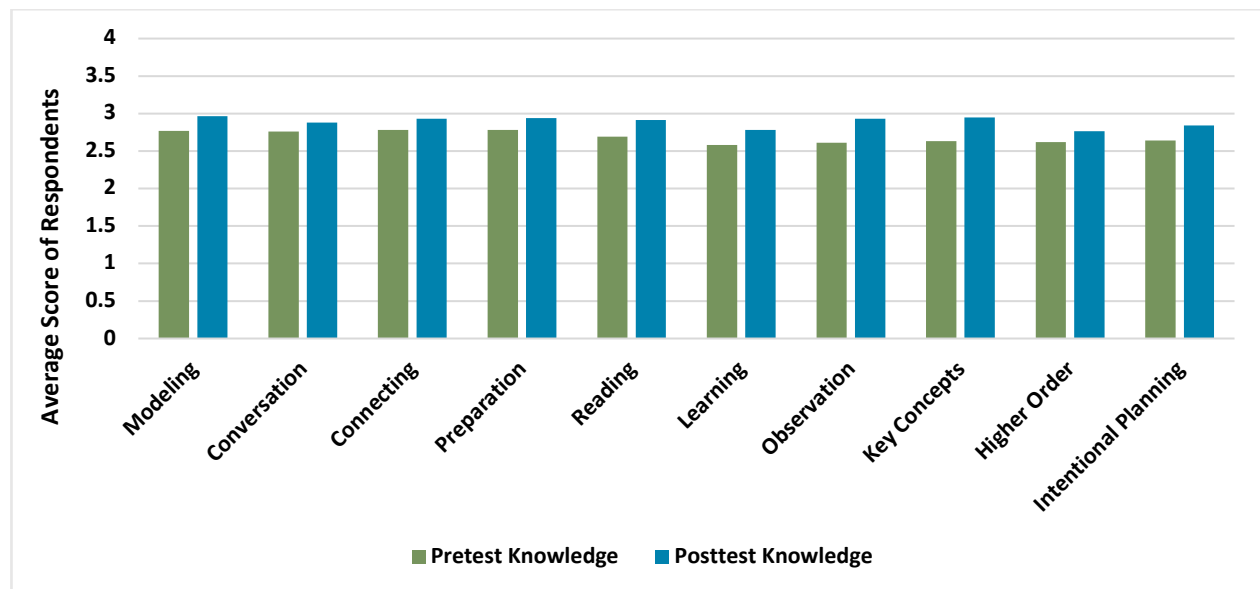
Additional PD for All evaluation questions focused on whether participants applied the knowledge and skills learned from the institutes in their own work and whether they shared their new learning with colleagues. On the Time 2 survey all but one of the respondents indicated that they did apply the knowledge, skills, and practices they learned during the 2017-18 PD for All institutes to their own work. These data were further supported during a focus group discussion, where discussants all agreed that PD for All is a valuable learning opportunity for teachers, one that balances presentations from national experts and local practitioners. One focus group participant even mentioned contacting a local PD for All presenter for further information and a follow-up PD session with colleagues at the discussant's place of

work. Another reported benefit of PD for All is practical advice and ideas that teachers could use in their classrooms and share with their colleagues who were unable to attend PD for All institutes. Several focus group participants gave examples of attempting to re-create projects and use techniques suggested by presenters at the PD for All institutes.

The Time 2 survey also provided findings about the respondents' practices related to sharing their new knowledge with colleagues from their work settings who were not able to attend PD for All as well as sharing knowledge with other PD for All attendees. Over 92% of survey respondents indicated that they shared knowledge and ideas learned from PD for All institutes with colleagues at their place of work. Several of the focus group participants likewise reported sharing ideas from PD for All with work colleagues who did not attend institutes. Of those who reported idea sharing, using project-based learning activities was the most popular practice that was shared with work colleagues.

When asked about networking across school buildings and districts during PD for All seminars, the survey respondents again indicated that an exchange of ideas did take place during the events. Over 70% of the survey respondents engaged in idea sharing across work settings while 26% did not. Interestingly, in the focus group discussion few of the participants reported exchanging ideas with colleagues from different work settings.

PD for All provides early education professionals in the Omaha metro area with opportunities for engaging with leading scholars and innovators in the field, networking across local early childhood settings, and gaining practical skills and ideas for applying their newfound knowledge to their own work. Opportunities for reaching a more diverse workforce audience include considering location of events, continuing to expand Spanish-language institutes, and scheduling. Ongoing evaluation and program improvement will allow PD for All to expand its reach as a resource for evidence-based professional learning for the birth – Grade 3 and early childhood affiliated workforce in the Omaha region.

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Appendix 1
Birth – Age 3 Measures

CHILD BIRTH – AGE 3	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 Evaluation 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 Evaluation Team
Language	Preschool Language Scales – Spanish Edition (PLS-S) Spanish speakers only	An interactive assessment for monolingual and bilingual Spanish-speaking children.	Direct assessment by Evaluation Team
PARENT BIRTH – AGE 3	**MEASURE**	**DESCRIPTION**	**METHOD**
Parent-Child Interactions	Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS)	A structured observation tool for parent-child interactions; assesses interaction during play in a familiar environment.	Video observation by Evaluation 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 Evaluation 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 =**	Parent report by Evaluation Team

CHILD BIRTH – AGE 3	MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	METHOD
		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.	
	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 Evaluation Team

HOME VISIT BIRTH – AGE 3	MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	METHOD
HV-Parent & 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 Evaluation Team

Appendix 2

PreK – Grade 3 Measures

CHILD PreK – GRADE 3	MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	METHOD
Demographics	N, F/R, ELL, SPED, Gender		District NDE Data
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 Evaluation 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 Evaluation Team
Social-Emotional	Behavior Assessment System for Children: Behavioral & Emotional Screening System (BASC 3– BESS) PreK & 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 ages 2 to 5. Consists of a Global Executive Composite, three overlapping summary indexes, each with two scales (Inhibitory Self-Control = Inhibit & Emotional Control, Flexibility = Shift & Emotional Control, and Emergent Metacognition = Working Memory & 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, and Working Memory.	Teacher report
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) PreK & Kindergarten	A measure of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English.	Direct assessment by district SLP

CHILD PreK – GRADE 3	MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	METHOD
PARENT PreK – GRADE 3	**MEASURE**	**DESCRIPTION**	**METHOD**
Parent-Child Interactions	Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) PreK & 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 & 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	**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 PreK – 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 Evaluation Team

Appendix 3
Customized Assistance Measures

DISTRICT	MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	METHOD
Gretna	The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)	The TPOT was designed by the creators of the *Pyramid Model*. Gretna teachers made modifications to the indicators in collaboration with trained Pyramid coaches, the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the district, and Buffett Institute staff to better reflect their experiences working with children in the district and their developmental progression.	Trained, objective Pyramid Coaches
	The Work Sampling System (WSS)	The *Work Sampling System*© is a curriculum-embedded, authentic performance assessment used to assess the skills of children age 3 through Grade 3 in multiple domains. Four areas were utilized: 1) self-concept, 2) self-control, 3) approaches to learning, and 4) interaction with others.	Teacher report
Ralston	CLASS	See Appendix 2 for details.	
	Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment	Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment guides teachers through the assessment cycle, helping them to link observable behavior to essential early learning requirements and predict likely next steps in development and learning. Each objective consists of two items. Children are rated on each item, and the rating scale is as follows: below proficiency expectations, meeting proficiency expectations, or exceeding proficiency expectations.	Teacher report
Westside	Online Survey	The program was evaluated using an anonymous and confidential online survey. The educator survey contained 11 questions, and the administrator survey contained 14 questions. Participants were asked to detail their barriers to meeting attendance, rank order the utility of the meeting topics for their work, and share their ideas for future meetings.	Self-report

STUDENT
DATA
AND
DEMOGRAPHICS

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 2017-2018 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: 2017-2018 Demographic data including the total number of enrolled students, percent eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL), and percent of English Language Learners (ELL) by Subcouncil

	SC	ENROLLMENT	NUMBER FRL	PERCENT FRL	NUMBER ELL	PERCENT ELL
K-6	1	8,706	3,977	45.7%	504	5.8%
7-12	1	7,375	4,076	55.3%	369	5.0%
Subcouncil Total	1	16,081	8,053	50.1%	873	5.4%
K-6	2	8,782	7,916	90.1%	1,897	21.6%
7-12	2	7,711	5,637	73.1%	668	8.7%
Subcouncil Total	2	16,493	13,553	82.2%	2,565	15.6%
K-6	3	9,450	5,503	58.2%	1,424	15.1%
7-12	3	6,207	3,200	51.6%	313	5.0%
Subcouncil Total	3	15,657	8,703	55.6%	1,737	11.1%
K-6	4	12,238	2,726	22.3%	295	2.4%
7-12	4	11,076	2,166	19.6%	69	0.6%
Subcouncil Total	4	23,314	4,892	21.0%	364	1.6%
K-6	5	12,289	8,597	70.0%	3,309	26.9%
7-12	5	10,770	7,114	66.1%	852	7.9%
Subcouncil Total	5	23,059	15,711	68.1%	4,161	18.0%
K-6	6	15,113	2,466	16.3%	165	1.1%
7-12	6	12,356	1,909	15.4%	49	0.4%
Subcouncil Total	6	27,469	4,375	15.9%	214	0.8%
K-6	All LC	66,578	31,185	46.8%	7,594	11.4%
7-12	All LC	55,495	24,102	43.4%	2,320	4.2%
Learning Comm. Total	All LC	122,073	55,287	45.3%	9,914	8.1%

The growth within the Learning Community has been consistent over the last several years, with 1.71% growth year on year and 2.68% over 2 years. In fact, total enrollment has increased 8.5% over the past five years. FRL students outpaced enrollment across the six Subcouncils with a year

over year increase of nearly 8.5%, far larger than the state as a whole experienced. This growth occurred across five of the six Subcouncils.

Figure III.1: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Percentage of FRL Students by Subcouncil
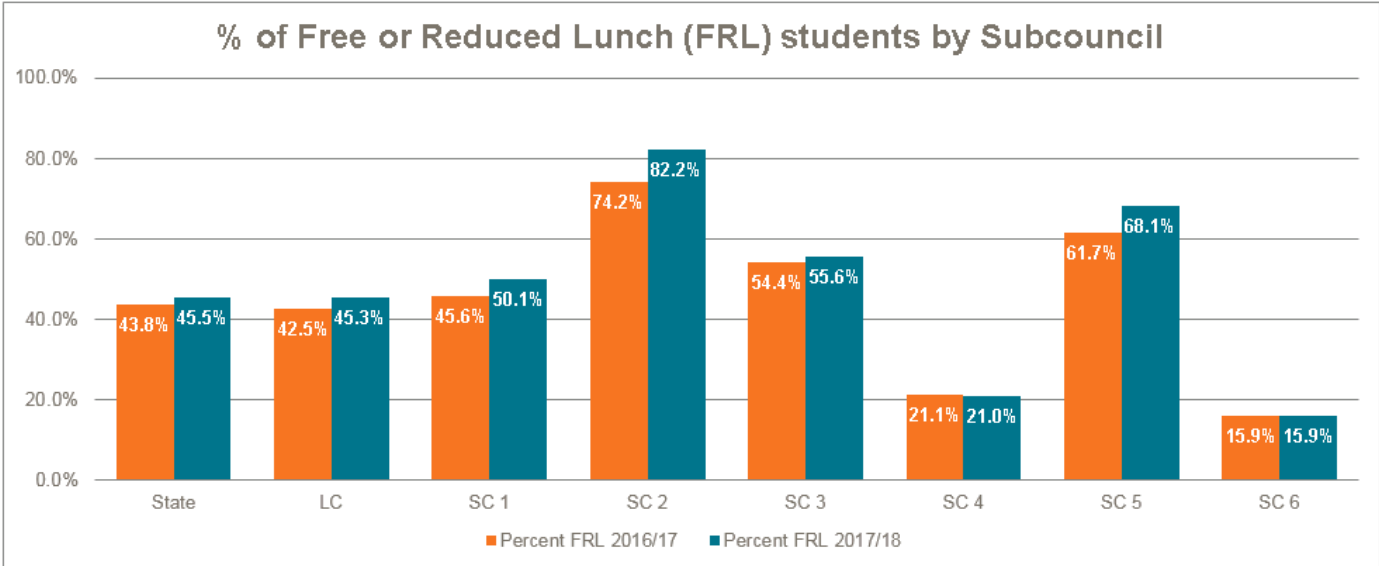
- The percentage of FRL students to total student enrollment increased nearly 8.5% across the Learning Community for the 2017-2018 school year compared to the 2016-2017 school year.

Figure III.2: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 ELL by Subcouncil
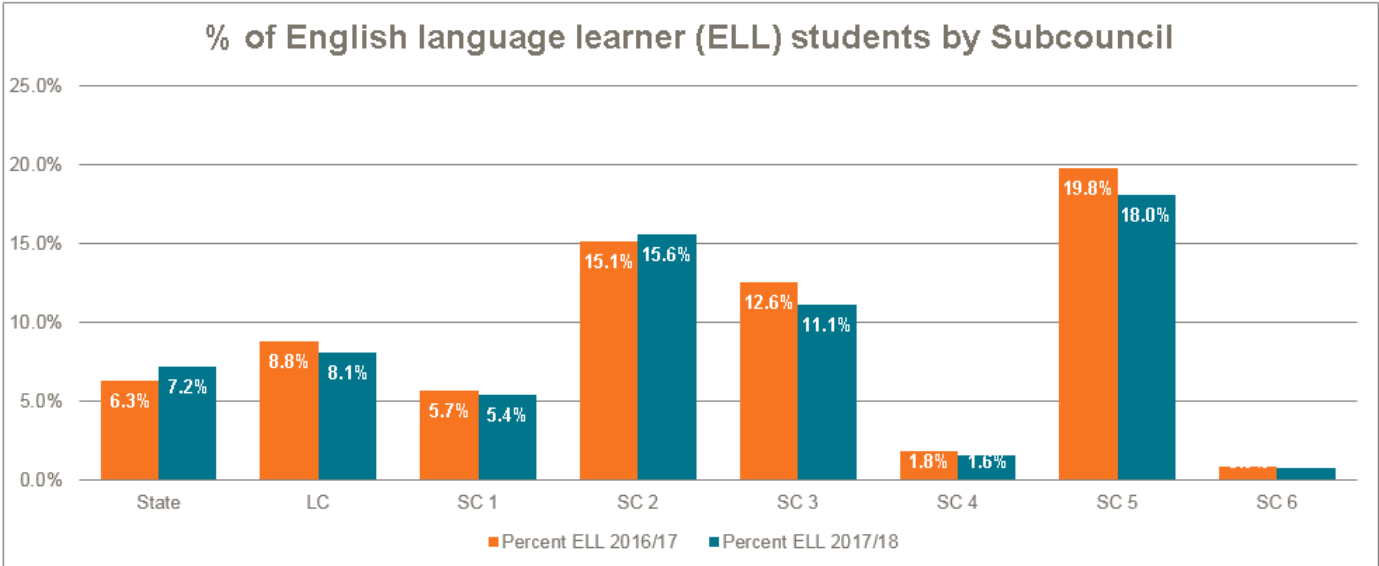
- The percentage of ELL students to total student enrollment decreased slightly year over year.

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 2017-2018 school year.

Figure III.3: Number of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10% Comparing 2017-2018 with the Previous Five-Year Average
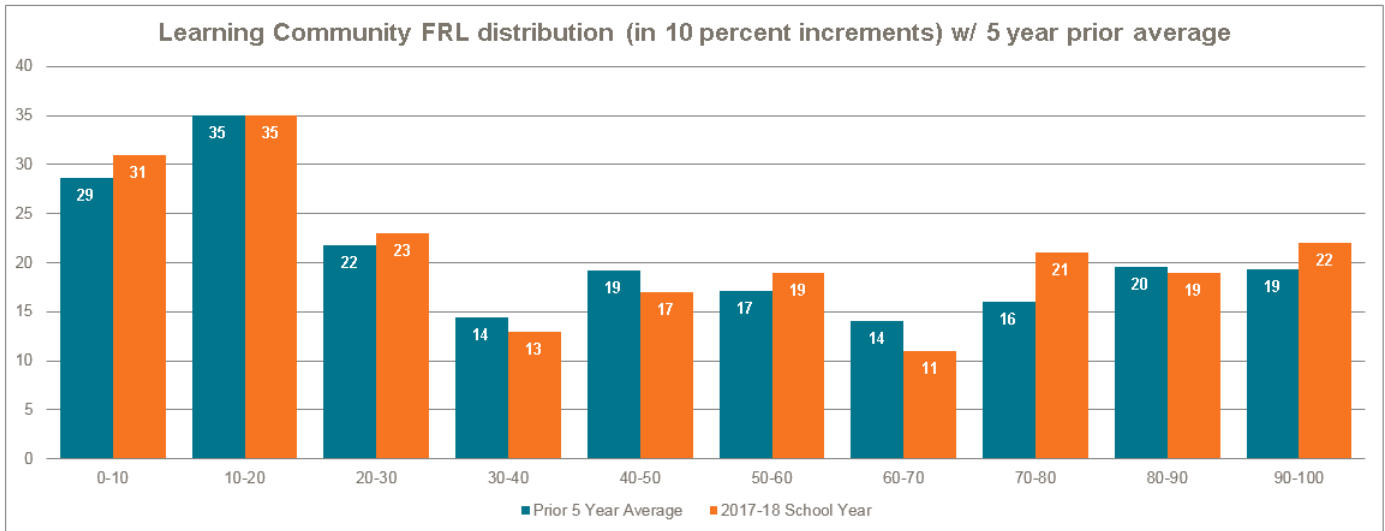
Generally, the number of low poverty schools is decreasing; the number of high poverty schools is increasing; and the number of schools in the middle ranges has remained fairly constant. There were no highlights in the 2017-2018 school year as the 90-100 percentile decile, returned to and exceeded the five-year average.

Figures III.4 (p. 4) and III.5 (p. 5) 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: 2017-2018 Percentage of Nebraska Schools in FRL Intervals of 10% (excluding Learning Community)

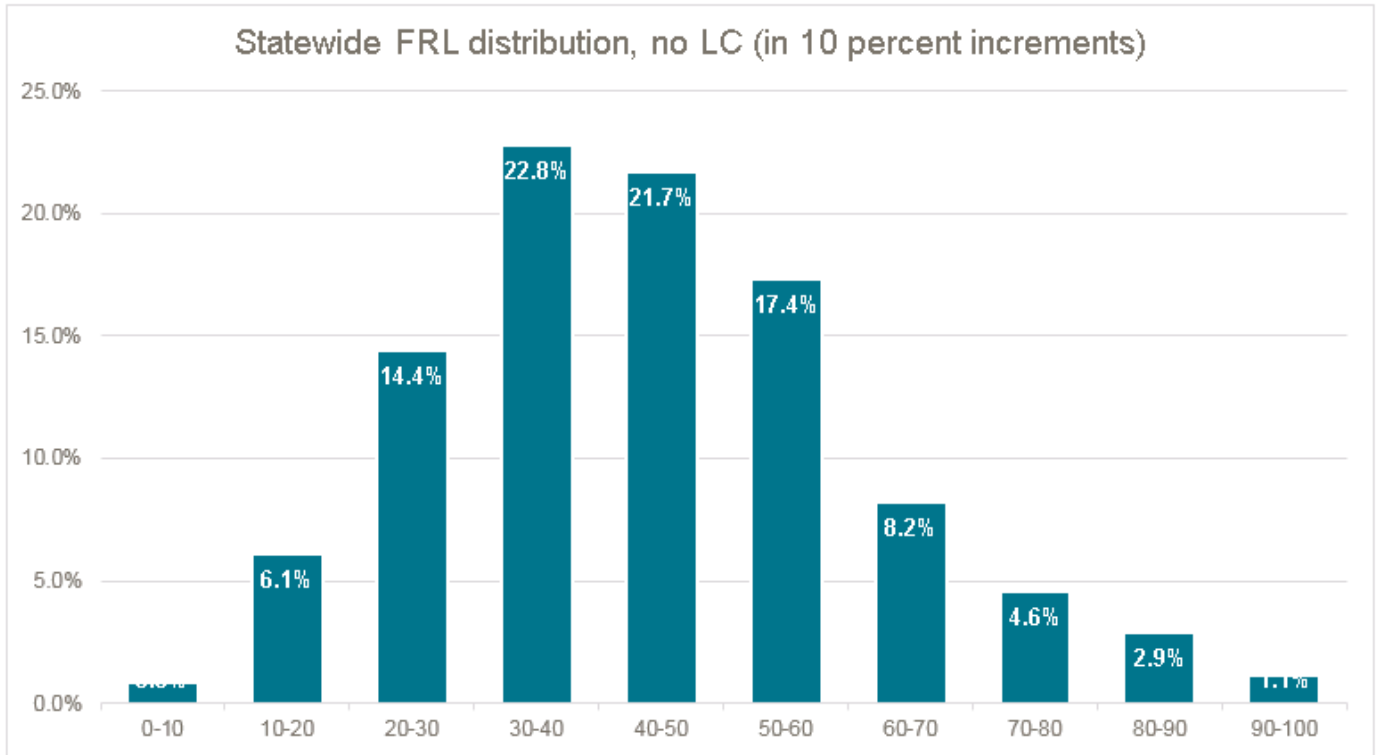Statewide FRL distribution, no LC (in 10 percent increments)

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 5) 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: 2017-2018 Percentage of Learning Community Schools in FRL Intervals of 10%

Learning Community FRL distribution (in 10 percent increments)
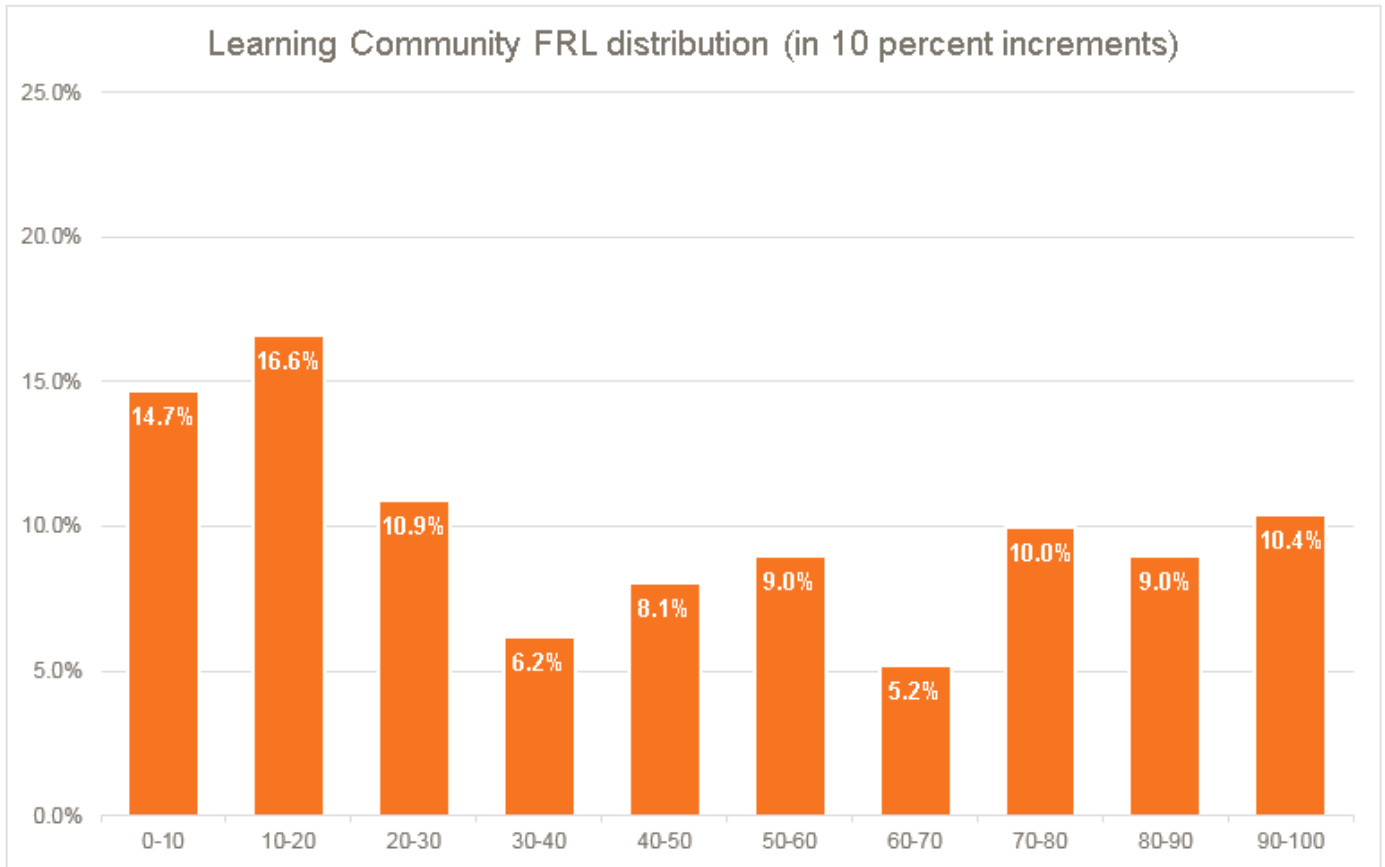
These data demonstrate the dramatic difference in the economic diversity of Learning Community schools in comparison to all other schools in Nebraska. The majority of schools in Nebraska are relatively diverse economically, while the majority of schools in the Learning Community are segregated economically 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 through 2017 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 the difference between *Open* Enrollment and *Option* Enrollment.

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. Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, open enrollment was only available to students who were continuing in their current school building and had chosen open enrollment in the 2016-2017 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. Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, all Learning Community school students not covered by open enrollment above will use option enrollment going forward.

An important difference between Option and Open Enrollment is the priority given to students who contribute to the socioeconomic diversity of the school. 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 had focused 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
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%
2017-2018	4,396	38.97%	45.29%

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
2017-2018	122,073	4,396