



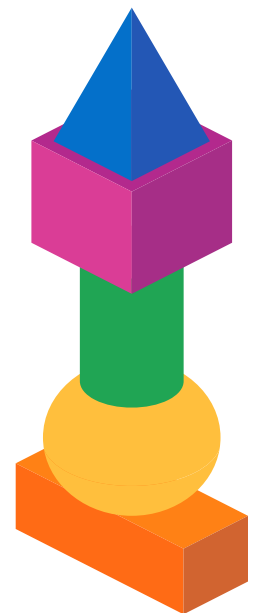
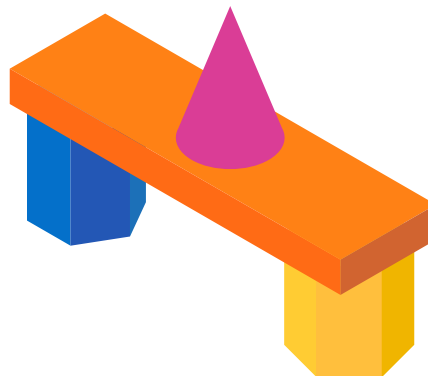
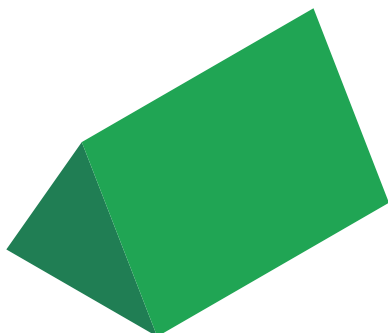
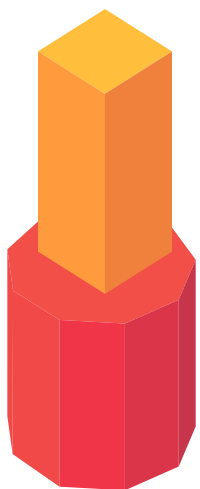
2021-22

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STATE REPORT

for Nebraska's Public School District,
Educational Service Unit & Head Start Programs

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SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SUCCESS

The Early Childhood Education Program-Birth through Age 5 (B-5) included all children who were part of Nebraska public education programs that were supported through the blending of multiple funding sources. Comprehensive early childhood education programs operated by Nebraska public school districts (hereafter referred to as districts) or Educational Service Units (ESUs) supported the learning and development of children B-5 across home- and center-based settings including Sixpence programs. Many of these full- or part- day programs received support through partnerships with community agencies.

Districts and ESUs served children who represented a full range of abilities, languages, and economic diversity of families within the community. The purpose of the Early Childhood Program was to provide high quality early childhood education experiences that empower children to reach their full potential and increase the likelihood of their later success in school.

PROGRAM FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO QUALITY

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) requirements for Early Childhood programs include:

- Use of developmentally appropriate curriculum and authentic assessment
- Inclusive programs and services
- Attention to research-based elements of effective programs
- Teachers in classrooms hold a Nebraska teaching certificate with an approved early childhood endorsement
- Paraprofessionals in classrooms have 12 credit hours in early childhood education or its equivalent
- Teachers in home-based Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Programs hold a Nebraska teaching certificate with an approved endorsement
- Staff in home visiting programs hold a degree in early childhood education, early childhood special education, social work, nursing or related field
- Home-school-community partnerships that promote a strong family development and support component to recognize the central role of families in their children's development

The latest revision of [Rule 11: Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs established by School Districts or Educational Service Units](#), introduced the waiver procedure for any staff member that does not meet the requirements for an early childhood teacher. Rule 11 5.05A requires a teacher to have a Nebraska teaching certificate with an approved early childhood endorsement. Eight hundred and forty-six teachers met the requirement for Rule 11. Twenty-six teachers were working toward the proper endorsement as required by Rule 11. Sixteen teachers did not meet the requirements for Rule 11 and submitted a waiver for approval by the State Board of Education.

INTEGRATED FUNDS EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Nebraska's district and ESU operated early childhood programs were funded with multiple sources. In 2021-22, over 165 million dollars supported these ECE programs. Federal dollars accounted for the majority of Early Childhood Education funds and were provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Head Start, Title 1 Part A, and Title 1 Migrant. State sources of funding were provided through Early Childhood Grants for ages three through five, State Aid, Special Education, and general funds.

Local district funds, including matching fund requirements for Special Education and the Early Childhood grants, as well as parent fees were included in local funding sources. Some districts also received funding from the Sixpence Early Childhood Education Endowment to support birth to three programs.

Based on district expenditures reported to the NDE, local programs have been spending increasing amounts to support Early Childhood Education programs. The total funds reported below represent a 22% increase in funding from the 2020-2021 school year. While the total funds spent on district prekindergarten programs has increased greatly, according to the 2021 State of Preschool Report, Nebraska ranks 42nd for amount of state funding spent on these programs (Friedman-Krauss, et al. 2021).



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

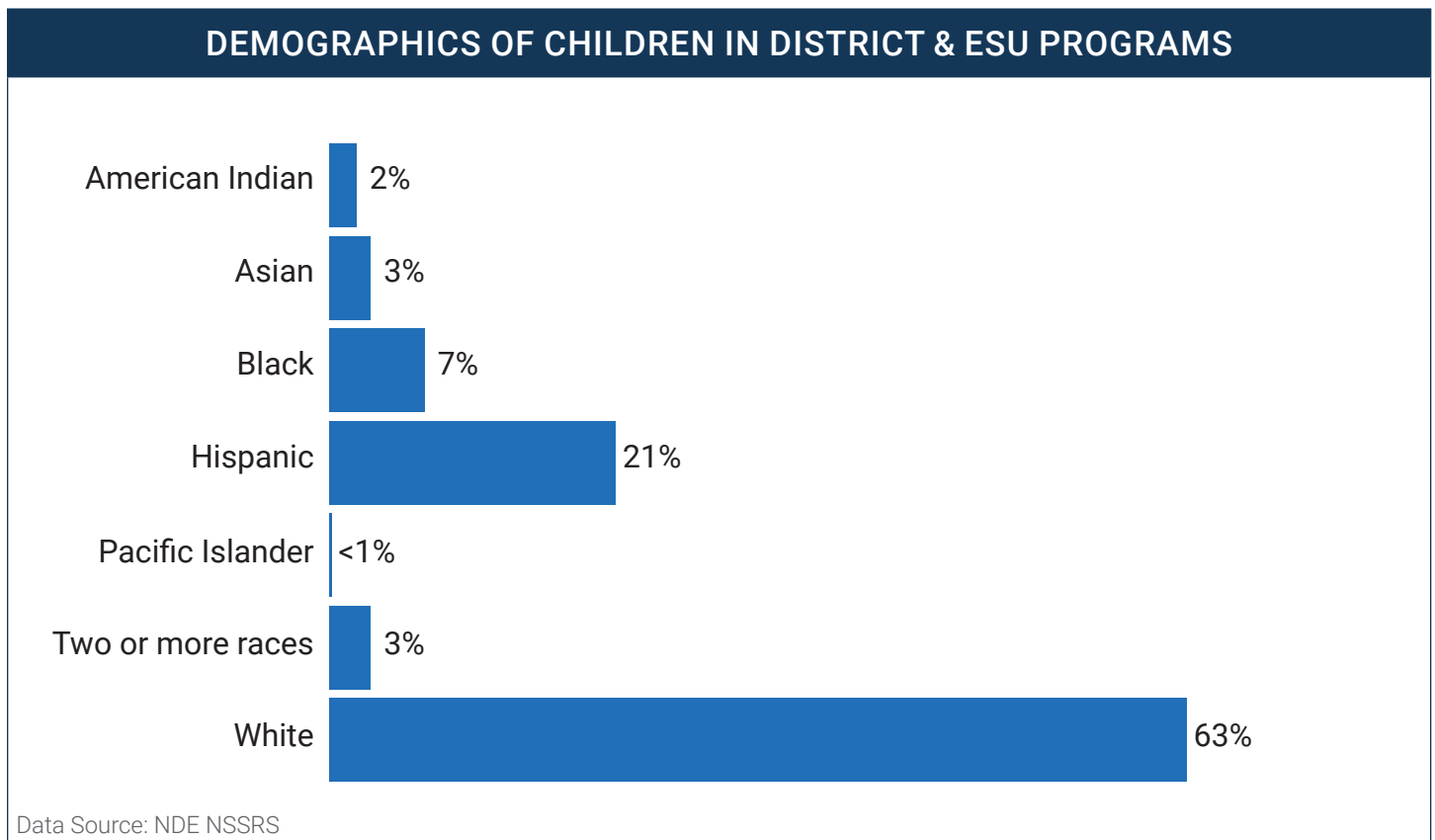
The Nebraska Department of Education began approving district-operated early childhood programs based on compliance with Rule 11 in 2004. At that time, there were only 23 approved programs. For the 2021-2022 school year that number grew to 225 approved district-operated early childhood programs. Of these 225 approved early childhood programs, 220 were district run programs, two programs were ESU operated and one ESU operated programs for three districts. Of the over 1,000 early childhood classrooms across the state of Nebraska, 652 were part day classrooms and 408 were full day.

These approved Nebraska school districts and ESUs provided early childhood programs and services to 21,043 children, age birth to five. Included in this total child count are 101 children whose programs and/or services were not identified by the district serving them.

PROGRAM TYPE	CHILD COUNT	PERCENT
The NDE Grant Funded Early Childhood Education Programs serving children ages three to five	1,744	8%
The NDE non-Grant Funded Early Childhood Education Programs serving children ages three to five	11,616	55%
Early Childhood Birth to Age Three Endowment Grant Programs (Sixpence)	1,934	9%
Home-based Early Childhood Education Program serving non-special education children ages birth to five	264	1%
Special Education and Early Development Network services provided to children ages birth to five in homes and community settings	5,384	26%
Unidentified	101	<1%
TOTAL	21,043	100%

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN IN DISTRICT & ESU PROGRAMS

According to district data submitted to the Nebraska Department of Education, the demographics represented a similar picture to the [demographic of children served in K-12 settings across the state](#).



Of the total number of children served, the following categories show the number of children considered at-risk for possible poor outcomes in future academic settings:

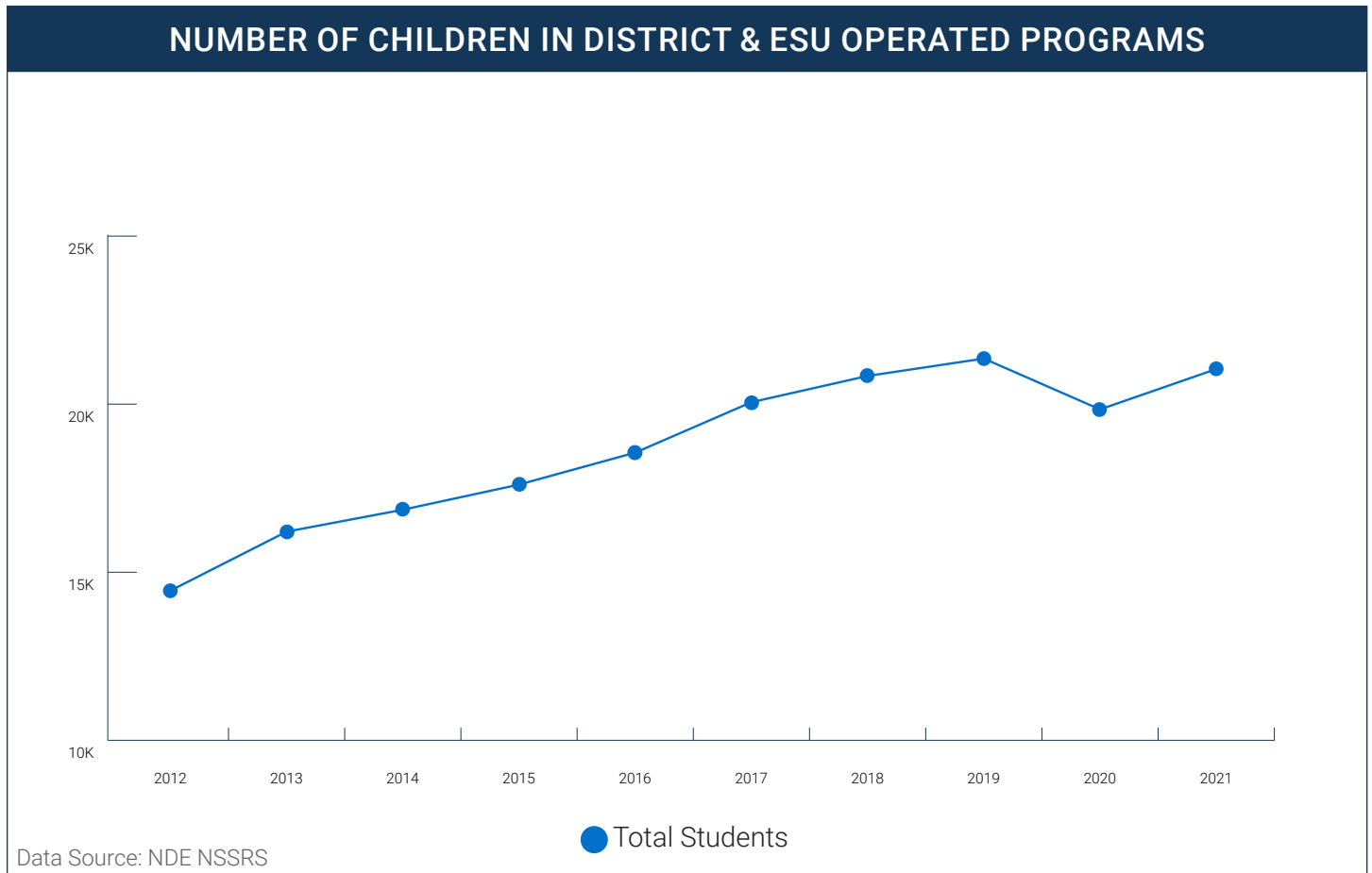
- 9,471 (45%) had an IEP or IFSP (center-based or home-based)
- 8,413 (40%) qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch
- 2,550 (12%) had a home language other than English
- 268 (1%) were reported as English Learners

The above percentages were all within 1% of the previous year's percentages except for children with a home language other than English. This percentage increased from 10% to 12%.

TEN-YEAR TREND DATA

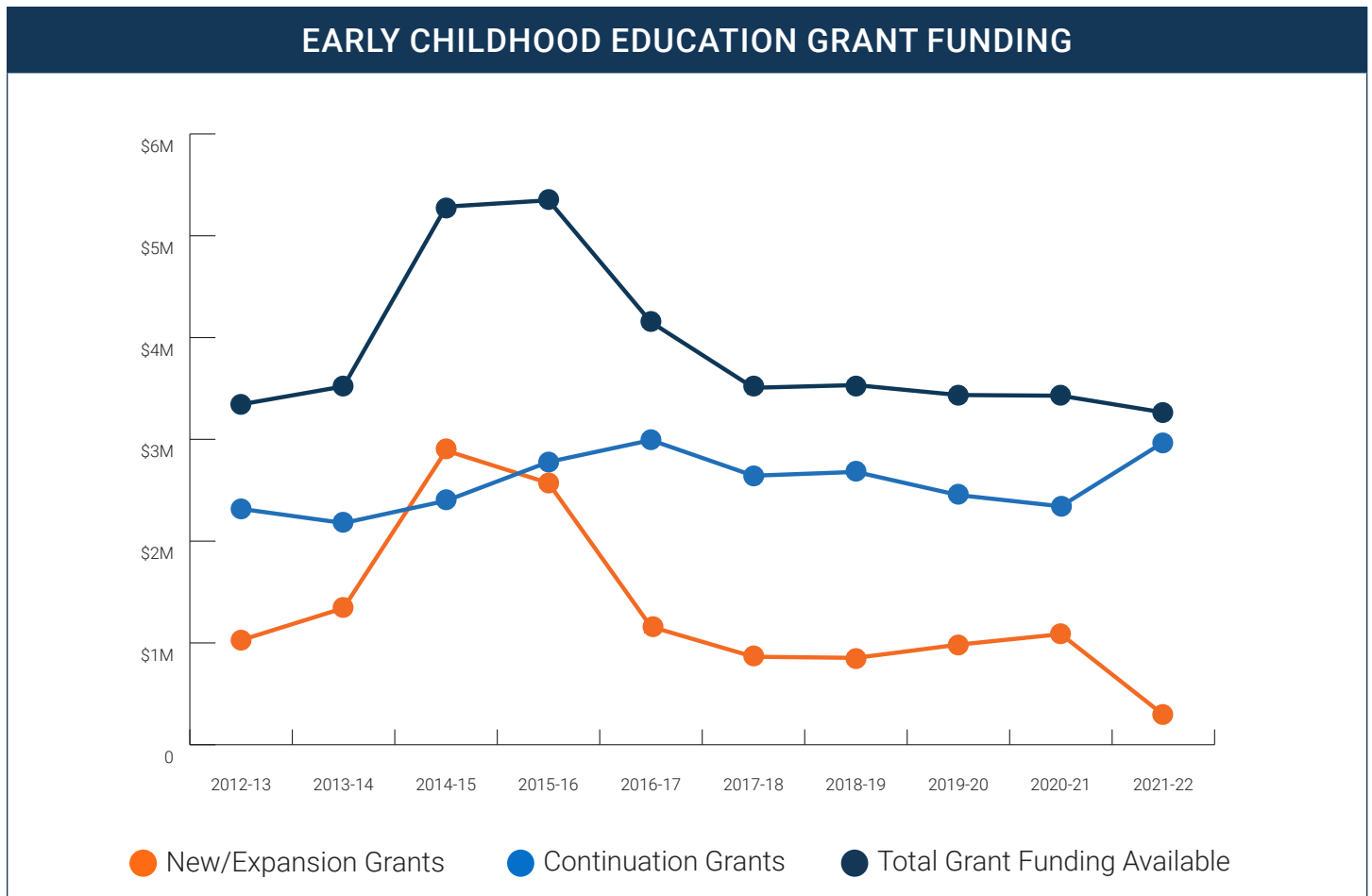
Longitudinal data was reviewed to track the pattern of children served by district and ESU operated programs across ages. The graph below represents children served in programs that were home-based, center-based and received services provided to children ages birth to five in homes and community settings.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the number of children enrolled in district and ESU operated early childhood programs declined. This same decline was observed across the country and was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic (Weisenfeld, 2021). The number of enrolled children in the 2021-2022 school year rebounded to nearly the same number of children in 2019-2020. The numbers of 2019-2020 reflect pre-pandemic enrollment from the fall of 2019.

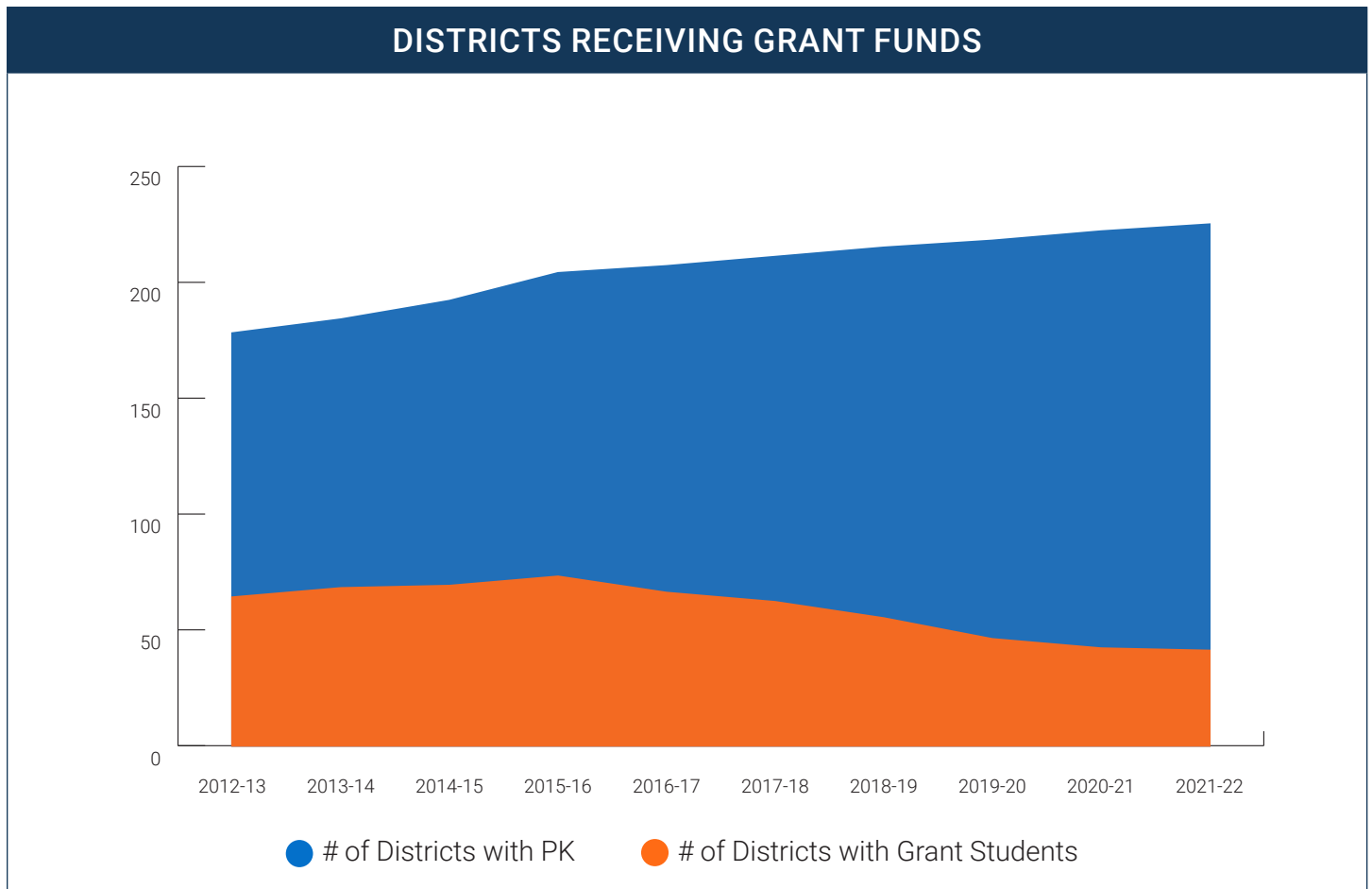


There has been an increase in districts operating prekindergarten programs in order to serve the increased number of children. Early Childhood Grant funds have been utilized by more than half of the school districts across the state as the district began or expanded the prekindergarten program. As the number of districts providing prekindergarten programs has increased, the amount available for the Nebraska Department of Education to allocate for Early Childhood Grants has not.

In 2012-2013, \$3,343,880 were allocated to districts for early childhood grants programs. The amount allocated to districts increased greatly in 2014-2017 due to legislation providing several years of additional funding that began with the 2014-2015 school year. Since then, the amount of grant funds available for the NDE to allocate to districts have been similar to the amounts funded ten years ago, even though there has been a 26% increase in districts offering prekindergarten programs and a 46% increase in children being served in district operated programs since 2012. In 2021-2022, \$3,264,517 were allocated to district operated programs.



During the 2021-2022 school year, 41 districts received state grant funds while 184 districts did not receive any state grant funds. Some districts had a mixture of state grant funded classrooms and non-state grant funded classrooms.



RESULTS MATTER IN NEBRASKA: A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Results Matter in Nebraska is a child, family, and program outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all young children birth to age five served through districts, ESUs, the Early Development Network (EDN), Early Head Start, Head Start, Tribal and Migrant seasonal Head Start programs, and community partners. Child, family, and program outcome data is used to inform early childhood program practices and policy.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Quality early childhood education programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term positive academic outcomes (Morgan, 2019) The NDE promotes quality programs through ongoing training and technical assistance.

Program quality is measured through onsite observations. Assessment tools measure how the classroom environment supports children's physical, cognitive, language and literacy, mathematical, and social-emotional development.

QUALITY MEASURES FOR THREE- TO FIVE-YEAR-OLD PROGRAMS

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale® (ECERS-3) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) were used to evaluate the overall quality of prekindergarten programs.

ECERS-3 is an observational assessment of 35 items across six subscales, designed to assess center-based programs for children 3-5 years of age. The program standard of quality is a rating of five across all six subscales and is based on a 7-point scale with 7 being excellent. ECERS-3 rates six areas: Space and Furnishing, Personal Care Routines, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interactions, and Program Structure.

CLASS is an observational tool designed to measure the interactions between teachers and children as well as how those interactions affect children's learning. CLASS encompasses 10 dimensions that are divided into three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. Each domain is scored on a 7-point scale with 7 being excellent.

The NDE selected the district classrooms in which observations were conducted. Observations of district programs receiving Early Childhood State Grant funds are completed using the ECERS-3. Districts not receiving early childhood grant funds may choose which tool, ECERS-3 or CLASS, is used for their observation. For the 2021-2022 school year, 81 observations were completed including 70 ECERS-3 and 11 CLASS observations.

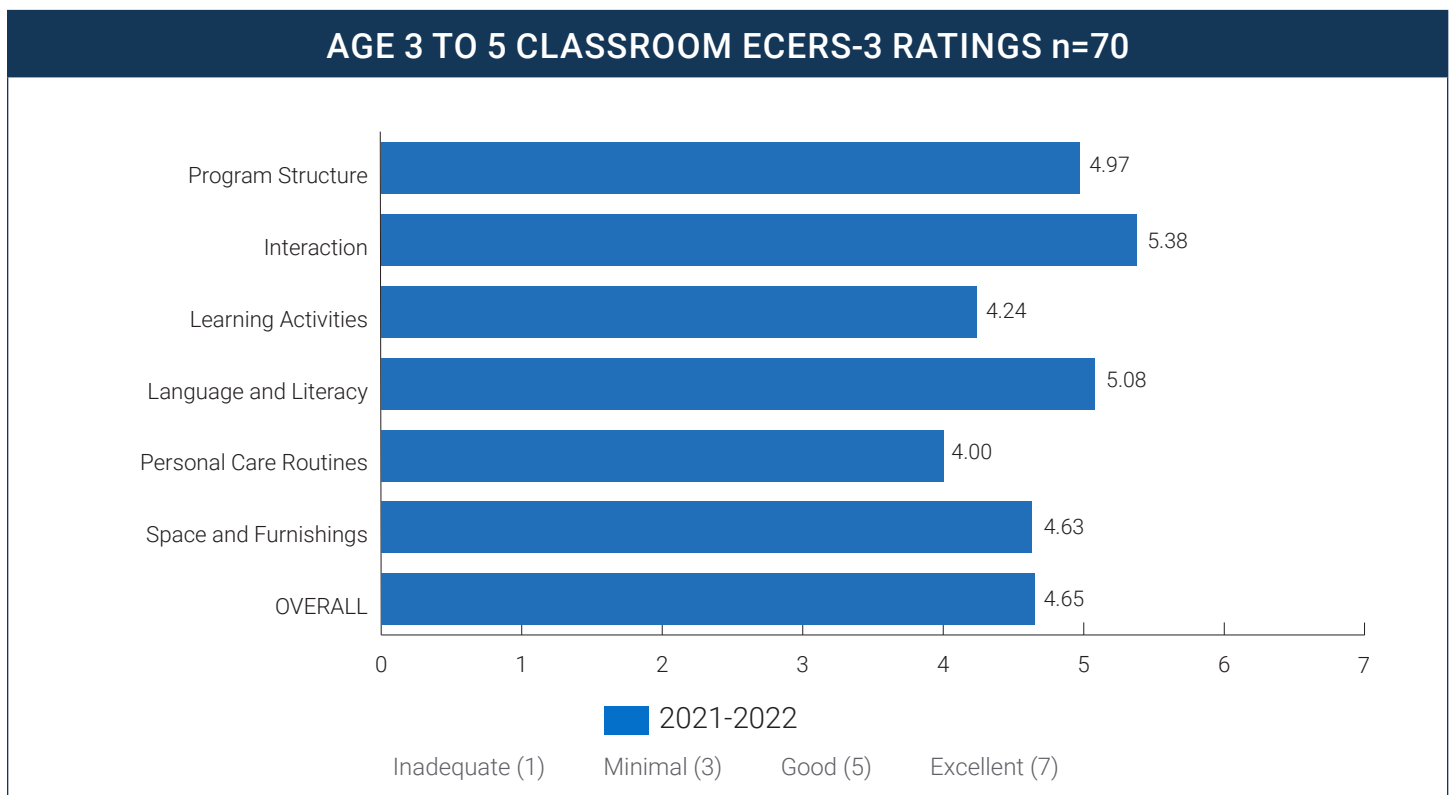


PROGRAM ASSESSMENT DATA

ECERS-3

ECERS-3 observations were completed in 70 classrooms. The results showed that classroom quality was strongest in the subscales of Interaction, Language and Literacy, and Program Structure. The Interaction subscale focuses on how adults interact with children through supervision of gross motor activities, individualized teaching and learning, staff-child interaction, peer interaction, and discipline. The Language and Literacy subscale includes vocabulary, children's use of books, and becoming familiar with print. Program structure evaluates how the program is set up for whole group activities, play, and transitions.

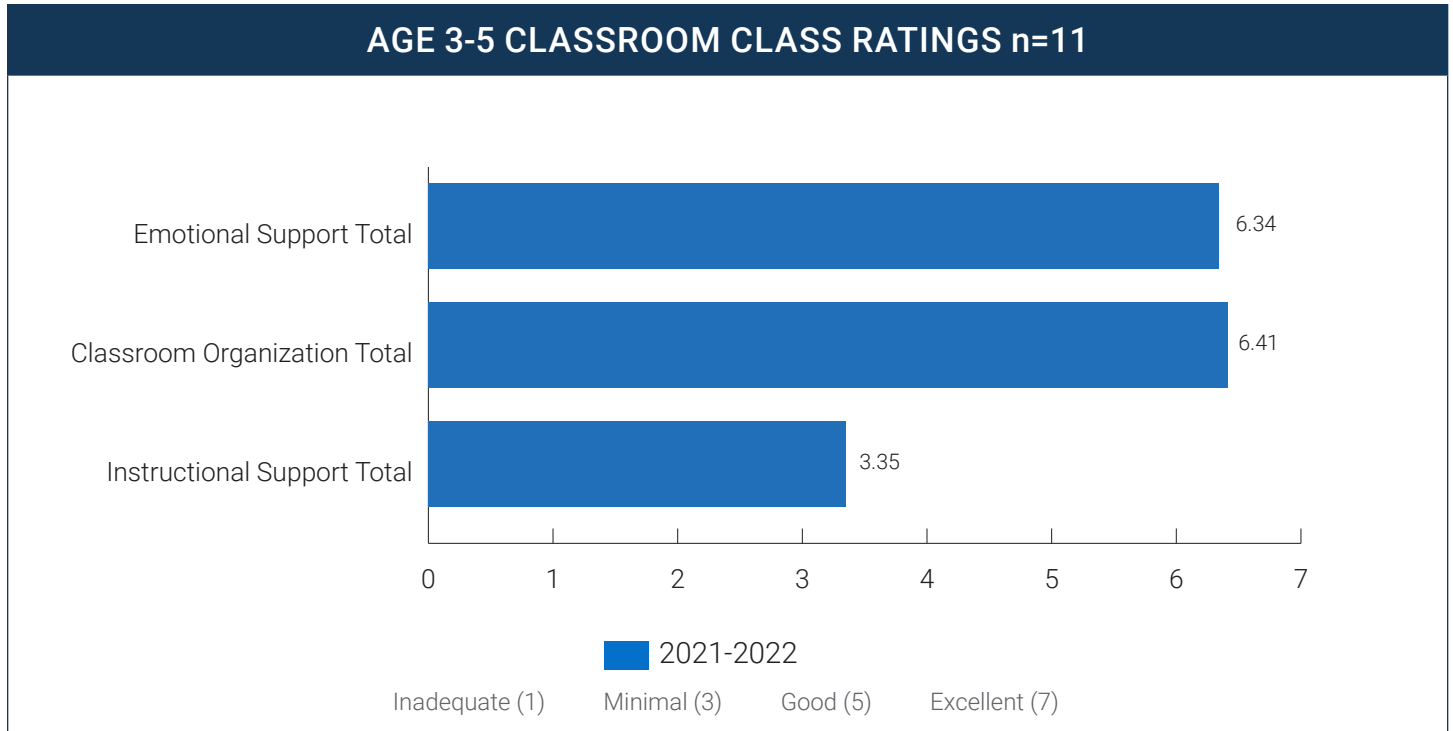
The lowest ratings were in Learning Activities and Personal Care Routines. The Learning Activities subscale identifies how the classroom and staff support learning throughout the day including fine motor skills, dramatic play, nature/science, math, and technology. The Personal Care Routines subscale focuses on meals/snacks, toileting/diapering, health practices, and safety.



CLASS

Eleven CLASS observations were completed. CLASS has three domains: Instructional Support, Classroom Organization, and Emotional Support. The results showed the strongest ratings in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization.

The Emotional Support domain determines the positive or negative climate in the classroom as well as measuring teacher sensitivity and how teacher interactions show an understanding of the child's point of view. The Classroom Organization domain focuses on how smoothly the classroom operates along with ensuring that children are engaged in productive learning activities. The Instructional Support domain, which received the lowest state-wide scores, emphasizes how teachers promote higher order thinking skills, provide effective feedback, and encourage the development of children's language skills.



CHILD OUTCOMES: CHILD ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Early Childhood programs are informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches that provide teachers and families with information about children’s learning and development. MyTeachingStrategies GOLD™ is a research-based, authentic assessment system used by district and ESU programs as well as in many federally funded Early Head Start and Head Start programs. This report includes data from district and ESU programs and Early Head Start/Head Start programs participating through an NDE umbrella purchase option.

GOLD™ data is collected through observation of six areas of development and learning on an ongoing basis for all children B-5 served by districts, ESUs, and Early Head Start/Head Start. The data is used by teachers and other program staff to inform and improve instruction to meet the needs of individual children and groups of children. The NDE uses GOLD™ data for state and federal reporting purposes. Fall and Spring checkpoint data is analyzed and used to monitor district progress toward achieving widely held expectations across the six areas.



THE AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING ARE:



Social-Emotional

Regulate emotions and build relationships with others.



Physical

Demonstrates large motor skills, such as traveling, balancing, and coordinated physical manipulation skills.



Language

Learn to understand and use words/gestures to effectively communicate.



Cognitive

Demonstrate positive approaches to learning, classification skills, and use representational skills.



Literacy

Engage in emergent reading and writing behaviors.



Mathematics

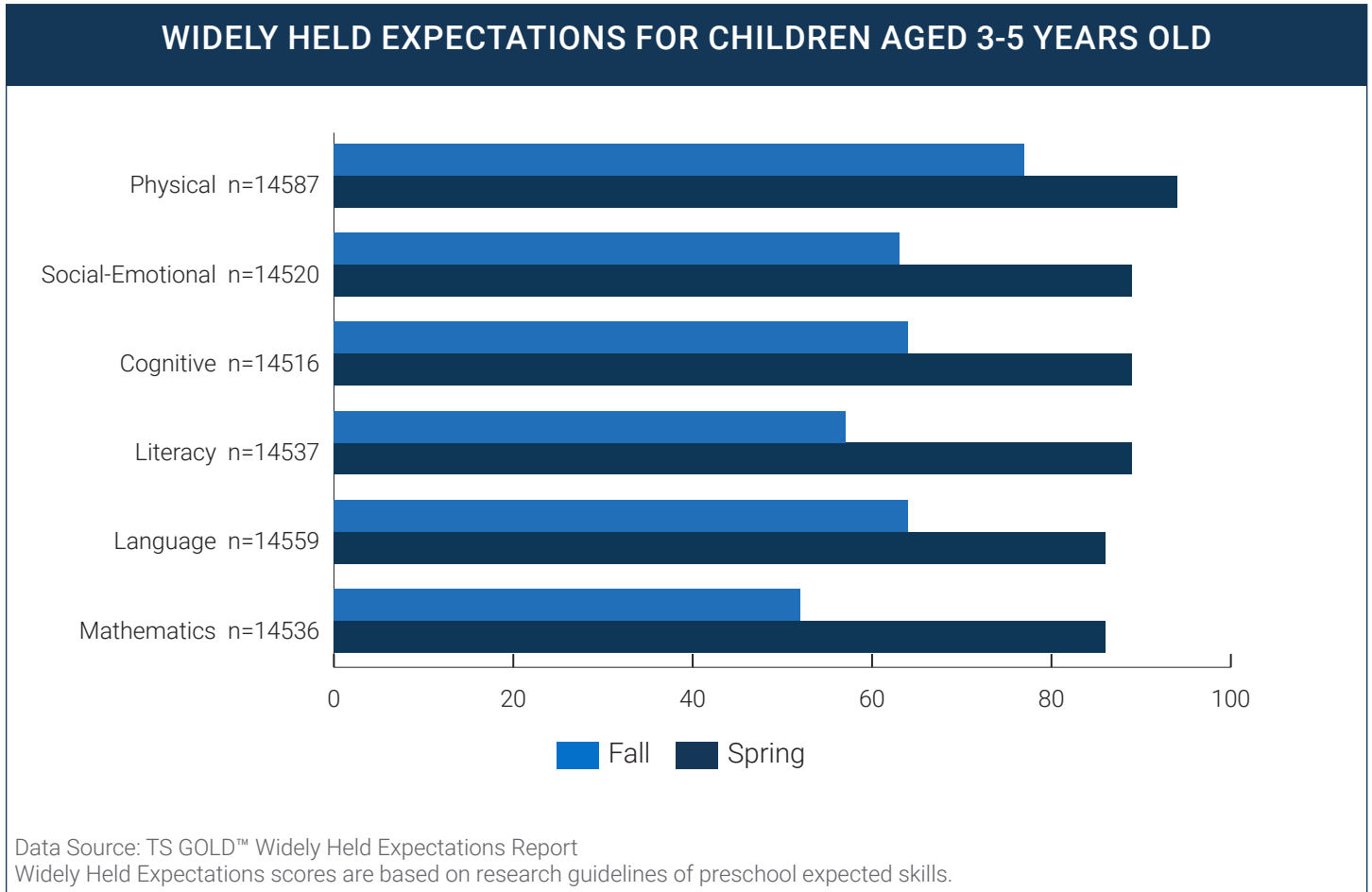
Explore spatial relationships and demonstrate knowledge of patterns and number concepts.

CHILD ASSESSMENT DATA

Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, 20,061 children birth to age five were assessed utilizing GOLD™ across various settings. For this report, fall and spring checkpoint data were analyzed to monitor children’s progress towards achieving widely held expectations for children ages three to five. Additional child data for children birth to age two can be found within the Sixpence, Special Education and/or Head Start reports, linked later in this report.

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AGED THREE TO FIVE YEARS OLD

The preschool data included children within early childhood settings that were either one or two years from entering kindergarten. Of the 17,621 children ages three to five with assessment data in the 2021-2022 school year, an average of 14,543 children had finalized assessment data by both the fall and spring checkpoint date in at least one of the six areas of development. The varying numbers in the graph for each of the developmental areas indicate the number of children with finalized checkpoint data in both the fall and spring. Checkpoint data may not be available for children across all areas based on a variety of factors limiting teachers' ability to gather data including extended child absences, discontinuation of services, and family mobility. By the spring of 2022, the majority of children aged three to five years old met widely held expectations in every area assessed, with the highest number of children meeting widely held expectations in the areas of literacy, social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development. The strongest gains were made in the areas of math and literacy.



KINDERGARTEN READY

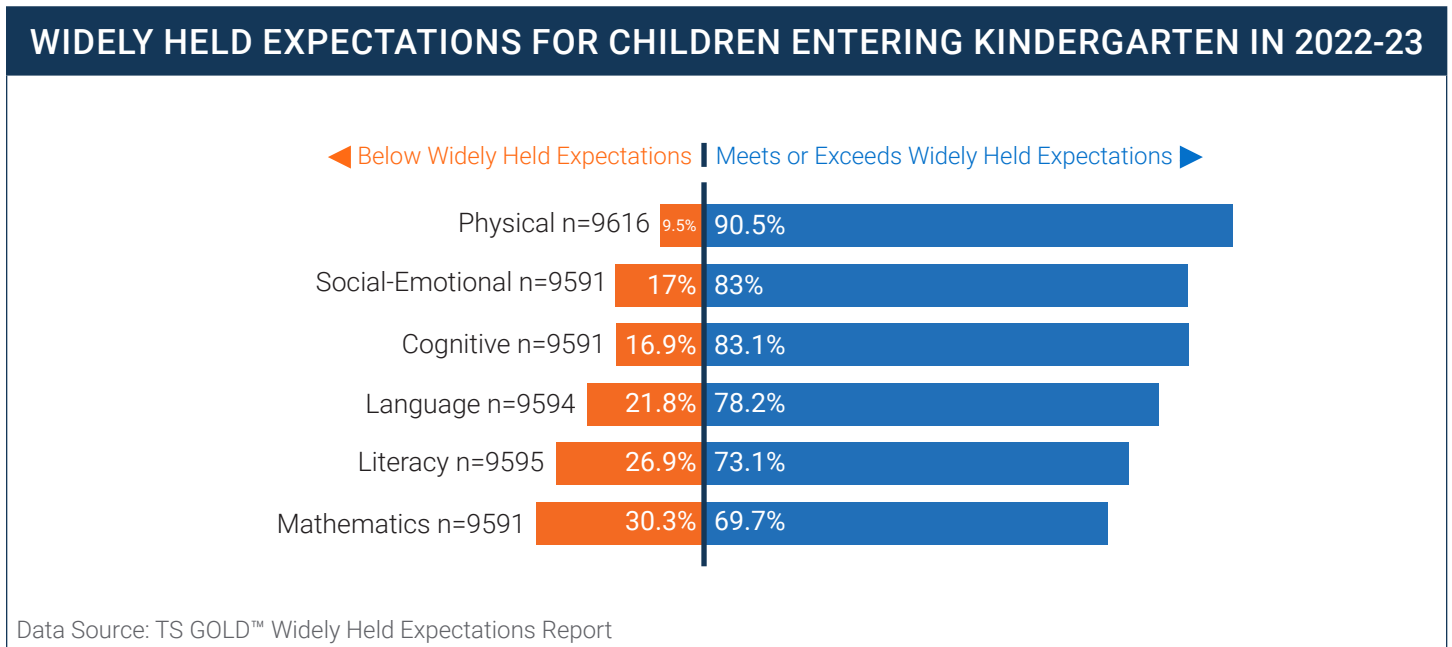
Children are born with the innate ability to learn. The goal of school readiness efforts is to support all children entering kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, health, and attitude to be successful life-long learners. Nebraska law entitles children to receive a free public education the year that they turn five on or before July 31.

TRANSITION AGREEMENTS

The majority of students entering kindergarten within public school districts do not attend district-operated programs; therefore, districts must work with local partners to ensure the school is ready for incoming kindergarten students. With an increased focus on transition agreements required by Title 1, 165 districts reported utilizing a kindergarten transition agreement with Head Start programs within the community and 149 districts reported utilizing a kindergarten transition agreement with child care programs.

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN IN 2022-2023

To evaluate the growth and learning of children eligible to enter kindergarten in 2022-2023, data was gathered during the spring of 2022 for children who participated in district, ESU, and or Head Start programs and would be eligible for kindergarten in the fall of 2022. The data for more than 9500 children was analyzed in six areas of development and learning and showed the percentage of children meeting the kindergarten readiness standards. The varying numbers of children for each of the areas indicates the number of children with finalized checkpoint data. Checkpoint data may not be available for children across all areas based on a variety of factors limiting teachers' ability to gather data including extended child absences, discontinuation of services, and family mobility. Strengths for children entering kindergarten were the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive skills.



PARTNERSHIPS

District prekindergarten programs are working in partnerships. All school districts are required to provide special education services for children with disabilities, including those below kindergarten entrance age. Other partnerships are also utilized to better meet the needs of children and their families. These partnerships often have their own reporting requirements. Information regarding some of those partnerships is included along with links for additional information.

REPORTING CHILD OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WITH AN IFSP OR IEP

In addition to the NDE annual Early Childhood Education State report, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires the NDE to annually report child outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities (IDEA Part C, ages Birth to 3) and preschoolers with disabilities (IDEA Part B, ages 3-5). To meet annual reporting requirements of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), child program entry and exit checkpoint data is analyzed to determine if the NDE's annual targets are being met for the three outcomes.

The NDE Annual Reports to OSEP include the number and percentage of children who:

- Show greater than expected growth
- Function within age expectations

Annual Reporting is based on functional outcome areas across areas of development and learning that reflect the integration and progression of child development and learning. Child outcomes reflect the child's ability to be successful in the context of everyday living. Each year the results are compared to the state targets.

Detailed information regarding the functional outcomes, targets, and comparison of children's Part C or Part B outcome data to the state targets can be found in the IDEA Part C Planning Region Team (PRT) Annual Performance Report and IDEA Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report, which are located on the Public Reporting webpage of the Nebraska Department of Education Special Education website: www.education.ne.gov/sped/public-reporting.

QUALITY MEASURES FOR IDEA PART C: EARLY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (EDN)

OSEP requires monitoring of family outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Three outcomes are identified for families who have a child with an IFSP. They include the percent of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services helped the family:

- Know their rights;
- Effectively communicate their children's needs; and
- Help their children develop and learn.

Each year families are asked to complete a family survey to gather this information. Data is then analyzed and compared against state determined targets. The results are included in the IDEA Part C PRT Annual Performance Report located on the Public Reporting webpage of the Nebraska Department of Education Special Education website: www.education.ne.gov/sped/public-reporting.

SIXPENCE INFANT AND TODDLER PROGRAMS

The Sixpence Early Learning Fund is a public-private partnership that supports collaboration at the state and local levels. Funds are awarded to school districts with community-based partnerships to serve families and children birth to age 3. Sixpence serves children and families through center-based and home-based programs. Forty six districts across the state have either a Sixpence center-based, home-based program, and/or child care partnership grant. To assess program outcomes and family outcomes, Sixpence programs use assessment tools including: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS), the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales®-Third Edition (ITERS-3), the FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS), and family interviews. The CLASS is an observational tool designed to measure the interactions between teachers and children as well as how those interactions affect children’s learning. The ITERS-3 assesses quality with a focus on classroom structure, activities, and play materials. The PFS measures the perceived presence of protective factors in the caregivers of children.

The Sixpence Report and analysis can be accessed at:
www.singasongofsixpence.org/resources/resource-library.html

HEAD START PROGRAMS

There are 19 Early Head Start/Head Start grant recipients across the state of Nebraska: 15 regional recipients, 3 Native American Tribal recipients, and 1 Migrant/Seasonal grant recipient. These Head Start programs provide a variety of programming options, including center-based options for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children, home visiting programs, and childcare partnerships, to over 5,300 children ages Birth to 5. Of the 15 regional recipients, four are direct awards to either a school district or ESU. During the 2021-2022 school year, seventy-one districts reported having some sort of partnership with at least one program of the 19 Head Start grant recipients. These partnerships range from providing referrals to providing comprehensive services to children and their families.

Additional information regarding access to Head Start and Early head Start as well as services provided can be found at the National Head Start Association Fact Sheet and individual state fact sheets:
nhsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NE.pdf



SUPPORTS

As the NDE Office of Early Childhood strives to ensure quality early childhood programs across the state of Nebraska, several programs have focused on the importance of supporting family engagement and early childhood leadership.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Supporting Family Engagement PK-3

Following the pandemic, school districts reported an increased professional development need for staff to better connect and collaborate with families and caregivers to support the learning and growth of the children in their classrooms. The NDE Office of Early Childhood partnered with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, College of Youth and Family Studies to develop and share a family engagement webinar at no cost to participants. The course, Supporting Family Engagement PK-3, was launched in March of 2021 and has been accessed by more than 150 participants and completed by more than 60 participants.

ReadyRosie

ReadyRosie is a family engagement program that was implemented during the 2021-2022 school year throughout the state of Nebraska. The Office of Early Childhood invited early childhood programs across the state to try out ReadyRosie in their programs with the Office of Early Childhood paying all the associated costs. ReadyRosie supports young children's caregivers and families with developmentally appropriate activities and videos that show caregivers and families ways to interact with young children while supporting learning outcomes. Learning outcomes included:

- Language and Literacy
- Math
- Social Emotional
- Health and Well Being

ReadyRosie also focused on building and supporting family relationships through family outcomes. These outcomes included:

- Families Well Being
- Positive Parent-Child Relationships
- Families as Lifelong Educators
- Families as Learners
- Family Engagement in Transition
- Family Connections to Peers and Community
- Families as Advocates and Leaders

During the 2021-2022 school year, 51 programs across the state implemented ReadyRosie. Three hundred and eighty-five teachers created 444 virtual classrooms for approximately 4,560 family members and caregivers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP

Nebraska's NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy

As part of Nebraska's Preschool Development Grant, a federal grant awarded to Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services to support strategic planning on the importance of early childhood education, the Nebraska Department of Education was awarded funds to support school district and Head Start leadership in having a better understanding of the PreK-3rd grade alignment through participation in three cohorts of Nebraska's NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy. This cohort model provides Principals, Special Education and Curriculum Directors, and Head Start directors, and other early childhood and school district leaders an opportunity to participate in a year-long professional learning community, designed to support the PreK-3rd grade leader using the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) curriculum.

Through two cohorts (2019-2022), more than 30 leaders from across the state graduated from the academy with a certificate in leadership from NAESP. As part of the leadership academy, graduates demonstrated their learning from the course through the presentation of a capstone project focusing on one of the six competencies that were presented through the NAESP coursework. Those competencies include:

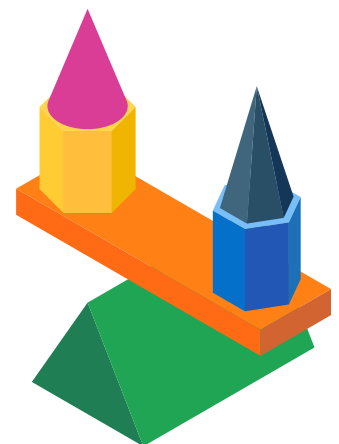
- Understand child development and its implication for high-quality instruction and interactions, PreK-3rd grade,
- Develop and foster partnerships with families and communities,
- Embrace and enact a preK-3rd grade vision,
- Ensure equitable opportunities,
- Share leadership and build professional capacity, and
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement.

A third cohort began in May of 2022, with plans underway for two additional cohorts utilizing ESSER funds in the upcoming years.



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Nebraska Department of Education
Office of Early Childhood
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